



**HARTLEY NATURE**  

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**PreSCHOOL**

Parent Handbook

Half Day Classes 2017-18

Hartley Nature Center

218-724-6735

State Dept. of Human Services

(Licensing) 651-431-6500

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## Welcome!

Thank you for enrolling your child in Hartley Nature Preschool!

Hartley Nature Preschool (HNP) offers experiences typically found in a preschool classroom including child-directed learning through play, chances to explore and learn with all of the senses, large and small motor activities, and chances to create art, make friends, and develop social skills. But, HNP does all of these things, and more, in the context of the natural world! Your child will be busy learning about cooperation while building a snow fort under the pines, learning about colors while playing in the crisp fall leaves, and developing coordination and balance by climbing on logs and stumps, among many other activities.

HNP's curriculum is based on what's happening in the natural world. We provide a predictable structure for each preschool session, including indoor free play, circle time, snack, bathroom break, and outdoor play time, while also making the most of what nature has to offer on each day. Your child will spend as much time as possible each preschool session playing outside in all seasons and all (safe) weather. At HNP your child will learn through playing in and with nature as he/she learns from and about nature, all while building relationships with other children and with HNP's professional and nurturing staff.

We hope this Parent Handbook provides you with the information you need for our half day preschool classes; please hold on to this handbook as a reference for the preschool year ahead and share it with your child's other caregivers who will bring them to and from HNP. We look forward to welcoming your family to Hartley Nature Preschool! Please feel free to contact HNP staff with any questions and/or concerns about what your child will experience at HNP or about the enrollment process.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Erpestad  
Preschool Director

## **Mission**

Hartley Nature Preschool's mission is to inspire life-long connections with nature through education, play, and exploration in a premier preschool environment that supports the whole child's development while preparing children for school.

This mission builds directly off of, and supports, Hartley Nature Center's Mission. Hartley Nature Center is dedicated to inspiring life-long connections with nature through education, play, and exploration.

## **Educational Philosophy**

### **Organization**

Hartley Nature Preschool (HNP) is a licensed child care center located at Hartley Nature Center in Duluth, MN. HNP is a unique nature preschool program for children ages three through five, which provides a developmentally appropriate preschool program rooted in the local environment and Duluth community. HNP staff members are high quality educators who have experience in both early childhood education and environmental education. The educators are nurturing, supportive, and model positive environmental attitudes, values, and behaviors. HNP is committed to providing a safe and peaceful educational setting, serving diverse populations, and engaging parents in their children's preschool experiences.

Hartley Nature Preschool is licensed as a child care center by the MN Department of Human Services.

### **Learning and Curriculum**

HNP believes that young children learn best through play. Through a mixture of child-directed and teacher-directed activities, children use all of their senses, explore, get dirty, and actively move their bodies as they are busy learning both indoors and out. HNP teaches pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, science, social skills, and environmental literacy through a seasonal, place-based, experiential, and developmentally appropriate curriculum. The HNP curriculum includes a mixture of inquiry-based and hands-on activities, group and

individual activities, indoor and outdoor activities, and active and quiet activities. Independent and self-help skills are also emphasized as children learn to dress themselves for all seasons and play outside in the natural environment of Hartley Park.

### **Nurture Nature**

HNP believes that nature is a child's natural habitat. As such, children will spend as much time as possible of each nature preschool session out in Hartley Park in all seasons and all weather. Children will play in and with nature while learning from and about nature. These experiences, in combination with carefully planned activities, will provide opportunities for the development of environmental literacy and the acquisition of knowledge about the natural world. Children will become naturalists and scientists in their own ways.

### **Child Development and Nature Preschool Benefits**

HNP supports each child's whole development, including their social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. HNP helps children develop their individual strengths as well as their courage, enthusiasm, confidence, and independence. HNP teaches children to be compassionate and caring towards themselves, other children, the staff, and the natural world. As they participate in HNP's programs, children learn to interact positively with and cooperate with their peers. As children play and learn at HNP they develop positive attitudes towards learning and a sense of curiosity, wonder, and discovery. Through regular experiences in Hartley Park, children develop their creativity and observational skills and a connection with nature.

### **Facility**

HNP is located in Hartley Nature Center at 3001 Woodland Avenue, which is located in 660 acre city-owned Hartley Park. Entry to the preschool classrooms is through the main Nature Center entrance. There are currently two preschool classrooms at Hartley Nature Center and the classrooms are carefully prepared and equipped to meet the needs of the children. In addition to facilities and furnishings for eating, washing, learning, and playing, great care is taken to provide ample amounts of natural light. The classroom space and

materials are carefully designed for the developmental needs of children aged 3-5 and include a variety of interest areas and materials. The restrooms are located in the main space of Hartley Nature Center across from the office's main desk and children are always supervised while using the restroom facilities.

### **Classroom Access**

The preschool classrooms are secure spaces and require key or keycard access. Visitors and members of the public are unable to enter the classroom without receiving permission due to the secured doors. Parents, visitors, and volunteers must sign-in at the main office desk and be admitted to the classroom.

### **Staff**

Each preschool session is staffed by a lead teacher and an assistant teacher who meet or exceed the requirements from the State of MN. Teachers stay with the same class for the entire preschool year to ensure continuity of care and an environment rich in personal contact and meaningful relationships. The State of MN required ratio is 1 adult for every 10 preschoolers. However, at HNP the staff to child ratio is always 1:8 or better. Parent and community volunteers also help out in the classroom on a regular basis; volunteers are not counted as part of the required ratio and are always supervised. Staff are carefully screened and trained and must pass a background check before working with children.

All staff members participate in program trainings throughout the year. These trainings include, among many others, medication administration, child development, abusive head trauma, and orientation to and implementation of all policies and procedures. Staff are certified in first aid and CPR and participate in trainings as necessary to maintain these certifications.

## **Meet the Staff**

### **Kaitlin Erpestad—Preschool Director and Lead Teacher, Tues/Thurs AM and PM**

I grew up exploring the parks, lake shore, and green spaces of Duluth and learning to ski on the ski trails of Hartley Park. I earned a BA in Social Studies Education and a MN teaching license for K-6 elementary and 5-8 social studies from St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. I then had the pleasure of living in the country of Finland for three years where I taught preschool for 3-7 year old Finnish and international children and explored the Finnish woods with my husband, Matti. I returned to MN and completed a naturalist training program at Wolf Ridge ELC and earned a Master's degree in Environmental Education from UMD. I love to be active outside in all seasons, to cook and bake, to watch and read Nordic crime series, and to eat chocolate!

### **Dani French--Lead Teacher, Mon/Wed/Fri AM and PM**

As a native to Duluth, I spent my childhood enjoying the lake at my cabin, and exploring the woods surrounding my house. I have always felt a sense of peace when surrounded by nature and I love to share that with my family now. My husband and our 2 daughters love to hike the many trails in town and enjoy being outside whenever we can. I have always loved working with young children and found my calling when I decided to study at WITC in their early childhood program. I am one who believes you should never stop learning and pursued a bachelor's degree in Child Development from Concordia University a few years after graduating WITC. Just last spring I completed yet another Bachelor's program in Unified Early Childhood Studies from UMD. Between schools I have taught in various settings around the area and worked with students from 6 weeks to 6 years. In my off time I like to read, take pictures and go geocaching with my family.

### **Becca Bell—Assistant Teacher, Mon/Wed/Fri AM and PM**

After growing up, attending college, and working in Minnesota, this state is truly my home. From my hometown of Willmar, I grew up loving all activities on and in the water - sailing, swimming, waterskiing, canoeing - and still consider these are still some of my favorite things to do outside! I attended St. Olaf College where I earned a biology degree and discovered an excitement for working in our natural world. Since college, I've worked with

the outdoors in a variety of settings: a nature center near my hometown, Wolf Ridge ELC, & Custer State Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota. I also went back to school for my Master's in Environmental Education at UMD. Each experience has honed my appreciation and respect for both nature and our youngest learners, leading me very clearly to nature preschools. I am thrilled to be joining the team at Hartley Nature Preschool and can't wait to get to know the students and their families! When not at Hartley, I'll be enjoying a good cup of coffee, hiking with my new pup, or spending time with family and friends.

**Caitlin Johnson—Lead Teacher, Tues/Thurs Full Day**

I have always loved exploring the natural world and learning as much as I can about it! It wasn't until I attended the University of Minnesota Duluth that I realized how much I enjoy teaching about our natural world and introducing children to its many wonders, which is why I obtained a degree in Recreation/ Outdoor Education. Since college I have worked as a teacher for Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in Finland, MN and Deep Portage Learning Center in Hackensack, MN. I then decided I wanted to explore the mountains a bit and moved out to Aspen, Colorado to work at Aspen Center for Environmental Studies as a naturalist. The mountains were beautiful, but I missed the lake so I moved back to Duluth. I love exploring the woods in Duluth with my family and our dogs, mountain biking, cross country skiing, making jewelry and creating things in the kitchen.

**Emma Richtman—Assistant Teacher, Tues/Thurs Full Day**

As a native of Minnesota, I spent much of my life enjoying and exploring 'The Land of 10,000 Lakes'. I have a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from the U of MN, Twin Cities. While earning my degree I realized my passion fell more towards outdoor education rather than conservation, and so began my career as an environmental educator. I have taught at Wolf Ridge ELC, The Raptor Center and as a Naturalist for a Montessori in Stillwater, MN. Most recently, my husband and I decided to take a chance and completely change our lives by moving to Duluth! So when I am not working on updating our house, I am an avid kayaker, canoeist, cyclist, climber, snowshoer, hiker, camper, gardener, bird watcher, agate picker, back yard chicken farmer, Chaco wearer, Mukluk lover and ukulele enthusiast. I could not be happier here and I look forward to creating many great memories

with your children!

**Maria Hopkins—Lead Teacher, Full Day M/W and Friday Morning Care and Co-Lead Teacher, Tues/Thurs AM**

All my life I have enjoyed being outdoors and learning about my surrounding environment, which is why I chose to study biology as an undergraduate in Minnesota. Upon receiving my degree, I began to pursue outdoor education, which sparked my interest and passion for teaching children and engaging them with nature. In December 2011, I received my M.Ed. in Elementary Education, with a focus in environmental education, from Antioch University New England. Upon receiving my degree I worked as an Education Coordinator for a Nature Explore Classroom in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. While there, my dedication for teaching young children outdoors grew even stronger. I am very excited to be back in the Midwest and to begin my journey as Assistant Teacher for the Hartley Nature Preschool!

**Alyssa Nelson—Assistant Teacher, Full Day M/W and Friday Morning Care**

As a child I discovered a love for water and all things wild exploring in Southern Minnesota creek beds, wandering local woods, and camping with my family. I earned a BA in Sociology and played Division II volleyball for University of Minnesota Duluth. In 2014 I earned my masters in Experiential Education with an emphasis in Sports Psychology from Minnesota State University Mankato. During my time in Mankato I discovered my passion for teaching in the outdoors as a river guide for Bent River Outfitter. After three years in Mankato, I moved to St. Paul to work as an outdoor educator for Wilderness Inquiry where I taught multi-cultural urban audiences about the natural and historical resources of Minnesota. I rekindled my love for the Duluth area working as a dog handler for Wintermoon Summersun and as a sea kayak guide for Lost Creek Adventures. I love hiking and fishing in all seasons, reading, baking and cooking, listening to NPR, and gardening.

**Julie Bates—Assistant Teacher, Tues/Thurs PM**

My husband and I have lived in Duluth for almost 25 years. I was a stay-at-home mom, and we raised a son and a daughter in our home adjacent to Hartley Park. I was born and raised in Minneapolis and attended the U of MN where I obtained a degree in recreation and environmental education. I have worked as a naturalist at various places including resorts on

the Gunflint Trail, Hennepin County Parks, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. I currently work at the J. Skylark toy store and have been a substitute preschool teacher at Hartley for the past two years. I love camping, canoeing, crafts, bicycling, Legos, and spending time at our tiny cabin in the woods.

## **Child Care Program Plan**

HNP has a written Child Care Program Plan, parts of which are included in this handbook. The full Child Care Program Plan is available from the director for parents/guardians to view at any time. The Preschool Director sees that the Child Care Program Plan is carried out and reviews the plan annually. It is the policy and practice at HNP that all children are supervised by an approved staff person at *all* times, meaning that a child is always within sight and hearing of a staff person. Your child is your responsibility before they are signed in and after they are signed out each session on the sign-in/sign-out form located in the preschool classroom. At HNP all program adults are responsible for protecting the health and safety of all enrolled children, although teaching staff assigned to specific morning or afternoon sessions have primary responsibility for continuous supervision of children enrolled in that session.

HNP is an equal opportunity employer and educator. HNP offers a non-sexist, non-racist, multicultural curriculum and environment and does not discriminate against staff, parents/guardians, or children on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity and expression, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, income, status in regards to public assistance, religion/spirituality, language, physical or mental abilities, or veteran status. HNP promotes an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment in part by representing many different kinds of families within the curriculum, decorations, books, toys, activities, and teaching materials in the classroom, providing opportunities for children to experiences different cultural activities and to ask questions, and not celebrating any particular culture's holidays.

Throughout this document the term parent/guardian is used, however it is understood that a caregiver such as a nanny, babysitter, grandparent, or other adult may

accompany your child to/from HNP and/or may be the child's primary caregiver. Please share this information with all of your child's caregivers as it is a valuable resource for all of the caregivers who will be involved in your child's preschool experience.

### **Ages and Numbers Served**

HNP serves preschool aged children. The MN Department of Health and Human Services in Chapter 9503.0005 defines a preschooler as a child who is at least 33 months old and who has not yet attended the first day of kindergarten. To enroll in HNP, children **must** be toilet trained and 3 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the year in which they will enroll.

HNP generally has 30 enrolled children on site at any given time. HNP is licensed to serve 20 children per class in the half day program, however HNP currently limits class sizes to 16 children in the half day classroom. Half day classes do not overlap. There are 14 children in each full day class. The MN State minimum staff to child ratio for preschool aged children is one staff member to 10 children (1:10) with a maximum group size of 20 children. HNP currently serves a maximum of 64 children in the half day program and 28 children in the full day program if enrollment in all classes is at capacity. HNP will maintain a ratio of one teacher to eight or fewer children in each classroom. This ratio does not include the presence of volunteers.

### **Days and Hours of Operation**

HNP is open Monday-Friday between the hours of 8:30-4:30. HNP will be closed when the Duluth Public Schools (ISD #709) close due to severe weather (see the Weather Emergency Closings section for more information). HNP offers morning sessions from 8:30-11:30 and afternoon sessions from 12:30-3:30 and full day sessions from 8:30 am-4:30 pm. HNP is a 9-month program and requires a commitment for the entire year. The following sessions will be offered in the 2016-2017 school year:

<b>Days of the Week</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Monthly Tuition</b>	<b>Yearly Tuition</b>
Monday/Wednesday/Friday	8:30 am--11:30 am	3—5 year olds	\$280	\$2,520
Tuesday/Thursday	8:30 am--11:30 am	3—young 4 year olds	\$187	\$1,683
Monday/Wednesday	12:30 pm--3:30 pm	3—5 year olds	\$187	\$1,683
Tuesday/Thursday	12:30 pm--3:30 pm	3—5 year olds	\$187	\$1,683
Monday/Wednesday	8:30 am--4:30 pm	3—5 year olds	\$326	\$2,934
Tuesday/Thursday	8:30 am--4:30 pm	3—5 year olds	\$326	\$2,934
Friday Morning Care	8:30 am—1:00 pm	3—5 year olds	\$91	\$819

## **Yearly Schedule**

HNP will generally be open from the Tuesday following Labor Day to the last weekday of May. HNP will be closed on federal holidays including Labor Day, Thanksgiving (and the Friday after), Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Memorial Day. HNP will also be closed for approximately two weeks surrounding the winter holidays and for all or parts of the weeks that align with the Duluth Public Schools' winter and spring break weeks. Families will be notified of the yearly schedule and scheduled closings via a HNP calendar provided with enrollment materials, at the parent meeting before the start of the school year, and via a calendar posted online. Extra copies are available upon request. Holidays are considered to be part of the scheduled billing and are included in tuition fees. HNP does not operate in the summer months. However, summer camp and parent-child nature programs for preschool aged children are available at Hartley during the summer months.

## **Program Enrollment**

HNP does not discriminate in admission on the basis of gender, race, religion, creed, national origin, disability, or source of payment. There are no geographical boundaries for enrollment to HNP. HNP accepts children with special needs when, in the opinion of staff,

parents, and, if necessary, appropriate professionals, those needs can be met by our program.

### **Application for Enrollment**

Parents/guardians interested in enrolling their child are encouraged to visit the program prior to registration. Schedule a visit by contacting the preschool director:

- ❖ Phone: 218-724-6735
- ❖ Email: [psdirector@hartleynature.org](mailto:psdirector@hartleynature.org)

A completed Enrollment Application Form and a \$50 **non-refundable** Application Fee are required to be considered for enrollment. Submission of an Application for Enrollment and Application Fee does not guarantee a child a place in a HNP session. Incomplete applications will not be considered. HNP staff do their utmost to place a child in the family's preferred session. However, this is not always possible for a multitude of reasons. Please rank your choices of sessions when submitting an Application for Enrollment to aid HNP staff in creating balanced classrooms and in meeting the needs of your family.

A completed Waiting List Application Form and a **non-refundable** \$25 administrative fee are required for a place on the waiting list. Please see Waiting List Policies for more information.

### **Securing a Child's Place at HNP**

You will be notified via the mail of your child's class assignment. In order to secure your child's place at HNP you must return a **non-refundable** deposit of one's month's preschool tuition. The deposit will be applied to your May tuition payment. The deposit will not be refunded if you withdraw your child from HNP. If you have more than one child attending HNP, you must submit a non-refundable deposit for each child.

### **Required Enrollment Forms**

An enrollment packet will be mailed to you in the spring and includes helpful program information required by State of MN licensing regulations. *Before the first day of preschool new children* must have the following documents completed and submitted:

- ❖ Immunization History
- ❖ Health Care Summary (must be submitted by 30 days after the first day of school)

*Before the first day of school ALL children, even returning children, must have the following documents completed and submitted:*

- ❖ Hartley Nature Preschool Contract for Preschool Services
- ❖ Hartley Nature Center Membership (\$50 family level or above)
- ❖ Emergency Information Sheet
- ❖ Payment Option Form
- ❖ Enrollment Information Form
  - Dietary and Medical Needs
  - Water Bottle Use Permission
  - Animal and Pet Permission
  - Observation Permission
  - Information Release
  - Photo/Video Permission
  - Walking Field Trip Permission
  - Permission to Transport in an Emergency

### **Additional Forms**

#### **Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medication Administration Forms, if applicable**

These forms provide HNP staff with information about medications that your child is taking that need to be administered while the child is at HNP. This includes medications for allergic reactions such as an EpiPen as well as over-the-counter medications such as sunscreen or hand lotion. You can find this form on the preschool's website or request one from the preschool director. See Medication Administration Policy for more information.

#### **Individualized Child Care Plans**

You must submit an Individualized Child Care Plan if your child has a learning disability, special needs, a mild or severe food allergy, asthma, seizures, or other medical conditions that need special attention. The form should be completed in cooperation with and signed by the child's medical provider, except in the case of a mild allergy. You can find this form on the preschool's website or request one from the preschool director.

## Waiting List Policy

HNP maintains a waiting list for two purposes: families may apply to be on the waiting list for a class that is currently full and families may place a young child on the interest list for a class that begins in a future fall. Families may apply to be placed on the waiting list by submitting a Waiting List Application Form and a **non-refundable** \$25 administrative fee. As openings at HNP occur, enrollment of a child in any one of our four classes is determined by these criteria in the following priority order:

1. Internal movement of a child between classes.
2. Sibling of a child currently enrolled at the time of the sibling's conception or initial adoption application. Prior tuition payment history will be considered before an offer of enrollment is made.
3. Child on the waiting list.
4. General Public.

\*Every effort is made to contact families on the waiting list by email, mail, and telephone when spots become available. **If we are unable to get in touch with a family, HNP will move on to the next family on the waiting list.**

## Drop-off and Pick-up Policies

Children benefit from routine arrival and departure times and you are encouraged to keep to a regular schedule whenever possible. Arrival and departure times provide opportunities for you to communicate with your child's teacher about their day and discuss any questions you may have. If you are late in dropping off your child, please respect that the teachers will be involved in classroom activities and may not have a chance to chat with you at that time.

Hartley Nature Center is open to the public during HNP's program hours. As a result, preschool classroom doors are always secured and locked. Check in at the front desk and Gail will let you into the classroom if you are running late or coming to volunteer. **Please do not allow your child to open the classroom or nature center doors when arriving or departing.** At HNP children are taught that it is an adult's job to open the door. This policy

helps us supervise the children and control access to the classroom. Your help with this policy is greatly appreciated.

**You must “sign-in” your child each morning upon arrival in order to transfer responsibility of care from parent to authorized program staff. Upon departure you must “sign-out” your child. Once your child is signed out, he/she is no longer the responsibility of HNP and the HNP staff.** You must also initial the column on the sign-in/out sheet verifying that your child’s water bottle is clean, sanitized, and filled with fresh water as per the variance conditions from the MN DHS that allow HNP children to use water bottles for snack instead of disposable cups.

Signing children in and out is extremely important. When a child is signed-in the responsibility for that child’s care is transferred from the parent/guardian to authorized program staff. HNP staff use the sign-in sheets to track the number of children present and use it as a roster in an emergency situation. A parent who fails to sign their child in/out creates a safety issue; beginning with the fourth time of failure to sign in or out, you will be fined \$10.00 per time you forget to sign in or out, payable immediately or billed to the you.

### **Drop-off Policies**

Please do not attempt to drop-off and sign-in your child earlier than 8:25 for morning sessions and 12:25 for afternoon sessions as the time before classes is set aside for teachers to set up activities and prepare for the day. You must accompany your child into and out of the building at all times. The sign-in/sign-out form also has space for you to leave special contact information for the day or changes in who will pick off or drop off a child. Please leave this information if you will be away from your regular telephone number or if some else will pick up your child so that you can be reached in case of an emergency.

A sign on the preschool room door will alert you if it is an indoor or outdoor start day. For an indoor start, please let (or help) your child remove outdoor clothing, put away their outdoor clothing and snack, and put on their indoor shoes. Make sure your child visits the restroom (even just to try!) and washes their hands in the sink near the restrooms before accompanying them into the classroom and signing in. For an outdoor start, ensure that

your child has recently visited the restroom and is properly dressed for the weather before accompanying them outdoors to sign-in with the teacher.

If your child will be late for their session, please call HNP or email your teacher so that we know you will be arriving late. If your child will not be attending on any particular day due to illness or other reasons, please inform HNP as soon as possible. Due to safety concerns, if a child does not arrive for a scheduled session and you do not inform HNP of the child's absence, HNP staff will attempt to contact you to check on the whereabouts of the child.

Please move other children and conversations with other parents outside of the classroom as soon as possible after dropping off your child to allow children to settle in and teachers to start the session. Families are always welcome to enjoy the comfortable rocking chairs and the sunshine in the Exhibit Hall or to enjoy the trails of Hartley Park.

### **Pick-up Policies**

Out of respect to children and staff, please be prompt in picking up your child at the scheduled time. The morning sessions end at 11:30 and children must be picked up at 11:30. Afternoon sessions end at 3:30 and children must be picked up at 3:30. Families are welcome to remain at the Nature Center or in Hartley Park after children are picked up. Once a child is signed-out they are no longer the responsibility of the HNP staff or program.

If you will be late, please call HNP to let us know. This way we can let your child know that you will be late and we will not attempt to call you or contact alternate adults to pick-up your child. In the case of car malfunction, traffic, snow storm, being stuck in an elevator, etc., it is expected that you would be in contact with HNP by the end of your child's session. Please see Emergency Procedures Related to Child Pick-up for more information about what HNP would do if no one came to pick up a child.

### **Late Pick-up Fee**

**If deemed necessary by teachers, a fee of \$1.00 per minute may be charged for each child being picked up 5 minutes or more after the official end time of the session.** The fee is assessed as of 11:35 or 3:35 to allow for potential differences in clocks. Late pick-up penalty fees will be billed to you or paid on the spot. Families picking their child up late more than four times in three months may have their child care services terminated.

### **Authorization to Pick-up a Child**

Children will only be released to parents/guardians or authorized people listed on the child's Emergency Information Sheet. HNP cannot and will not allow a child to leave with an unauthorized person. Any person who is listed on a child's Emergency Information Sheet is considered authorized to pick up a child from HNP. These adults may be asked to show an ID at any time when picking up a child. If a new person will be picking up a child from HNP, staff must be notified of the change by an authorized adult. Staff must check that person's photo ID when he/she arrives to pick up the child. If the person does not have a photo ID they will not be allowed to pick-up the child. HNP cannot release a child to an unauthorized person.

Any parent denying pick-up authorization to a non-custodial parent must submit a court order supporting that denial to the Preschool Director. Families involved in visitation schedules with children must have specific date and time information submitted to the Preschool Director by the child's legal guardian. HNP will make every effort to comply with these schedules. HNP asks that families involved with special conditions regarding custody and visitation meet with the Preschool Director and teaching staff to ensure that all needed information and schedules are in place.

### **Parking Lot**

Hartley Nature Center's parking lot is used by preschool families, Nature Center visitors, and Hartley Park users. Please drive slowly as there may be children and families walking on the driveway and in the parking lot. Please park in the lot and not in front of the kiosk or path to the Nature Center as that area needs to remain open for emergency vehicle access. *For the safety of all children, please hold your child's hand at all times in the parking lot.*

### **What to Bring Each Day**

Please send the following items with your child each day that they attend preschool. Please label all items. More information about each of these items can be found in the relevant sections of this parent handbook.

- ❖ Hearty, healthy snack (with no peanut or tree nut products)

- ❖ Water bottle that is easy for your child to drink from without assistance. For example, your child can remove and replace the lid or flip-up the nozzle on his/her own.
- ❖ Seasonally appropriate outdoor clothing and foot wear
- ❖ Indoor shoes (can be kept at HNP)
- ❖ 1-2 complete changes of clothes (can be kept at HNP)

## Sample Daily Schedule

The HNP curriculum values spontaneity and takes advantage of seasonal changes and happenings in nature. However, many people, especially young children, benefit from having a regular schedule. HNP maintains a loose schedule with predictable events such as circle time, snack, and outdoor play time during each session. Below is a sample HNP daily schedule for a half day class\*:

Sample Daily Schedule		
AM		PM
8:30	Arrival	12:30
8:30	Free play in the classroom	12:30
9:00	Circle Time	1:00
9:15	Snack Time*	1:15
9:30	Outside Play Time	1:30
11:30	Pick Up Time	3:30
*In fantastic weather, snack may be eaten outdoors!		

### Arrival

Accompany your child into the building, help them hang up their outdoor clothes and backpacks on their hooks, help them go to the bathroom and wash their hands, and accompany them into the classroom. Sign your child in on the sign-in/sign-out sheet and note any changes in contact information for the day.

### Free play in the classroom

Children can choose from the many possible activities offered in the preschool classroom's interest areas including dramatic play activities that vary by the season and by theme, building blocks, art activities, or sensory activities such as the bean bin or water table. Other possible activities include literacy activities such as listening to a story or playing with puppets, writing activities, math and manipulative games and activities, or adult-directed activities such as a cooking or craft project. At the end of free play time children clean-up to prepare for circle time.

**Circle Time**

This is a time when children learn about the calendar and the days of the week, record the daily weather, participate in songs, finger plays, and rhymes, and read a story. Children may play instruments, dance, or do stretches, a Hartley Nature Center naturalists may visit the classroom with an animal, or a special guest may visit during this time.

**Snack Time**

After washing their hands, children eat the snack they brought from home while sitting at the tables. Children learn and practice good table manners in a calm, friendly setting while eating the healthy, hearty snack provided by their parents.

**Outside Play Time**

Children explore, play, and learn outdoors in the fenced play area and/or on a walking field trip in Hartley Park. Activities may include climbing and balancing on logs, playing with balls, sledding down hills, sand play, fort building, imaginary play, digging, building with rocks and tree branches, climbing trees, and running. Activities may include a mix of child-directed and teacher-directed activities, individual, small group, and large group play, as well as active and quiet play.

**Pick Up Time**

Pick up is generally done on the brown benches outside of the nature center's front doors, near the climbing trees, or inside the exhibit hall near the rocking chairs. On very cold days pick up may be from the classroom. Parents must sign their child out on the sign-in/sign-out sheet held by the program staff whether indoors or out.

\*This schedule is subject to change depending on the weather and/or in response to staff or child needs.

**Napping Policy**

Naps will not be part of HNP's half day program since sessions are limited to three hours in length. Please ensure that your child arrives well-rested for preschool so they are able to make the most of each preschool session. If a child falls asleep while at HNP, staff will wake up the child by gently so the child can participate in the remainder of the session's

activities. You will be notified that your child fell asleep so you are able to determine if your child needs additional rest.

### **Technology in the Classroom**

At HNP we do not include technology such as computers in our classroom or offer children computers, tablets, or other technological devices to play with during free play time. We occasionally show children a brief video clip or music video to enhance our learning on a topic such as dinosaurs, space, or dog sledding. As they grow up, children will have ample opportunities to become masters of technology. HNP offers children a space when they can be unplugged and be immersed in the rhythms of the natural world and engage with their classmates and teachers. HNP staff only use mobile devices when with the children to briefly snap photos or make emergency calls.

### **Curriculum**

HNP teaches pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, science, social skills, and environmental literacy through a seasonal, place-based, experiential, and developmentally appropriate curriculum supplemented with the Creative Curriculum for Preschool. The HNP curriculum includes a mixture of inquiry-based and hands-on activities, group and individual activities, indoor and outdoor activities, and active and quiet activities. Independent and self-help skills are also emphasized as children learn to dress themselves for all seasons and play outside in the natural environment of Hartley Park.

The Creative Curriculum is aligned with the *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards for Children Ages 3 to 5* (ECIPS). The learning domains addressed in ECIPS, and in HNP's curriculum, are: physical and motor development, creativity and the arts, approaches to learning, cognitive development, language and literacy development, and social and emotional development.

### Sample Developmental Goals for Preschoolers

Physical development	Social development	Emotional development	Intellectual development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops balancing skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balances needs and rights of self and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to emotional cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops independence in dressing in outdoor clothes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forms relationships with adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulates own emotions and behaviors by managing feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses symbols and images to represent something not present</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses writing and drawing tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works with other children and adults to resolve social problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes care of own needs appropriately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connects numerals with their quantities</li> </ul>

### Sample Activities

HNP preschoolers will participate in activities that promote their physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. These activities will be provided in a manner consistent with each child's cultural background. There will be a mixture of quiet and active activities as well as a mixture of child-directed and adult-directed activities. Sample activities to promote a child's development may include the following:

Physical development	Social development	Emotional development	Intellectual development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running in the forest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative group games such as using a parachute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quietly watching and listening to birds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing math and critical thinking games</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balancing on logs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing house or other imaginative games with other children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing adults model appreciation of the natural world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to stories read and told aloud</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jumping in puddles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing sharing tools and toys in pretend play, while digging or while building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions of empathy with animals, such as when stepping on an insect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing creating letters with sticks</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dancing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing games such as follow the leader or Simon Says</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practicing putting on boots and coats independently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflecting on the events of the day</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulating crayons, markers, and paintbrushes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching out for each other as we walk in the woods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural cooking events with families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting during calendar time</li> </ul>

Activities will also require the use of varied equipment and materials both indoors and out. Teachers will change the teaching materials in the classroom every three to four weeks to provide children with a variety of age-appropriate toys, books, dramatic play elements, and other equipment to engage with during indoor play time. For example, activities may include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using a magnifying glass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using snowshoes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing instruments or dancing to recorded music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stirring mud with a spoon or stick</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catching insects with a net</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counting natural objects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretend cooking with utensils and measuring cups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using sticks to create letters on the ground</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating art projects with a variety of natural materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using building blocks made of a variety of materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using dramatic play materials such as dress up clothes or a tent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using water and other ingredients to make “soup” or potions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using crayons, markers, pens, and pencils to draw and write</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading books and listening to stories read or told aloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing in the sand/water table</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using manipulatives such as puzzles or matching games</li> </ul>

### Assessment

Children enrolled in HNP will be assessed using a Parent Aware approved assessment tool aligned with MN early learning standards. The results of the assessment(s) will be used in conjunction with ongoing informal assessment to individualize instruction and are shared with families during parent teacher conferences and as requested.

## **Outdoor Play**

HNP is dedicated to spending a majority of each preschool session, both full and half day, learning and playing outdoors. It is HNP's policy that all children who are well enough to attend preschool are well enough to participate in outdoor activities and play. In fact, the MN Department of Human Service Licensing requires a daily dose of fresh outdoor air for young children. If children are dressed appropriately and are well enough to attend preschool, weather conditions should not pose an illness risk. Staff makes sure that children are dressed in clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions. Parents must cooperate when it comes to preparing children to spend time outdoors in all weather. If a child is not prepared with the appropriate clothing, parents will be called to drop off appropriate clothing or to pick up the child. It is not fair to expect that all children will remain indoors because one child is not prepared for the weather. Play time outdoors will be appropriately limited in cold weather and children will not be taken outdoors in severe or threatening weather, based on the weather forecast from the National Weather Service and the judgment of the Preschool Director and staff.

## **Nature Play**

Time in nature is critical for a child's healthy development. Playing, learning, and exploring in the woods, waters, and fields of Hartley Park provides a safe space for children to learn how to assess physical risk and build resilience, an environment to nurture good mental health, promotes overall physical health through vigorous activity, and gives children ample opportunities to build relationships with other children and their teachers. At HNP, nature play is a primary focus of our time outside. Children at HNP will participate in nature play activities including climbing trees, running through the forest, balancing on and jumping from rocks and logs, playing with rocks and sticks, jumping in mud puddles, sledding, playing on ice, exploring in the woods, and much more.

## **Stick Play**

Nature play also includes stick play. Sticks are a common toy at HNP because they are open-ended and can be anything the child can imagine such as a sword, wand, or shooter. Stick play of all types is an important form of expression for young children. HNP staff

carefully monitor the play and we adjust the boundaries of stick play depending on how the children are responding to one another. While playing with sticks, children are learning that their classmates need to feel safe in the play, no matter what the play scenario is. Children are constructing their own understandings and play scenarios for how these tools are being used. We coach children throughout the year to use and control their sticks in safe, kind ways. We may redirect children who are using sticks in less safe ways to take a break from playing with sticks or to play with their sticks in a different way.

### **Rough-and-Tumble Play**

Children at HNP may engage in rough-and-tumble play. We believe in the value of exuberant, boisterous, rough-and-tumble play to a child's overall development. This vigorous, big-body play allows children opportunities to use language—both verbal and non-verbal—and learn how to negotiate, take turns, wait, compromise, sometimes dominate and sometimes hold back, and make and follow rules. They are learning about cause and effect and developing empathy. Big body play also supports optimum physical development because it is so vigorous and because children, since they enjoy it so much, tend to engage in it for an extended period of time. There are many ways that we support safety in rough-and-tumble play including teaching children how to communicate that they want rough-and-tumble play to stop, constantly monitoring (and guiding, if needed) the rough-and-tumble play in progress, designating safe areas where rough-and-tumble play can occur and areas where it cannot occur, and working with children to help them learn their own boundaries and process the interactions occurring during rough-and-tumble play.

### **Required Clothing**

Children need comfortable, non-restrictive clothing that is appropriate for both outdoor and indoor play every day of preschool. In addition, the clothing needs to be easy to put on and take off for independence in toileting. Please do not send children in clothing that would be missed if misplaced or soiled. All clothing must be labeled, including boots and shoes. Unlabeled clothing can easily be mixed-up or lost.

### Indoor Clothing

Each child needs a pair of indoor shoes. Children will wear their indoor shoes anytime they are indoors. Indoor shoes keep children's feet warm and dry in the classroom and restroom and help keep the classroom clean. Flip-flops and open-toed sandals are not allowed as indoor shoes and closed heels are recommended. Each child must have at least one extra complete change of clothing including underwear, socks, pants, and at least one long-sleeve and one short-sleeve top with them every day. These clothes can be kept in the preschool classroom or brought back and forth to in the child's backpack. The teachers will let you know if the clothing bag needs to be replenished.

### Outdoor Clothing

Children will be outside every day in all seasons and all weather and children engaged in nature play tend to get wet and dirty. Please send multiple pairs of mittens and other layers that tend to get wet quickly to ensure that children have warm, dry clothing to wear. HNP staff will do our best to dry wet gear in-between play sessions to ensure that children are warm. Children should be adequately dressed for outdoor play for all seasons and weather conditions. It can be surprisingly chilly in the woods of Hartley Park; always send more clothing than you think is necessary. It is easier to take off a layer than to be cold because of inadequate layers. Children need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for running, jumping, climbing, and playing. Sneakers, rubber boots, winter boots, or well-fitting hiking boots are recommended depending on the season. Closed-toed sandals with heel straps will be allowed during the warmest weather. Flip flops and open-toed sandals will not be allowed as outdoor shoes. In addition to appropriate shoes, clothing needs for each season include:

<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Late Spring/ Late Summer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubber boots</li> <li>• Wool/fleece socks</li> <li>• Warm sweatshirt or sweater</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Snow pants</li> <li>• Winter coat</li> <li>• Waterproof mittens</li> <li>• Scarf/balaclava/Buff/ face cover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubber boots</li> <li>• Wool socks</li> <li>• Warm sweatshirt or sweater</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rubber boots</li> <li>• One piece rain suit <b>OR</b> rain jacket with</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain jacket with hood/rain hat</li> <li>• Rain pants</li> <li>• Gloves/mittens</li> <li>• Cap/stocking hat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm hat</li> <li>• Winter boots</li> <li>• Wool/fleece socks</li> <li>• Long underwear top and bottom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rain jacket with hood/rain hat</li> <li>• Rain pants</li> <li>• 2 pairs gloves/mittens</li> <li>• Hat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hood/rain hat <i>and</i> rain pants</li> <li>• Sun hat</li> <li>• Long-sleeve shirt</li> </ul>
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You will probably be able to find most of the above items at second-hand stores or garage sales. Other good places to find these types of clothes include Oakiwear, REI, L.L. Bean, Lands' End, Columbia, Patagonia, etc. If you are having trouble locating or affording any of these items, please don't hesitate to ask for advice from HNP staff or other HNP families. Please do not send umbrellas with children as they tend to get in the way and get broken or torn.

Rain gear should be waterproof. Wind pants/jackets are not the same as rain pants/jackets. We have found that rain gear work very well if it is either one-piece (such as the brand Oakiwear) or overall style pants with a rain coat (such as Polarn O. Pyret, Dickerson's, Land's End or Helly Hansen). These one-piece suits or overalls plus a rain coat help keep children and their clothing clean and dry and avoid the gap between coat and pants that lets water and snow in.

For winter, we recommend buying a one-piece snowsuit or a winter jacket and snow pants that are a bit too big in order to keep children's limbs covered when they bend, stretch, and slide in the snow. If you are going with the two piece snow gear, we recommend that the coat has a hood and that the snow pants are the overall style with grippy/rubber cuffs to help them stick to boots. For boots, we recommend ones that come up to a child's calf and that have Velcro or bungee-like tightening system. Rubber boots do not count as winter boots in MN winters. Mittens that have a longer cuff that can be securely tucked into or up and over coat sleeves work the best for keeping hands warm and snow out of the mittens.

HNP is pleased to announce a partnership with Oakiwear's Outdoor School Program. HNP families can purchase Oakiwear gear at a 15% discount at [oakiwear.com](http://oakiwear.com) by using the coupon code "outdoorschool" at checkout.

## **Additional Program Information**

### **Holidays and Celebrations**

At HNP we do not celebrate religious holidays, do not attempt to provide religious education to children, and do not use religious symbols in the classroom. Children will have ample experiences for class parties and holiday related activities when they attend elementary school. However, children are welcome to share their special holiday experiences with teachers and other children without censure. When children take the initiative to share their special memories and traditions they learn to respect and appreciate cultural differences. Families are also welcome to come into the classroom to share special songs, stories, and cooking experiences with the children. Families may schedule such an event with their child's teachers.

We may celebrate secular holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, and Mother's Day for the fun of having celebrations and as a way to encourage artistic expression and to practice writing. We will also celebrate special seasonal events such as harvest time in the fall, solstices and equinoxes, and new growth in spring. HNP is generally closed on federal holidays.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are very important for most preschoolers and HNP wants to recognize this special day\* in a non-competitive, non-commercialized, and pressure-free manner. On a birthday the class will gather around the birthday sun (a large felt sun). We sing *Happy Birthday* to the child after the child holds a blow-up earth and walks around the sun one time for each year while all children and staff count. You can send a picture of your child for each year to share with the children. As always, families are welcome to join us for the birthday celebration. Summer birthdays can be celebrated at the half-birthday or at the end of the preschool year. Please do not send treats or goody bags for the children due to differences in family customs, concerns about allergies, and differences in economic status. Please do not pass out birthday invitations at HNP in order to prevent hurt feelings among children unless you plan to invite every child in the class.

\*HNP will respect the parent's wishes in the event that customs or religious beliefs prohibit birthday celebrations.

### **Toys from Home**

The preschool classroom is prepared to meet the needs of HNP children and to complement the HNP curriculum. Though we may provide some extra play items when outdoors, generally the natural world doesn't need extra toys to make it engaging and educational for preschoolers! Children are asked not to bring toys from home to preschool. Toys brought from home present potential problems for children and staff in that they are difficult to share and may get broken. There may occasionally be a Special Book Day, Toy Day, or Stuffed Animal Day, when children can bring something special from home to share with the other children and play with during the school day. The following toys are not allowed at HNP at any time: toys that resemble weapons and computer/video games. Please speak with HNP staff if you feel your child needs to have a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed toy, with them at preschool.

### **Babysitting**

HNP does not endorse or recommend staff to parents or parents to staff for child care outside of HNP hours (babysitting) and neither encourages or prohibits staff from entering into these arrangements with families. HNP assumes no liability whatsoever for any injury, damages, liability, or loss of any kind resulting from or occurring during the private child care or babysitting provided by any HNP staff member who is not on duty at HNP during regular hours of operation.

### **Plants and Animals**

Non-toxic plants may be included in the preschool classroom. Hartley Nature Center is the home to a variety of animals including turtles, snakes and fish. HNP children may have daily interactions with animals. These interactions can take the form of enjoying a classroom pet, visiting resident animals in the Nature Center, animals visiting the preschool classroom with a HNC naturalist, special programs such as the Zoomobile or bird banding, or observing animals in their natural habitats in Hartley Park. These animals may include wild birds, pet dogs, and a wide variety of other animals. Children may also have encounters with animal

feces in Hartley Park as HNP cannot control where wild animals or Hartley Park visitors' dogs go to the bathroom or whether or not these visitors pick up after their pets. After any encounter with animals or animal feces all staff and children will wash their hands with soap and warm water. If a child's clothing is soiled with animal feces, the child will change into his/her spare clothing and the soiled clothing will be bagged and sent home to be laundered. HNP may also choose to have a small, easy to care for domestic classroom pet such as a mouse, rat, gerbil, hamster, frog, or fish. Any classroom pet will be kept away from the food preparation and sink area in a covered, easy to clean cage that is appropriate for the animal. Cages will be cleaned daily or as necessary. Both staff and children will wash hands after handling classroom pets, cleaning the cage, or coming into contact with the animal's feces. Staff will supervise all interactions between the children and animals and will teach the children safe and respectful ways to interact with the pet both in the cage and out. All pet food and pet supplies will be kept separate from any food service supplies in a locked cupboard. Pets will be purchased from licensed pet shops and cared for by a local veterinarian to ensure that they are in healthy condition. Parents are required to inform HNP of any allergies to animals.

### **Walking Field Trips**

HNP children will take daily walking field trips into the Hartley Park and Hartley Nature Center grounds for the purpose of nature study and nature play as well as for other curriculum and development related activities. HNP will not take field trips off the grounds of Hartley Park during the school day. We don't need to leave Hartley Park to find adventures and to learn about our world because we have the forests and trails of Hartley Park to explore. Parents give their permission for these walking field trips via the enrollment information form at the time of enrollment.

### **Lost and Found**

All items that are found on the trails of Hartley Park or in the Nature Center are located at the lost and found at the main Nature Center desk. HNP staff will do their best to return lost items to you if we know they belong to a preschool family.

## Parent Communication

### Daily Communication

Our teachers work hard to meet the needs of all children. As part of this goal, HNP strives for on-going communication and collaboration with all families through a variety of methods. Please feel free to bring any questions or concerns to the preschool teachers and/or the preschool director. Arrivals and departures can be useful times for you to briefly exchanging information or concerns with the preschool teachers. You are strongly encouraged to communicate to staff, verbally or in writing, any information that may help HNP teach and interact with your child. Please try to share any private information out of the hearing of other adults and other children. It is helpful to share information when:

- ❖ A family member is ill.
- ❖ A parent is out of town.
- ❖ The child did not sleep well the night before.
- ❖ A pet is missing or has passed away.
- ❖ Other life changes occur, such as a move, a divorce, or the arrival of a new sibling.

However, any topic that will take more than a moment to communicate should be communicated via a written note, an email, or a phone message. A meeting can also be arranged so that you have time to adequately discuss an issue with your child's teacher(s) and/or the preschool director.

A family bulletin board is located next to the door to the preschool room. This board will be used to communicate with families about the week's activities, upcoming events, and announcements and reminders. These announcements may also be communicated through the daily email or the monthly preschool newsletter.

You are also welcome to call or email your child's teacher to talk about your child, the program, or any concerns or questions you may have. The contact number for HNP is 218-724-6735. Teachers' email addresses are provided in the Meet the Staff section and again at the end of this handbook.

You will receive an email each day describing the day's activities. These emails may also provide photos of the day, information about the schedule for the week to come, updates on appropriate seasonal clothing, and other reminders.

### **HNP Newsletter**

HNP will put out a monthly newsletter most months for preschool families and the public. The newsletter will contain information about HNP seasonal teaching themes, activities, events, and photos of the children. Families are encouraged to contribute content to the newsletter. The newsletter will be distributed via email and posted on the HNC website. If you do not have access to the Internet or would prefer a paper copy, please let a staff person know.

### **Hartley Nature Center Newsletter**

As Hartley Nature Center members, preschool families also receive the quarterly newsletter from HNC. This newsletter will keep you up to date on what is happening in Hartley Park and at the Nature Center. It will also remind you of opportunities to make the most out of your Hartley membership with special events, camps for children of all ages, and adult and family programs.

### **Parent Teacher Conferences**

Parent teacher conferences are offered twice a year and are a formally scheduled time for you to discuss your child's growth and development and to set future goals with your child's teacher(s). Staff will use a variety of tools to document and report on your child's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development including work samples, photos, checklists, and anecdotal notes kept in your child's assessment portfolio. Staff will share information about your child's strengths, interests, and successes and collaborate with you to plan for areas in which your child needs to strengthen his/her skills. Please feel welcome to schedule additional meetings with teachers throughout the year as needed.

### **Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement is a vital aspect of our program and critical for the healthy development of young children. Throughout the year we may offer parent meetings in

various formats. There are many ways in which you can help and support HNP, such as volunteering, organizing a fundraiser, or joining the HNC Board of Directors. Parents are encouraged to be involved in HNP in any of the following ways:

- ❖ Attend Parent Orientation held before the preschool year begins where you'll have a chance to meet the staff and learn what to expect for the coming year.
- ❖ Attend parent/teacher conferences, which are offered twice a year.
- ❖ Read emails, newsletters, and other communication from HNP.
- ❖ Attend parent and family events offered by HNP when possible.
- ❖ Volunteer in the classroom. See below for more information.

## **Visitors**

### **Parents/Guardians of Enrolled Children**

Parents/guardians of enrolled HNP children are welcome to visit the preschool anytime during the hours of operation. For safety and security, all parents must check in at the front desk, show an ID if asked to do so, and wear a visitor button.

### **University Students**

An important function of HNP is to serve the Duluth community as an example of a high quality nature preschool program. As such, HNP serves as a resource for projects and questions concerning nature preschools, the importance of nature in education, and early childhood environmental education. UMD, CSS, and other local university and college students in the HNP classroom may be: making observations, completing a practicum or student teaching assignment, or teaching a practice lesson. You give consent for your child to participate in these general learning activities by initialing the Observation Permission in the Enrollment Form. Student/practicum teachers do take teacher responsibilities in the classroom, but remain under the supervision of HNP staff as well as their university supervisor.

### **Community Volunteers**

Many visitors want to observe or participate in HNP's programs in a variety of ways. All visitors, including grandparents or teenage siblings, must sign in at the main Hartley

Nature Center desk and wear a visitor nametag. A volunteer may not be left alone with HNP children, other than their own child, at any time. HNP reserves the right to deny access to the preschool classroom or children to any person at any time for the purpose of protecting the rights of children, parents, and staff and for programmatic integrity.

### **School-Age Children**

A child under the age of 13 who has attended a kindergarten program is considered a school-age child by the State of MN and, according to State Statutes, “cannot be present in the child care center unless the program is licensed for school-aged children.” The only exceptions are when the child accompanies a parent, caregiver, or staff person into the classroom to pick-up or drop-off an enrolled child. School-age children must be accompanied by an adult at all times when they visit the HNP preschool classroom.

### **Preschool Aged Children**

According to State statutes, preschool aged children may visit HNP for no more than ½ hour and only when given permission by the director and the session’s lead teacher. The parent/guardian must supervise the child at all times since that child is not enrolled at HNP and is thus not under the care of HNP staff.

### **Photography and Social Media**

Photography is a common means for documenting learning and development and is used by HNP staff and by university students doing observations. For example, HNP staff may take photos of a child’s art project to include in the child’s portfolio, take photos for the newsletter, or a local news channel may come to HNP to do a story on nature preschools. If you want restrictions placed on when your child may be photographed or videoed, please indicate this in the Photo/Video Permission on the Enrollment Form.

HNP uses social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram to promote the HNP program and to spread the word about the importance of nature play. No last names will be used and no “tagging” will be done by HNP staff in photos posted on HNP’s social media sites, including Hartley Nature Center’s website and social media pages.

## **Research**

Sometimes university students and/or faculty conduct research studies involving children. Students and faculty alike are required to provide a written explanation to families about the research procedures and parental permission is required in writing before any child may participate in a research study. A child's consent will also be requested to the extent they are able to consent. Families are not required to have a child participate in any research study. The child's well-being and comfort is the top priority, thus teachers and/or parents may decide to defer a child's participation at any time because of fatigue, interest in simultaneously occurring activities, or other factors. Past studies have included examining the benefits of nature preschools versus traditional preschools on children's resiliency and creativity.

## **Withdrawal of Child Care Services**

### **Parental Notice of Termination**

If you wish to discontinue preschool services at HNP a written notice must be submitted to the preschool director at least four weeks prior to your child's last enrollment day. Tuition is charged last official day of attendance following receipt of that written notification regardless of your child's attendance during that time. All fees for preschool services must be paid on or before your child's last official enrollment day at HNP. The deposit will not be refunded and cannot be applied to the child's last month of preschool if before May.

### **Program Notice of Termination of Care**

In the event that any of the following situations occur, preschool services may be terminated by HNP:

- ❖ Non-payment of fees by parent/guardian, i.e. 30 days in arrears or breach of established payment plan contract.
- ❖ Failure to provide the required health, immunization, and/or emergency contact information.

- ❖ A parent’s inappropriate behavior, such as menacing and/or verbal threats towards staff, children, other parents, or property of the program.
- ❖ Lack of cooperation from parents/guardians with the program’s efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child’s needs through parent teacher meetings, conferences, and/or additional interventions.
- ❖ Chronic lateness in picking up child at the end of the session.
- ❖ Failure to pick up an injured or ill child within an hour of being notified, for the third time in a calendar year.

A written notice from HNP will be sent to the parent/guardian as soon as possible after the occurrence of any of these events. HNP will also communicate this decision to the parent verbally. A parent may grieve the notice of termination within two working days of its receipt—see Grievance Procedures.

Regardless of the duration of the grievance process, the child or children of the parent/guardian who has received the notice of termination shall remain in HNP for a period of not more than two weeks after the parent/guardian has received the notice of termination.

## **Behavior Guidance Policies and Procedures**

### **General Policies and Procedures**

At Hartley Nature Preschool our behavior policies and procedures encourage positive, healthy, and safe interactions between children and between children and adults. HNP must abide by the guidelines from MN Statute 9503.0055 on regarding the development and implementation of written policies and procedures for Behavior Guidance. HNP behavior guidance policies and procedures:

- ❖ Ensure that our staff provide all children with positive role models of acceptable behaviors;
- ❖ Are tailored to be developmentally appropriate for 3-5 year old children;
- ❖ Redirect children and groups of children away from problems toward constructive activity in order to reduce conflict;

- ❖ Teach children how to use acceptable alternatives to problem behaviors in order to reduce conflict;
- ❖ Protect the safety of children and staff persons; and
- ❖ Provide immediate and directly related consequences for a child's unacceptable behavior.

If a behavior becomes dangerous, destructive, and/or disruptive then a staff member will intervene in order to protect people and property without loss of self-esteem and to help a child understand the problem with the behavior. Different children and different situations will call for different responses. The staff will enforce ground rules, employ logical consequences, and deal with specific problems in a caring, consistent, and positive manner. In general, the staff will emphasize positive behaviors, offer reasonable choices, recognize feelings, and make clear when a child's behavior is unacceptable. The staff will not bribe, use threats, moralize, shout, or humiliate children. Physical force would only be used to contain a child if necessary to protect the child or others from harm. You will be notified if your child acts in a harmful manner, for example if he/she bites another child. You may be asked to remove your child for the remainder of the session if their behavior continues to be harmful or threatening.

Any behavior which requires an increased amount of staff guidance and time, such as on-going biting, kicking, hitting, pinching, or scratching will be observed and recorded by staff. If deemed necessary, staff will work with you and other staff members to develop a plan to address the behavior. Observation records created by staff members will be used as the basis for this discussion. Other professionals may be consulted when appropriate. See Referral Process for more information.

### **Referral Process**

Occasionally staff members have questions regarding assessment or additional services for children already enrolled in our program or will need to make a plan regarding persistent unacceptable behaviors. When issues such as these arise, you will be notified in person, by telephone, and, if necessary, by mail of the concerns and invited to participate in the development of an individual plan to address program concerns. Continued participation

in HNP's program is contingent upon a cooperative relationship between HNP staff, parents, and appropriate professionals, as needed.

1. Program teaching staff will communicate with parents regarding the concern.
2. Program teaching staff will observe and document the child's behavior(s) at the onset of a concern regarding personal or developmental behavior.
3. Program teaching staff may request the preschool director or an Early Childhood Education Consultant to conduct an observation of the behavior(s) of concern.
4. Staff will receive communication from the director regarding the observations within one week, if applicable.
5. Staff and/or the preschool director will meet with the parents to discuss the behavior(s) and observations and to create an Individual Child Care Plan, which parents must sign within 30 days.
6. If it is indicated that additional professional observation is necessary, staff will provide parents with a list of potential resources outside of HNP that may provide the needed observations, including:
  - ❖ Duluth School District—Child Find at 218-336-8744
7. Staff will work with outside professionals to arrange for observation and intervention times that best meet the needs of the child within the context of the child's participation at HNP.
8. Staff, parents, and outside professional staff will meet periodically to evaluate the outcome of the intervention and the child's progress.
9. In the event that the staff, parents, and outside professional staff cannot come to agreement about outside professional observation and assessment and/or the total program being offered to the child and family, enrollment may be terminated.
10. When a child's behavior results in either of the following situations, the preschool director will meet with the child's family and HNP staff to set a date for termination of child care services:

- ❖ The child's behavior poses a threat to the physical and emotional safety of other children and/or him/herself and staff can no longer assure the safety of all children in their care, and/or
- ❖ Through extensive attempts at intervening with any specific behavior, such as developmental delay, HNP has exhausted the available program, staff, community, and professional resources and/or staff is only able to meet the needs of that individual child through frequent or persistent one-on-one care. While this compromises their ability to adequately meet the needs of all the children in their care, it also indicates that HNP is no longer the most appropriate environment for that child.

## **Financial Policies**

### **Family Payment Policy**

HNP is a program of Hartley Nature Center, a 501(c) 3 non-profit. We rely on revenue from tuition fees for the preschool's operating expenses. It is essential that you pay tuition promptly and regularly. By enrolling your child in HNP and signing the HNP Contract for Preschool Services, you agree to pay the fees as set out in HNP's policies and procedures.

- ❖ Tuition is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month every month.
- ❖ The deposit of one month's tuition is necessary to secure a child's place in HNP. The deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the May tuition.
- ❖ Tuition is based on the enrollment schedule, not on children's actual attendance. Sick days, vacation days, holidays, staff development days, and emergency closings are considered to be part of the enrollment schedule.
- ❖ If payment is not received by five business days after the due date, HNP will apply a \$25 late fee.
- ❖ If payment is 30 days past due it becomes delinquent. See Collection of Delinquent Accounts for more information.

- ❖ If a child is withdrawn from the program, the family must provide written notification to the Preschool Director. The deposit is not refunded to the family. See Withdrawal Policies for more information.

### **Accepted Methods of Payment**

Tuition for the nine-month school year can be paid annually or monthly. A one-time 3% discount is made to accounts paid in full for the entire preschool year by **check or cash** on or before the first day of preschool. If you wish to pay monthly, Hartley Nature Center prefers that you pay monthly tuition payments via an automatic withdrawal from a bank account in order to make payments smooth and efficient. You must give authorization for these automatic monthly withdrawals on the Payment Options Form. Automatic payments will start with the September 1<sup>st</sup> tuition payment and end with the April 1<sup>st</sup> tuition payment. Your non-refundable preschool deposit is applied to the May tuition payment. Monthly invoices will be provided for families choosing to pay on a monthly basis and you can pay by cash, check, or credit/debit card. HNC will charge a \$35 handling fee for the processing of any check returned to Hartley Nature Center due to insufficient funds (NSF). Upon receipt of the second NSF check, all future HNP tuition payments must be made by cashier's check, money order, or automatic electronic withdrawal.

Contact HNC's bookkeeper to discuss additional alternative methods of payment and questions/concerns.

### **Childcare Assistance**

HNP is able to accept St. Louis County Child Care Assistance and MN Early Learning Scholarship payments. If authorized to do so, HNP will work with your family and St. Louis County or the State to arrange for payments to be made to HNP. If you are on a child care assistance program, you are also eligible for a reduced rate on a HNC family membership. Additional forms of childcare assistance are available including Hartley Nature Center scholarship funds. Please contact the preschool director for help applying for additional assistance. See the section Resources for Families for more information on assistance programs.

### **Scholarship Procedures**

HNP has a limited scholarship fund. You can apply for the scholarship fund if your family is eligible for a needs-based assistance program such as WIC, CCAP, or free and reduced lunch. Scholarship applications are considered on an individual basis and generally cover 25-75% of tuition.

1. Submit a completed scholarship application form. Contact the preschool director for a copy of the form or find one on the preschool website.
2. The application must include documentation showing your family's qualification for a needs-based assistance program such as WIC, free and reduced lunch, medical assistance, etc. Contact Hartley for help in determining appropriate types of documentation.
3. Once a scholarship award has been determined a confirmation letter will be sent via email and/or mail.
4. The deposit payment will be adjusted as necessary to be equal to one month's tuition payment after the correct scholarship award has been applied to the amount.
5. The preferred method of monthly payment will be by automatic deduction from a bank account. The monthly deduction will reflect the scholarship award. Contact the HNC bookkeeper at [bookkeeper@hartleynature.org](mailto:bookkeeper@hartleynature.org) to arrange alternative methods of monthly payment.
6. All information related to the scholarship application will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of determining scholarship assistance. Information about scholarship awards will not be shared with other scholarship families.

### **Collection of Delinquent Accounts**

An account is considered past-due when the balance is delinquent more than 30 days from the posted due date. The following steps will be taken when an account becomes 30 days past-due, in addition to the \$25 late fee charged when a payment is not received by five business days after the due date:

1. The preschool director will speak with the family. If necessary, a notification letter will be given to the family identifying the delinquent charges owned to Hartley Nature Center and the date when the fees must be submitted.
2. A meeting will be scheduled between the family and the HNC bookkeeper, director, and/or preschool director to determine a payment schedule, such as a promissory note or signed payment contract.

If a delinquent account is not paid as agreed upon in the payment plan, the account will be turned over to a collection agency and enrollment will be terminated. See Withdrawal Policies for more information on Program Notice of Termination of Care. The parent/guardian will be responsible for all costs of collection, including fees charged by the collection agency and legal fees.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

HNP has an obligation according to the MN Data Practices Act, MN Medical Records Act, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act to safeguard protected family and staff member information. All written information regarding a child, family, or staff member will be securely kept in the director's records. A child's information is available to parents/guardians as needed and upon request. Staff members may never share with others the following information without written permission from parents/guardians:

- ❖ Names, addresses, phone numbers, or emails of children, parents, or staff (other than those shared in the HNP Family Directory and staff HNC email addresses). If you would like contact information for another parent who did not give permission to be included in the family directory, please leave a note for the parent in their child's cubby or ask a staff member to connect you with the parent. When HNP creates the HNP Family Directory, you must give permission in the Enrollment Form in order for your information to be included.
- ❖ Medication Administration forms. These forms will always be kept out of sight and will not be discussed with anyone except other staff members providing direct care for the child and administrative staff members.

- ❖ Health Care Summaries, Immunization Records, ICCP forms, Accident Reports, and other forms with health and insurance information. These forms will be kept in locked file drawers and/or password protected computer data systems on our secure server. Emergency Information Sheets will be securely carried in staff member backpacks when outdoors.
- ❖ Credit card, debit card, and other payment information will be kept in secure physical and electronic locations.
- ❖ Participation of families in needs-based assistance or other human service programs.
- ❖ Results of informal or formal assessment screenings, special needs information including Individual Education Plan (IEP), and Individual Child Care Plan (ICP) information.
- ❖ As reasonable, information about your child's day at HNP will be shared personally with you without other parents or children listening in.

## **Health Policies and Procedures**

You can expect an accident/injury report any time your child needs first aid beyond a Band-Aid and appropriate comforting while attending HNP. You will be contacted immediately if an injury requires emergency attention. Injuries that require a child to receive treatment by a physician are reported within 24 hours to the State Department of Human Services Licensing Division at (651) 431-6500.

### **First Aid Policies**

Great care is taken to provide a safe environment and children are taught safe practices for being in the preschool classroom, Nature Center, and outdoors. However, sometimes accidents and injuries occur. All teachers and assistant teachers are certified in first aid and CPR as required by the State of MN. There is a first aid kit in the classroom and a first aid kit travels with staff when the class is outdoors. In the event of injury, such as minor bumps, bruises, cuts, or insect bites, or illness, a staff member will administer appropriate first aid which is always accompanied by verbal explanation and appropriate comfort.

### Sources of Emergency Medical Care

In an emergency situation a staff member will immediately call 911. If emergency transportation is required it will be provided by the paramedics that respond to the 911 call to the hospital that you indicated on the Emergency Information Sheet. You will be contacted immediately; if you cannot be reached, HNP staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on your child's Emergency Information Sheet. Injuries that require a child to be seen by a physician or require EMS response are reported within 24 hours to the State Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing at (651) 431-6500.

### Children's Health Records

The State of Minnesota requires that immunizations be up to date. A completed and signed Immunization Form and Emergency Information Sheet **MUST** be on file when the child begins enrollment at HNP. There are no exceptions to this policy. If a family arrives on the first day of preschool and does not have this paperwork on file, then the child is not allowed to stay for the session. You must keep your child's health forms and the Emergency Information Form current. A completed Health Care Summary for each child must be on file within 30 days of enrollment.

### Immunization Policy

MN state law requires that every child entering a child care center have verification of immunizations. HNP prefers that all children are fully immunized. You must submit a record of immunizations at the time of enrollment. **There are no exceptions.** An updated report is required whenever a child receives additional immunizations. Families who have medical exemptions for immunizations or are following an alternate immunization schedule must have their health care provider sign their immunization form. **Families who choose not to immunize or who choose only to partially immunize must submit a notarized immunization form before the first day of preschool.** Returning children do not need to resubmit an immunization form unless the child has received additional immunizations.

### Sunscreen and Bug Spray

It is your responsibility to apply sunscreen to your child *prior* to arrival at HNP. Physical barriers to the sun such as long sleeve shirts and wide brimmed hats are also

encouraged. You may also apply bug spray to your child's skin and/or clothing. Please remember that bug spray can eat away at the water proofing abilities of rain gear and that it should never be applied to children inside the Nature Center due to concerns about allergies. Children should always wash their hands before entering the preschool classroom in part to wash off any sunscreen or bug spray which may get on toys or books in the classroom and be ingested by a child.

If you forget to apply sunscreen or bug spray, HNP staff may only apply sunscreen or bug spray with a signed Medication Administration form and from the original bottle that you have provided. Staff will not be realistically able to apply sunscreen and bug spray to each child before going outdoors, so please apply these products before the preschool session. See Administration of Medications policy for more information on over-the-counter medications including sunscreen and bug spray.

### **Ticks**

HNP recommends that you check your child for ticks at the end of each day. This can be a routine that you do during bath time or while getting ready for bed. HNP will not do tick checks after outdoor play time under normal circumstances, but staff will remove a tick that is spotted crawling across a child's clothing or skin.

### **Administration of Medications**

If your child is on medications which must be administered during the time they are at HNP, the medicine must be in the original prescription bottle with the child's name, the physician/ licensed provider's or dentist's name, and the date on the label. Medications may only be given to the child for whom they are prescribed. Outdated/expired medications will not be administered. Any unused portion of medication will be returned to you or destroyed after seven days if not picked up. For prescription medications, you must fill out a Prescription Medication Administration Form and the form must be signed by the child's health care provider or dentist. Prescription Medication Administration Forms must be submitted annually. This includes forms for allergy medications for allergic reactions such as EpiPens.

Over the counter (OTC) medications such as Tylenol, cough syrups, or cough drops require an Over-the-Counter Medication Administration Form signed by a parent. Externally administered OTC medications such as moisturizing hand lotion or face cream also require an Over-the-Counter Medication Administration Form. OTC medications can only be administered when provided in the original container. OTC medications must be administered according to manufacturer's dosage and instructions printed on the container unless you provide signed instructions from the child's health care provider. OTC medications will be stored out of reach of children and according to directions on the original container. Over-the-Counter Medication Administration forms must be submitted annually.

Staff are trained annually in the proper administration of medications using the 5 Rights system and the below procedure. Staff are not allowed to administer medications unless they have taken this training.

When administering any medication staff will:

1. Wash hands or use hand sanitizer if outdoors.
2. Check to see that the Medication Administration Form has been completed and signed.
3. Check the 5 Rights:
  - ❖ Right Child
  - ❖ Right Medication
  - ❖ Right Dose (e.g. using a correct medication dispenser)
  - ❖ Right Time
  - ❖ Right Method (e.g. by mouth)
4. Administer medication.
5. Return medication to proper storage out of children's reach.
6. Wash hands.
7. Document the date and time of administration and initial the form.
8. Information should be recorded for every scheduled dose even if medication is not given (e.g. child absent or medication left at home). For example, HNP staff

would record that the child was absent or that the parent left the medication at home.

### Sick Children

HNP is unable to care for sick children. Your child should not come to preschool if they cannot participate in HNP program activities with reasonable comfort or if they require more care than HNP staff can provide while caring for all of the children. If your child is well enough to come to preschool, they are well enough to play outside and participate in normal preschool activities.

If your child becomes ill while at HNP, you will be called immediately. Sick children must be picked up **within one hour** of notification of an illness. If you are not able to pick up your child, they must be picked up by another authorized person listed on the Emergency Information Sheet. A staff member will attend to the needs of the sick child and the child will be supervised at all times.

A child with any of the following conditions or behaviors that the Commissioner of Health determines to be contagious and a physician/provider determines has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others, **must be excluded** from our program according to MN Department of Human Services Licensing requirements. If a staff member notices any of these symptoms when your child arrives, you will be instructed that your child cannot remain at HNP.

Chicken Pox	<i>Until all the blisters have dried into scabs (approximately 6 days after rash onset).</i>
Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)	<i>Until at least a full 24 hours after treatment begins.</i>
Diarrhea	<i>Until uncontrolled diarrhea stops, there are no other excludable symptoms (e.g. fever), and child is back to normal eating, drinking, and toileting patterns. Or until a medical exam indicates that it is not a communicable disease. Uncontrolled diarrhea is an increased number of stools, compared with a person's normal pattern, along with watery stools, and/or increased stool that cannot be contained by use of a toilet. Preschoolers may not get to the toilet in time. It has a distinctive smell that is noticeably different from a child's normal BMs.</i>
Fever	<i>Children may return when symptoms are gone for 24 hours and no fever reducing medication has been given. Fevers controlled by medications</i>

	are still fevers; children must stay home until free of fever without the use of medication.
Impetigo	<i>Until child has been treated with antibiotics for a full 24 hours.</i>
Lice (head)	<i>Until after the first treatment and no live lice are seen.</i>
Rash with or without Behavior Change	<i>Until a medical exam indicates these symptoms are not that of a communicable disease.</i>
Respiratory Infection	<i>Until child is without fever for 24 hours and is well enough to participate in normal activities. No exclusion for other mild respiratory infections without fever as long as the child can participate comfortably in all routine activities.</i>
Ringworm	<i>Until 24 hours after the first treatment has been started.</i>
Scabies	<i>Until 24 hours after the first treatment has been started.</i>
Streptococcal Sore Throat	<i>Until at least a full 24 hours after treatment begins and the child is without fever for 24 hours.</i>
Vomiting	<i>Until vomiting stops for 24 hours. Vomiting is defined as two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours.</i>

If your child is absent because of a communicable illness, including but not limited to those listed above in the chart, HNP will notify the appropriate health authorities within 24 hours of receiving the report. HNP will notify other families of possible infection through electronic media, written notices, and/or postings on the same day a parent/guardian notifies HNP of a child's communicable illness or condition. Staff members will also watch for symptoms in the other children. Staff members are not allowed to discuss a child's health or care with other children or HNP families, beyond saying that the child is home sick, due to privacy laws.

You are required by state laws to inform HNP within 24 hours (exclusive of weekends/holidays) when your child has been diagnosed by their medical provider or dentist as having a contagious disease, including, but not limited to those listed above, or lice, scabies, impetigo, ringworm, or chicken pox.

### **Allergies**

If your child has special needs related to a severe food or environmental allergy, please work with your child's medical provider to complete an Individualized Child Care Plan (ICCP) so that HNP is aware of your child's allergy and how to respond. You can request a copy of this plan from the preschool director or your child's teacher or download it from the Hartley Nature Preschool Parent Handbook. Revised 5.2017

preschool's website. Please let staff know if your child has a mild allergy or intolerance we should be aware of.

### **Snacks**

Each child will bring a snack from home to eat at snack time. Some notes about snacks:

- ❖ Snacks must be stored at room temperature. Send a cold pack if needed to keep food cool.
- ❖ Please break or cut snacks that could pose a choking hazard into appropriately sized pieces.
- ❖ Send a utensil with your child if they need one to eat their snack; it will be returned home for washing.
- ❖ Children are not allowed to trade or share food due to concerns about sharing germs and allergens.
- ❖ HNP is a peanut and tree nut free classroom (see below).
- ❖ According to state regulations, snacks must contain at least two food groups.
- ❖ We recommend healthy meals and snacks that contain a mixture of carbohydrates, fats, and protein to give your child lots of energy to play.
- ❖ When dropping your child off for preschool, please do not allow them to finish eating a snack or meal inside the classroom. If your child is eating on the way to preschool, please stay with your child in the hallway until they finish eating and help them wash their hands before signing them in to keep allergens out of the room.

### **Peanut and Tree Nut Free Classroom**

HNP is committed to having a peanut and tree nut free classroom. Please **do not** send peanut or tree nut products for your child's snack and please carefully check labels in order to respect the food allergies of other children. Tables are cleaned before and after each snack to reduce the risk of cross-contamination from the presence of potential allergens.

- ❖ Peanuts and tree nuts are not allowed. Tree nuts include, but are not limited to: almonds, hazelnuts, cashews, walnuts, Brazil nuts, and pistachios.

- ❖ Sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are okay. Sun butter (made of sunflower seeds) or Wow Butter (made from soybeans) are great alternatives to peanut butter.
- ❖ Snacks that say they are “manufactured in the same facility that processes peanuts and tree nuts” are okay as long as the snack does not contain nuts or traces of nuts.
- ❖ Snacks that say “May contain traces of nuts” on the label are not allowed.
- ❖ Be extra careful to read the labels of granola bars, which often unexpectedly contain nuts.

### **Water and Water Bottles**

Drinking water is always available to the children via the drinking fountain near the restrooms, via water in disposable cups in the classroom and outdoor play area, and in children’s water bottles, which are provided by families. A child’s water bottle must be easy for the child to use without assistance. For example, a water bottle with a nozzle that can be flipped up or down for drinking is less likely to spill and can be used independently. Children will have access to water when playing outdoors and staff will encourage children to take water breaks for proper hydration. The following policies and procedures are approved for water bottle use at HNP:

- ❖ Parents will provide their consent on enrollment forms to have their child use a water bottle for snack. Part of this signed consent will be an acknowledgment that a parent will regularly clean and sanitize the water bottle and fill it daily with fresh water. For the remainder of the 2015-16 school year, parents signed a separate sheet with this information/consent.
- ❖ Parents will be reminded in the parent orientation meeting that they must regularly clean and sanitize their child’s water bottle and must fill it daily with fresh water.
- ❖ You must initial the column on the sign-in/out sheet each day verifying that your child’s water bottle is clean, sanitized, and filled with fresh water as per the variance conditions from the MN DHS that allow HNP children to use water bottles for snack instead of disposable cups.

- ❖ Staff will visually inspect children's water bottles at snack time for any sign of uncleanliness and will take action if needed
- ❖ Staff will instruct children in our center-wide policy that we never share snacks or water bottles and ensure, through continued careful supervision, that children do not drink from another child's water bottle.
- ❖ Staff will continue to provide disposable cups for children who forget a water bottle, who have a water bottle that does not appear clean, or whose parents/guardians prefer him/her to use a disposable cup.
- ❖ Children may continue to use their water bottles while on walking field trips in Hartley Park.

### **Toileting Policies**

Children are required to be toilet-trained before enrolling in HNP. Children should also be comfortable using the toilet facilities at Hartley Nature Center, which are likely very different from the facilities they are used to. Families are encouraged to visit the Nature Center prior to the start of the preschool year to introduce their child to the bathroom and practice using it. Toilet-training includes children being able to wipe themselves after pooping. However, learning to wipe is an ongoing skill that requires practice and HNP staff are always willing to help a child wipe when needed.

Accidents do sometimes occur and are a normal and expected part of preschool life. If a child has an accident while at HNP, the child will be brought to the restroom to complete their toileting. Staff will put on gloves while the child completes their toileting. The staff member will provide the child with baby wipes to clean up with and will help clean the child when necessary. The child will be handed their change of clothing and will dress in the clean clothes. Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and put in the child's cubby. Both the staff member and the child will wash their hands. Permission to use baby wipes in the case of a toileting accident is given on the Enrollment Information Form.

## Touch and Nurturing

Physical touch is an important part of the care and nurturing of young children. Children feel loved, accepted, and supported through the sensations of touch by nurturing adults and peers. Nurturing touch is necessary for every child's emotional growth. Affectionate nurturing includes: hugging, holding on lap, rocking, carrying, patting or rubbing backs, and hand holding. While tickling may be an appropriate form of playful touch, it is kept to a minimum at HNP because of its potential for getting out of hand. Physical touch should be respectful of children's body cues and only occur with their permission. Children always have the right to refuse these touches except for safety purposes. Staff members are sensitive to children's requests for physical interaction. Staff model appropriate nurturing touches. Children are also taught to respect adults' and other children's touch preferences.

Children always have the right to refuse touch except for the purpose of safety or cleansing. Safety or cleansing touch includes assisting with face and hand washing, nose wiping, assisting with toileting, assisting with clothing changes when necessary, and first aid treatment. Physical intervention occurs when necessary for the safety of children and staff. Children are taught through assisted interactions, modeling, and verbal guidance to use words and problem solving skills rather than physical reactions to settle their differences with others.

## Weather Emergency Closings

HNP will follow the Duluth Public Schools District #709 for blizzard and severe weather related closings. If the Duluth Public School district is closed, delayed two hours, or closes early, HNP will do the same. The closing or two hour delay will be broadcast on local radio stations and on the following TV stations and their websites: WDIO, KBJR, and KDLH-Fox 21 News. When possible, the closing/delay information will be posted online and you will receive an email to alert you to the closing. However, the local news stations are the most up to date sources for closure information. In the event of an early closure, children must be picked up **within one hour** of an official school district closing by an authorized person.

When the weather conditions are poor, but the preschool is not closed, HNP encourages you to use your best judgment in determining whether or not your child will attend. Please be aware that Hartley Nature Center's driveway tends to get plowed in during snow events as the City plows Woodland Avenue frequently and the snowbanks close off the driveway. If you are unable to get into the Hartley driveway, HNP recommends parking at Concordia Lutheran Church and taking the Superior Hiking Trail (SHT) to the Nature Center. The SHT leaves from the far right side of the church parking lot and leads directly to the HNC parking lot.

See Emergency Preparedness for more information about HNP's Emergency Response Plan.

## **Emergency Procedures Related to Child Pick-Up**

### **Attempted Unauthorized Pick-up**

If an unauthorized person attempts to pick-up a child, the child will not be released to that person. Staff will immediately contact another authorized person to come to pick up the child. Staff will call 911 if necessary.

### **Emergency Pick-up Situation**

If a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of the scheduled dismissal time, without communication from the parents, HNP will attempt to reach the parent/guardian by phone. If HNP is unable to reach a parent/guardian, we will telephone the emergency contacts listed on the child's Emergency Information Sheet.

In the event that the parent is unable to contact HNP, is unable to pick up a child, HNP has been unable to contact parents/guardians, or other authorized adults listed on the child's Emergency Information Sheet, and if no one has contacted HNP by one hour after the session closing time HNP will assume an emergency situation exists and HNP staff will call the Duluth Police Department. At this point the police will attempt to contact parents and/or authorized adults to pick up the child. If no one can be contacted, the police may decide to accept custody and to transport the child to Bethany Crisis Shelter at 110 West Redwing St.

Duluth (218-728-7492). This Crisis Shelter is equipped to deal with children in emergency situations.

\*\*\*HNP does not allow staff to take children home with them.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

You trust HNP to keep your children safe during the day and expect staff to be properly equipped to handle emergencies of all kinds. HNP has an emergency response plan for all potential crises that has been reviewed by an officer of the Duluth Police Department. This Emergency Response Plan is available for families to view upon request.

## **Emergency Drills**

HNP conducts monthly fire drills, as required by the State of MN. HNP is also required to conduct monthly tornado drills in the months of April, May, and September. These drills will be conducted in a calm manner and gently explained to children.

## **Emergency Relocation**

In the case of an emergency that requires children and staff to evacuate the Nature Center, HNP has an emergency relocation site. In the event of an evacuation, staff and children will walk through Hartley Park and down Fairmont Street or across the parking lot and down the Superior Hiking Trail to Concordia Lutheran Church. However, if necessary children will be transported in a vehicle such as a bus. Permission for transport is provided by on the Enrollment Form. HNP will notify families via email, phone, and/or social media that parents/guardians or authorized adults will be able to pick up children at the emergency relocation site. The answering machine will also have a message stating the same. In order to pick up a child, the authorized adult will be required to show an ID and to sign a Reunification Form.

The emergency relocation site is:

- ❖ Concordia Lutheran Church  
2501 Woodland Avenue  
Duluth, MN 55803  
(218) 728-4229

Concordia Lutheran is located just down the road from the entrance to the Nature Center's parking lot on the corner of Woodland Avenue and Fairmont Street. It is a large, white, sway-backed church with a parking lot on three sides.

### **Maltreatment of Minors Mandated Reporting Policy**

Children need a safe, nurturing environment that assists them to grow, learn, and feel loved by their caretakers. In order to grow and learn, children's minimum needs for good nutrition, shelter, medical care, bathing, clean clothes, intellectual stimulation, appropriate discipline, love, a feeling of importance, and a safe, non-violent home setting must be met. When these needs are not met, a child cannot grow and learn as easily. HNP is committed to providing an environment that encourages the child's safe growth and learning. As mandated reporters, HNP staff are required to make a report if there is reason to believe or suspect that a child is being neglected or abused or subjected to witnessing domestic abuse, or has been within the past three years. It is the staff member who is mandated to report versus simply a member of the administrative staff. All staff at HNP will comply with the letter and spirit of this law.

This section provides HNP's policies and procedures for reporting suspected child maltreatment as well as for reporting complaints about the operation of HNP as required by the State of MN. Mandated reporting policies and procedures are also available upon request to families.

#### **Who Should Report Child Abuse and Neglect?**

- ❖ Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect.
- ❖ If you work with children in a licensed facility, you are legally required or mandated to report and cannot shift the responsibility of reporting to your supervisor or to anyone else at your licensed facility. If you know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused within the preceding three years you must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report to an outside agency.

**Where to Report**

- ❖ If you know a child is in immediate danger, call 911.
- ❖ To report suspected maltreatment of a child occurring at HNP contact the Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing Maltreatment Intake Line at (651) 431-6600.
- ❖ To report suspected maltreatment of a child occurring within a family or in the community contact the Initial Intervention Unit of the St. Louis County Child Protection Agency at (218) 726-2012 or 800-450-9777 Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm.
- ❖ To report possible licensing violations at HNP not involving abuse or neglect contact the Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing at (651) 431-6500.

**What to Report**

- ❖ Definitions of maltreatment are contained in the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556) and are available from the HNP Director.
- ❖ A report to any of the above agencies should contain enough information to identify the child involved, any persons responsible for the abuse or neglect (if known), and the nature and extent of the maltreatment and/or possible licensing violations. For reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect occurring within a licensed facility, the report should include any actions taken by the facility in response to the incident.
- ❖ An oral report of suspected abuse or neglect made to one of the above agencies by a mandated reporter must be followed by a written report to the same agency within 72 hours, exclusive of weekends and holidays.

**Failure to Report**

A mandated reporter who knows or has reason to believe a child is or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused and fails to report is guilty of a misdemeanor. In addition, a mandated reporter who fails to report maltreatment that is found to be serious or recurring maltreatment may be disqualified from employment in positions allowing direct contact with persons receiving services from programs licensed by the Department of

Human Services, by the Minnesota Department of Health, and unlicensed Personal Care Provider Organizations.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

An employer of any mandated reporter shall not retaliate against the mandated reporter for reports made in good faith or against a child with respect to whom the report is made. The Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act contains specific provisions regarding civil actions that can be initiated by mandated reporters who believe that retaliation has occurred.

### **Internal Investigations**

An internal review will be completed and corrective actions taken *within 30 calendar days* if necessary to protect the health and safety of children in the care of HNP when HNP has reason to know that an internal or external report of alleged or suspected maltreatment has been made. The review will include an evaluation of whether:

- ❖ related policies and procedures were followed;
- ❖ the policies and procedures were adequate;
- ❖ there is a need for additional staff training;
- ❖ the reported event is similar to past events with the children or the services involved;  
and
- ❖ there is a need for corrective action by the license holder to protect the health and safety of children in care.

### **Primary and Secondary Person or Position to Ensure Internal Reviews are Completed**

The primary person or position who will ensure that an internal review is carried out is the Preschool Director. Hartley Nature Center's Executive Director will be the secondary person to carry out an internal review when there is reason to believe that the primary person was involved in the alleged or suspected maltreatment.

### **Documentation of the Internal Review**

The primary or secondary person to carry out the review will document that the internal review has been completed and provide documentation showing the review was completed to the commissioner upon the commissioner's request.

**Corrective Action Plan**

Based on the results of the internal review, HNP will develop, document, and implement a corrective action plan designed to correct any current lapses and prevent future lapses in performance by individuals or by HNP, if any.

**Staff Training**

HNP provides training to all staff related to the mandated reporting responsibilities as specified in the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556). HNP will document that this training has been provided in individual personnel records, monitor implementation by staff, and ensure that this policy is readily accessible to staff, as specified under Minnesota Statutes, section 245A.04, subdivision 14.

**Car Seats**

As mandated reporters, HNP staff are required to make a report if there is “reason to suspect” that a child is being neglected or abused. This includes failure to place and secure a child in a car seat.

Effective June 9, 2009, MN’s seat belt law is a primary offense, meaning drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or in a the correct child restraint. Law enforcement can stop motorists for seat belt violations, including unbelted passengers. Effective July 1, 2009, a child who is both under age eight and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches tall is required to be fastened in a child safety seat or booster seat that meets federal safety standards. Under this law, a child cannot use a seat belt alone until they are age eight or 4 feet 9 inches tall—whichever comes first. It is recommended to keep a child in a booster seat based on their height, rather than their age.

**Grievance Procedures**

In the pursuit of our mission, HNP is committed to the protection of individual rights for all members of the HNP community including staff, families, and children.

## Family Grievance Procedures

Families who believe they or their children have been treated unfairly with regard to classroom procedures or program policies have recourse through the following grievance procedure.

1. The parent or authorized representative (the “complainant”) should inform the teacher or other staff member (the “respondent”) against whom the parent/guardian has the complaint of the nature of the complaint and discuss it with him/her. Most concerns are resolved this way.
2. If it is not possible for the complainant to discuss the complaint with the respondent or if discussion with the respondent does not resolve the complaint, the complainant should inform the Preschool Director of the complaint.
3. The Preschool Director will meet with the complainant to discuss their concern as quickly as possible within one week of the complaint.
4. The Preschool Director will meet with the staff member(s) concerned within 2 days after meeting with the complainant.
5. The Preschool Director’s decision will be communicated to the complainant and the respondent as promptly as possible and no longer than one week after meeting with the respondent.
6. In the event that the Preschool Director is the “respondent”, the Hartley Nature Center Executive Director will hear the grievance and proceed through the grievance policy from step 3.

Any concerns shared with the teachers will also be shared with the Preschool Director. Any concerns shared with the Director will also be shared with the teachers and with Hartley Nature Center’s Executive Director. Any concerns shared with Hartley Nature Center’s Executive Director will also be shared with the Director. Information may also be shared with Hartley Nature Center’s Board of Directors. It is important to HNP that we maintain open lines of communication to ensure the quality of our program and in order to adequately evaluate our program.

## Resources for Families

### Duluth School District Early Childhood and Developmental Screening

Early childhood and developmental screening is required by the State of MN for all children before entering kindergarten. MN state law recommends that screening be completed during the year the child is three. It includes a review of the child's immunizations, height, weight, hearing, vision, and a standardized developmental screening of speech, language, concepts, motor skills, and social-emotional development. This screening helps identify possible health or learning concerns early on so that children can get the help they need before starting school. Screenings are offered throughout the year by appointment. For more information about the screenings:

- ❖ Call Duluth School District 218-336-8816 to schedule an appointment
- ❖ [www.isd709.org/for-new-families/birth-to-pre-k/early-childhood-screening](http://www.isd709.org/for-new-families/birth-to-pre-k/early-childhood-screening)
- ❖ [www.unitedwayduluth.org/OurWorkImpact/Successby6/EarlyChildhoodScreening.aspx](http://www.unitedwayduluth.org/OurWorkImpact/Successby6/EarlyChildhoodScreening.aspx)

### Vision, Hearing, and Social-emotional Screening

These screening help identify children who are in need of further evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment. A child's health care provider will conduct these screenings at a child's yearly check-up. These screenings are also provided at a child's Early Childhood and Developmental Screening. See above for more information about how to schedule that screening. Local health care providers also provide these screenings and include, among many others:

- ❖ Essential Health Pediatrics Clinic: 218-786-3400
- ❖ St. Luke's Pediatric Associates: 218-249-7870
- ❖ For more information: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/hlth-vis/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/hlth-vis/)

### Dental Screenings

Good oral health is important for children. The American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children have their first oral health screening by their first birthday and include checks for tooth decay, gum disease, assessing fluoride level in the child's water, applying tooth varnish, and more. Resources include your family dentist and:

- ❖ Lake Superior Community Health Center in Duluth, which offers sliding scale dental services. 218-628-7035
- ❖ Learn more: <http://www.medicalhomeportal.org/clinical-practice/screening-and-prevention/oral-health>

### **Mental Health**

The Northland Foundation and the Thrive Initiative has produced a list of local infant and early childhood mental health and special education resources. It is available upon request from any HNP staff member or can be found at the following website:

- ❖ <http://www.northlandfdn.org/kids-plus/WebDirectory.pdf>

You can also request information about children's mental health resources by calling St. Louis County's Initial Intervention Unit (IIU) and mentioning your concerns and interest to the screener.

- ❖ St. Louis County's Initial Intervention Unit (IIU): 218-726-2012
- ❖ <http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/ADULTFAMILIES/ChildrenYouth/ChildProtection.aspx>

### **Duluth School District Special Education Resources**

HNP is able to work with ISD #709 to provide special education services within the preschool setting. These services include screening, identification, evaluation, special education, related services, and support for families. An individualized education plan (IEP) is written for children who qualify for services. Services are provided in home, community, and classroom settings and are free of charge to families. If you believe your child needs early childhood special education (ECSE) services or want to request additional ECSE resources for a child aged birth-six years, please contact:

- ❖ Call Duluth School District : 218-336-8744
- ❖ <http://www.isd709.org/for-new-families/birth-to-pre-k/help-me-grow>

### **Resources for Parents and Families in Crisis**

If you are having difficulty providing for your child's emotional or physical needs, or safety you are encouraged to ask for help. HNP staff can help you find a community resource that can offer assistance. Some 24-hour community resources include:

❖ Parent Warmline

Get support from a parent educator

- 1-866-916-4316
- <http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/NonNavPages/Helpline/index.html>

❖ Lutheran Social Services Crisis Nursery

Emergency care day and/or night for up to 3 days

- 218-302-6879
- [http://www.lssmn.org/lss/crisis\\_nurseries.htm](http://www.lssmn.org/lss/crisis_nurseries.htm)

❖ United Way Telephone Referral Service

FREE service that connects you with community services in Minnesota including childcare, counseling, food, health, housing, legal help, mental health, transportation and youth services.

- 651-291-0211 (cellphone) or 211
- <http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/NonNavPages/Helpline/index.html>

❖ Parents Anonymous National Parent Helpline

Get emotional support from a trained parent advocate.

- 1-855-4A PARENT or 1-855-427-2736
- <http://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/>

**St. Louis County Social Services: Help paying for child care and health care**

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

The CCAP program can help families pay for child care so that families can work, look for work, or attend school. Families pay a copayment based on gross income and family size.

- ❖ Contact Information for CCAP: [childcare@stlouiscountymn.gov](mailto:childcare@stlouiscountymn.gov)
- ❖ Call the child care worker of the day: 218-726-2000
- ❖ For more information, go to <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-supports/> and click on Child Care Assistance

### The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)

The MFIP helps low-income families move from welfare to work. It includes both cash and food assistance. Contact St. Louis County for information or an application to determine eligibility:

- ❖ Call 218-726-2101
- ❖ Contact email for St. Louis County MFIP: [financialassistance@stlouiscountymn.gov](mailto:financialassistance@stlouiscountymn.gov)
- ❖ For more information, go to <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-supports/> and click on MN Family Investment Program

### Health Care Coverage: (Medical Assistance, Minnesota Care or Advanced Premium Tax Credit)

Medical Assistance (MA) is the largest of MN's publicly funded health care programs. MA provides coverage for children and families and for pregnant women and adults without children. This program includes Minnesota Care. Apply for MA through St. Louis County's Department of Health and Human Services:

- ❖ Call 218-726-2101
- ❖ Contact email for St. Louis County MA: [financialassistance@stlouiscountymn.gov](mailto:financialassistance@stlouiscountymn.gov)
- ❖ For more information:  
[www.stlouiscountymn.gov/ADULTFAMILIES/FinancialAssistance/  
MNHealthCarePrograms.aspx](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/ADULTFAMILIES/FinancialAssistance/MNHealthCarePrograms.aspx)

### St. Louis County Public Health Services

St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services offers many services to families and children including maternal and child health care, mental health resources, the WIC program, lead poisoning prevention, child protection, and more:

- Call 218-726-2222 or 800-450-9777
- Contact email: [phhs@stlouiscountymn.gov](mailto:phhs@stlouiscountymn.gov)
- For more information, go to [www.stlouiscountymn.gov/GOVERNMENT/Departments  
/agencies/HealthHumanServices.aspx](http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/GOVERNMENT/Departments/agencies/HealthHumanServices.aspx)

### Bridge to Benefits

Bridge to Benefits is a multi-state project by Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota to improve the well-being of families and individuals by linking them to public work support

programs and tax credits. Families can apply for all types of assistance including food, emergency, and child care assistance with one application:

- ❖ Children’s Defense Fund: 651-227-6121
- ❖ <http://mn.bridgetobenefits.org/>

### Early Learning Scholarships

Early Learning Scholarships increase access to high-quality early childhood programs for three- and four-year-old children with the highest needs, in order to improve school readiness for all young children. Priority for scholarships will be given based on family income, child poverty and geographic region. Up to \$5,000 per scholarship will be awarded.

- ❖ <http://www.familiesfirstmn.org/>
- ❖ Call Families First of MN for an application and to be guided through the application process: 507-287-2020 or 1-800-462-1660
- ❖ Families First of MN  
126 Woodlake Drive SE  
Rochester, MN 55904

## **Contact Information**

### **Hartley Nature Center**

- ❖ 218-724-6735
- ❖ Fax: 218-724-4891
- ❖ 3001 Woodland Avenue  
Duluth, MN 55803

### **Tom O’Rourke, Executive Director**

- ❖ [director@hartleynature.org](mailto:director@hartleynature.org)

### **Hartley Nature Center Bookkeeper**

- ❖ [bookkeeper@hartleynature.org](mailto:bookkeeper@hartleynature.org)

### **Teacher Email Addresses**

Kaitlin Erpestad, Preschool Director and Lead Teacher T/TH AM and T/TH PM

- ❖ [psdirector@hartleynature.org](mailto:psdirector@hartleynature.org)

Dani French, Lead Teacher M/W/F AM and M/W PM

- ❖ [dfrench@hartleynature.org](mailto:dfrench@hartleynature.org)

Becca Bell, Assistant Teacher M/W/F AM and M/W PM

- ❖ [bbell@hartleynature.org](mailto:bbell@hartleynature.org)

Caitlin Johnson, Lead Teacher T/TH Full Day

❖ [cjohnson@hartleynature.org](mailto:cjohnson@hartleynature.org)

Emma Richtman, Assistant Teacher T/TH Full Day

❖ [erichtman@hartleynature.org](mailto:erichtman@hartleynature.org)

Maria Hopkins, Lead Teacher, M/W/F Full Day and Co-Lead, T/TH AM

❖ [mhopkins@hartleynature.org](mailto:mhopkins@hartleynature.org)

Alyssa Nelson, Assistant Teacher, M/W/F Full Day

❖ [anelson@hartleynature.org](mailto:anelson@hartleynature.org)

Julie Bates, Assistant Teacher, T/TH PM

❖ [jbates@hartleynature.org](mailto:jbates@hartleynature.org)

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