



## Riverview Ashland Forest School Program

Forest School Email: [RACCforest@gmail.com](mailto:RACCforest@gmail.com)

112 Ashland Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R3L 1K6  
Phone: 204-477-0917 cell: 204-979-6809  
Email: [info@riverash.com](mailto:info@riverash.com)  
Director Email: [director@riverash.com](mailto:director@riverash.com)  
Website: [www.riverash.com](http://www.riverash.com)

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## **Introduction from Riverview Ashland Childcare**

It is important that you read this information carefully so that you are aware of our policies. You will want to keep this handbook, as you may need to refer to it from time to time. The policies which have been established in your child's best interest, help us to provide a safe and comfortable place for all the children in our care.

We are a licensed, non-profit, charitable early learning & child care program. We are licensed and funded by the Province of Manitoba. The operation of the Centre is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. We provide care for children ages 3-12 in our Forest Nursery, Preschool and School Age Child Care programs.

This document is intended to work in conjunction with the Enhanced Safety Plan, Code of Conduct and other appendixes. For more information on where to find these documents check our website or contact the Director.

## **Land Acknowledgement**

We meet on stolen Indigenous land in Treaty one territory. We are grateful for the gifts the land shares in each season, and to all Indigenous People of this land, including Anishinaabeg, Ininew (Cree), Anishinini (Oji-Cree), Ochethi Sakowin (Dakota), Sayisi (Dene) and Métis Peoples who belong on this land, and who have cared for it since time immemorial. As Treaty 1 people, we have a responsibility to care for the land, air and water; and to take only what we need. It is our responsibility to be good neighbours to all beings and people to whom this land belongs for as long as the grass grows, the rivers flow and the sun shines.

## **Core Values**

We know children to be trustworthy, thoughtful, capable, competent, and wise.

Our Curriculum is Play-Based, Place-Based and Emergent.

Our Program is oriented towards justice through environmental stewardship, uplifting diverse identities and perspectives, acknowledging and centering Indigenous experiences and belonging on the land, and building community.

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide a local, safe and accessible place for children to develop their relationship with the land, with peers, and with themselves.

## **Vision Statement**

Forging a connection with the wild and in-between places near where they live is the most accessible way for young children to grow in good relationship with the world. Children carry an innate understanding of their interconnection and belonging in nature. As Educators, we aim to foster and protect this understanding.

We attend to the whole child - head, heart and hands - as children grow, explore and craft their own identities. . We know children to be insatiable learners and that, with attentive, trusting and supportive educators, their play will meet and extend their natural wonder. We understand play to be serious business: messy, risky, and joyful. We strive to be responsive to our children's emerging abilities, interests and inquiries.

## What are Forest and Nature Schools in Canada?

Forest and Nature School (FNS) is a place-based philosophy of play, care and education that takes place in a variety of natural settings (fields, shore, forest, tundra, etc). It builds long-term, in-depth relationships with the land through repeated and regular access to the same place. It is rooted in a vision of children as capable and competent, where teachers are co-creators and play is child-led. Play and projects are process - not product - oriented. Because the land is the teacher, FNS adapts to all developmental stages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds. A Forest and Nature School requires a qualified practitioner who is rooted in FNS practical skills and pedagogical theory.

Although our current framework for FNS is informed by practices in the UK and Scandinavian countries, we know that Indigenous people have been learning with the land since time immemorial. This program strives to be in right relationship with the land and each other. We are committed to Truth and Reconciliation in our learning and preparation as educators, in our teaching and collaborations with children, and in our connections and relationships in the community.

## Educator Biographies

<p><b>Esther McNairnay</b> (She/Her)</p> <p>Forest School Practitioner, ECE II, BA (Geography)</p> <p>Esther has worked in childcare in the Riverview neighbourhood for 20 years. She is passionate about understanding our relationship with the places we're from - how we shape places, and how they shape us. She lives in Riverview with her partner and two sons.</p> <p>When she's not at forest school, you can find her with a coffee and a sewing needle.</p>	<p><b>Katie Daman</b> (They/She)</p> <p>CCA, BA (Developmental Studies) in progress</p> <p>Katie is a long time resident of South Osborne. They have over a decade experience in community building and working with non-profits - including many in the neighbourhood. They are passionate about building strong communities. Katie is working towards their Developmental Studies degree. When they're not at forest school, you can find them organising their community, or playing board games</p>
<p><b>Corine Anderson</b> (She/Her)</p> <p>Forest School Practitioner, ECE III, Executive Director of Riverview Ashland Childcare</p> <p>Corine is originally from Saskatchewan where she studied Fine Arts at U of S. She has worked in ELCC for almost 25 years in Alberta, BC and Manitoba. She sits on the Public Policy &amp; Professionalism Committee at the Manitoba Child Care Association and is the Treasurer of the Manitoba Nature Summit. When she's not at forest school or RACC, you can find her in her garden or making soup.</p>	<p><b>Alicia Alphonso</b> (She/Her)</p> <p>Consultant, ECE III, BA (Developmental Studies), Forest School Practitioner in training</p> <p>A proud band member of Waywayseecappo First Nation with roots in Guyana, Alicia was raised and lives in South Osborne. She holds a degree in Developmental Studies and is passionate about incorporating cultural teachings and land-based education in early childhood programs. When she's not visiting us at forest school, you can find her crafting dream catchers or spending time on the land with her family.</p>

## Daily Schedule

8:50-9:00 Arrival and Gathering

9:00-9:20 Morning Circle

9:20-11:40 Free play (activities offered)

11:40-11:50 Thank you song

11:50-12:00 Dismissal

## Sessions Calendar

Forest School is in session in all seasons. We close for breaks in Winter (3 weeks), Spring (2 Weeks), and Summer (4 Weeks). We are also closed for all Winnipeg One School Division Inservice days and all Holidays in the RACC policy. An up-to-date session calendar can be found on our website and will be provided each fall for the following 12 months. Reminders will be sent prior to closures.

Regular fees apply for stat. holidays and PD closures. No fees will be charged for seasonal breaks or closures due to WSD inservices.

### RACC Closures

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Years Day</li><li>• Louis Riel Day</li><li>• Good Friday</li><li>• Easter Monday</li><li>• Victoria Day</li><li>• Canada Day</li><li>• Civic Holiday (1<sup>st</sup> Monday in August)</li><li>• Labor Day</li><li>• National Day for Truth &amp; Reconciliation (including day in lieu when appropriate)</li><li>• Thanksgiving Day</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remembrance Day</li><li>• Christmas Eve – 1:00 pm closure if Christmas falls on a weekday</li><li>• Christmas Day</li><li>• Boxing Day</li><li>• New Years Eve – 1:00 pm closure if New Years falls on a weekday</li><li>• Three Professional Development days each year - you will receive a minimum of one month's notice of the date.</li></ul>
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## Enrollment

Children ages 3-5 may enroll. This program is best suited for children who can bathroom independently (require minimal help and able to recognise signs and wait short periods if needed) and who are able to stay with a group. As with RACC's wider policies, preference is given to children living in the communities of Riverview and Lord Roberts.

### Withdrawal

Parents/guardians must give a minimum of two weeks written notice to RACC when withdrawing their child. Regular fees will be charged during this period regardless of attendance.

## Location

RAFS Main Site lies between Churchill Drive and the Red River, alongside the community gardens. We explore the trails to either side of this site.

In keeping with Forest and Nature School Principals, we know that over time the land needs a rest from Forest School activity. Part of our planning may include moving sites in future years.

In seasons when the garden road is clear, RAFS uses the garden road for drop off and pick up. We ask that those driving are mindful of children, gardeners and other neighbours: slow and careful please.

When the garden road is inaccessible (through the winter), drop off and pick up may move up to Churchill Dr. Educators will always notify families ahead of any changes to our routine.

## Roaming

Walking and Roaming is part of the curriculum of Forest and Nature Schools. Our program moves along Churchill Dr regularly, as our interests, curriculum, or the weather requires. We walk to visit neighbourhood green spaces and to the centre at 112 Ashland for instance. When walking, children are always accompanied by an Educator. If our pick up location for the day has changed, you will be notified prior to 11:50. All locations for pick up are within a few blocks and are noted on the map above.

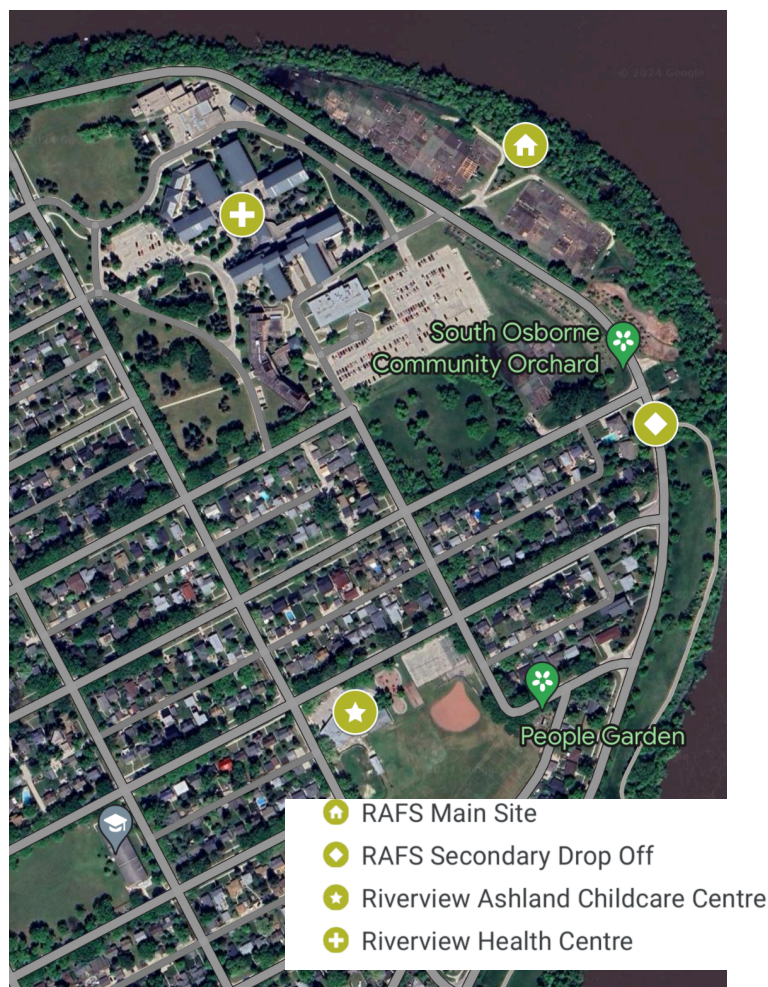
## Environmental Sustainability and Ecological Assessment

What is our impact on the land we're on?

*Soil Compaction* (from traversing the land). We help mitigate the impact of soil compaction by moving sites periodically over the years and staying closer to paths when the soil is wet. Moving sites and avoiding wet soil also help mediate denudation and erosion related to natural factors like spring flooding.

*Pollution:*

- Chemicals in soap, sunscreen and bug spray: We help mitigate the impact of these chemicals by choosing lake-friendly soap for hand washing, aiding in application of sunscreen and bug spray to avoid excess on the ground, and using bug spray only when mosquitoes/ticks are a nuisance.



- Litter: We help mitigate litter by removing everything with us when we leave. Additionally, we regularly pick up trash in the woods, garden and along the trails as part of our curriculum

*Factors involved in displacement of plants, animals, minerals*

- Children will play with and move sticks, break apart rotting wood, pick plants or step on them, investigate bugs, fungi and plants. We help mitigate these impacts by taking only what we need and practicing asking and say thank you (offering tobacco for instance) when we use something, by teaching to observe animals, plants and fungi as they move freely, rather than holding or moving them, and by learning to tell when something must not be disturbed (what are the signs of a home, food cache, nest or seedling?).

Periodically moving sites is part of how we mitigate all of these impacts. We also recognise the positive impacts our presence can have on the land, such as stewarding native species and keeping invasives at bay, tidying litter, etc.

Preparing for FNS: Clothing and Equipment

This program is designed to be 100% outside, preparing your child with appropriate gear for all weather is essential to your child's success in the program. Children carry their own belongings at forest school: packing well means sending what they need without weighing them down too much. If children arrive without necessary outerwear, a parent will be asked to provide the missing items.

In warm months, children should have long pants (not shorts or dresses with bare legs), socks and closed-toed shoes to fully participate in play. Sunscreen should be applied before arrival.

Backpacks should always include a full change of clothes (socks, underwear, pants, shirt) in a ziplock-type bag.

<p><b>Winter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Base layer, pants and shirt</li> <li>• Sweater</li> <li>• Snowsuit (jacket and snowpants)</li> <li>• Warm boots</li> <li>• Neck warmer or Scarf</li> <li>• Toque</li> <li>• Mittens or gloves (and an extra pair)</li> <li>• Water Bottle</li> </ul>	<p><b>Spring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of layers!</li> <li>• Rubber boots that keep feet dry</li> <li>• Splash pants and Rain jacket or muddy buddy/newt suit</li> <li>• Toque</li> <li>• Mittens or gloves (and an extra pair)</li> <li>• Sweater/sweatshirt</li> <li>• Water Bottle</li> </ul>
<p><b>Summer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long pants</li> <li>• Hat with brim</li> <li>• Socks and closed-toed shoes (appropriate for long walks and forest play)</li> <li>• Sweater/sweatshirt</li> <li>• Water Bottle</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fall</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long pants and long sleeve shirt</li> <li>• Hat with brim or toque</li> <li>• Socks and closed-toed shoes (appropriate for long walks/ play)</li> <li>• Sweater/sweatshirt</li> <li>• Light jacket</li> <li>• Light gloves or mittens</li> <li>• Water Bottle</li> </ul>

## Health and Safety Policy

### Privacy Policy

Our Forest School, through Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre Inc follows provincial privacy standards as outlined by our licensing body.

### Illness Policy

If your child becomes ill while at Forest School, you will be called to pick your child up immediately (within the hour). If your child will be absent, please let us know: information from families on illnesses and communicable diseases helps us keep each other safe.

### Medication

If a child requires medication while at Forest School:

1. The parent/guardian must sign a release form (and educators will record when medication is given)
2. The medication must be prescribed by a physician, we will never administer over the counter medication
3. The medication must be in the original container with a prescription label including the child's name and appropriate time period

### Lice/nits Policy

If nits and/or lice have been found in your child's hair, a parent/guardian will be called immediately to pick up. Your child can return when they have been treated with a lice shampoo/treatment and all nits have been removed. This policy is to prevent further infestation among other children, families and educators. We recognize the expense and time attached to treatments and will do everything we can to control an outbreak.

### Anaphylaxis Policy

When a child care facility is made aware that a child has or may have a life-threatening allergy and may require the immediate injection of adrenaline by auto-injector, this procedure must be followed:

1. When the child care facility is made aware that a child has a life-threatening allergy and carries an adrenaline auto-injector, appropriate planning can begin. Based on this information, a URIS (Unified Referral and Intake System) application should be submitted.
2. The child care Director will advise the parents/guardians of the child that:
  - (a) A URIS application will be completed on an annual basis. See Appendix "A"
  - (b) Parents/guardians of the child with the life-threatening allergy are required to sign an "Authorization for the Release of Information" form to the child care facility on behalf of URIS, Regional Health Authority and/or nursing agency. See Appendix "B".
  - (c) Parents/guardians of the child with the life-threatening allergy must complete the "Authorization Form for Administration of Adrenaline Auto-Injector" form. See Appendix "C".
  - (d) A Health Care Plan/Emergency Response Plan will be developed in consultation with the parents/guardians of the child on an annual basis.



- (e) When an adrenaline by auto-injector is used, an ambulance is to be called immediately and the child will be transported to the hospital.
- 3. The child care Director will submit the URIS Application to URIS for approval.
- 4. Once the URIS application has been approved, the child care Director is responsible for telephone contact with the nurse to notify him/her of the approved URIS application and request their services for staff training and Health Care Plan development. The child care Director will ensure that the Public Health Nurse develops an Individual Health Care Plan/Emergency Response Plan. This is completed in collaboration with the parents/guardians, administration/provider and other appropriate and relevant personnel. The plan will be specific to the age and maturity level of the child, the specific properties of the allergen and the parameters of the program.

### Toileting and Handwashing

Using the bathroom before arriving at Forest School should be part of your child's morning routine. We do not currently have access to toileting on site. Washrooms available for our program are at Riverview Ashland Childcare Centre, Riverview Health Centre and (seasonally) at the Churchill Dr. public washroom near the St. Vital Bridge. Children should be independent in the bathroom and able to recognise signs and wait short periods for the bathroom.

Handwashing will be done with warm running water from a portable water tank with biodegradable soap and paper towel. Hand sanitizer and wipes are carried in backpacks if we are away from the main site and children will wash hands upon returning.

### Food and Food Allergy Policies

#### Snacks

Please send a **peanut/nut-free** morning snack for your child each day. In keeping with forest school principals, all litter and leftovers will return home. In order to respect and preserve play, children will be able to snack during natural breaks and Educators will remind children to pause for snack before 11:00 am.

Eating together is an important part of our day and we strive to provide positive eating environments for children. We follow a division of responsibility: parents decide what food to send, educators decide when and where food is available, and children decide what to eat and how much. At Forest School, all foods from home are received with joy and no foods will be talked about in terms like good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, etc.

Due to possible allergies, and to respect each family's religious and other food choices, children are not allowed to trade or share food in their lunches.

When a child has a severe food allergy, educators will make a decision to allow that food or not in communication with the family. Any changes to foods allowed at Forest School will be communicated in advance to families by educators.

### Risk Management Policies and Procedure

Children are insatiable learners driven by curiosity. Children seek to understand the world through play that can include testing probability and limits. Educators work to support

children in identifying, co-managing and navigating those risks with purpose and intention. We know experiencing risks is an integral part of healthy child development. Educators are trained in identifying and mitigating risks and are responsible for risk assessment of the Forest School site itself, which is revisited seasonally and as necessary. We keep and update a binder of risk-benefit assessments (RBA) for Forest School activities and experiences.

### Site Boundaries

Flagging tape is used to mark the boundaries of our main site. The pedestrian path acts as a boundary between the site and the riverbank while the river is open. Children walk the perimeter regularly to get to know the boundaries until they can demonstrate an understanding of the site's parameters.

### Ticks

Ticks are not abundant on the site, but may be found in all Winnipeg greenspaces when temperatures are above freezing. We ask that participants wear pants, socks long enough to tuck pants inside, and closed-toe shoes at RAFS - hats and long sleeves help too. Our First aid bag contains a tick removal kit. Educators are trained to recognise and remove ticks. Please remember to do a thorough tick check after forest nursery each day during tick season (temperatures above freezing).

### Dogs

Occasionally, the program may encounter a dog without a lead. Educators will remind children to “be a tree trunk” (arms at their side, staring at their roots), then approach the owner and ask that the dog be put on a lead.

### Procedures for Tool Use

Hand tools (hammer, hand drill, bow saw, whittling knives, pruning saw, hatchet, mallet) may be introduced once children are settled into the program and able to adhere to a tool safety agreement. Tools are kept in a locked tool box within the boundary (yellow rope circle) for tool use. Children are supervised 1:1 using tools as they are introduced and 1:2 once educators are confident in a child's competence, attention, and care. Each tool is introduced before use, explaining their safety, how to tell if it's in good repair and proper use. Tools are maintained and sharpened seasonally.

### Tool Safety Agreement

- Tools are not toys
- Tools belong in a safe storage spot
- Most Tools must stay in their work area
- Tools need to be supervised by an educator
- The right tool must be used for the right job
- Tools must be in good repair
- One hand holds the tool, the other wears a glove

## Emergency Procedures and First Aid Policies

### Accidents

Minor scrapes and bruises are an expected part of healthy play therefore we do not define those as an accident and may not always record them as such. We will strive to always give a verbal notification of any marks on your child.

We will create a record of any injury that is out of the ordinary, involves the head, where first aid is required, or is particularly traumatic for your child. You will be presented with a copy of this incident report.

Educators are trained in and must maintain emergency first aid and CPR training.

Parents/guardians will be contacted if the accident requires immediate medical attention. The Centre should be notified immediately of any changes to names and numbers of Parents, Guardians, emergency contacts and pick up people.

In the unfortunate event that your child requires medical care after an accident at Forest School please provide us with the name of the Doctor as we are required to report the incident to our Child Care Coordinator within 24 hours.

### Evacuation Procedures

Our licensing body requires us to have an Enhanced Safety Plan that details all emergency and evacuation procedures. We keep this on site at all times and it can be found on our website. We practice evacuation drills once a month, and a full evacuation to our designated place of shelter (Riverview Health Centre) at least once a year. At forest school, this looks like gathering together when an educator blows a whistle and proceeding to our muster point at the Ed Engin Memorial Garden (between the garden roads). If there is ever an emergency or an evacuation, parents will be notified to pick up their children from a safe location once it is safe to do so.

### Relocation for the Day

In the event that the forest school site is unusable due to localized conditions (water levels, arborist/city workers, etc), we will contact parents as soon as possible with updated drop-off and pick-up locations. Extreme Weather Policy

If weather is - or may become - unsafe, but RACC is still open, we use our alternative sites: Riverview Ashland Childcare (112 Ashland ave) or Riverview Community Centre (90 Ashland). Families will be notified by text before 8:30 am if there is a location change. Examples of hazardous weather include: lightning, tornado warning, extreme heat or cold, heavy winds, freezing rain/ice.

### Program Closures

In the event that all Riverview Ashland Child Care programs must close (due to building issues, extreme weather, etc) Forest School will also be canceled for the day. We always post closures on our website blog and will contact each family the evening before, or early morning of the closure by phone or email.

### Receiving and Release Policy

Parents are expected to directly connect their child with an educator before leaving each morning. We accept responsibility for children from the time they are signed in until they are signed out at the end of the day. Educators will announce when they have signed your child in/out.

Because our program can be on the move, children arriving late (after 9:00 am) may find we have left our main site. If you know you will be late, please text/call us and we can help you connect with the group.

If our pick up location for the day has changed, you will be notified prior to 11:50. All locations for pick up are within a few blocks and are noted on the map above.

Educators will only release participants to parents/guardians and those who are listed as emergency contacts/alternate pick-up on your registration form. If someone who is not listed will be picking up your child, we require advance notice that includes the person's full name and relationship to the participant. When the person arrives, they will be asked to show identification. We will never under any circumstances release a child unaccompanied.

### Fees for Late pick up after 12:00

If you have not contacted us prior to 12:00 to inform us you are running late, a late fee will be assessed for each child not picked up by 12:00. The rate of calculation will be \$10.00 for every fifteen minutes or portion thereof per child. Our cell phone will be used for the time calculation. This fee is payable to RACC and will be due within 48 hours.

Failure by a parent/guardian to have a child picked up from the program by 12:00 will result in the following progressive actions:

1. The parents/guardians will be telephoned at home/work/school.
2. Emergency contacts will be telephoned and requested to pick up the child/children.
3. In the event that both parents and/or contacts have failed to make pick up arrangements or have not been reached by 12:45, RACC has the right to contact Winnipeg Intake for Child & Family Services. This will be at the discretion of educators in consultation with the Director, Assistant Director or any Executive Board Member.

### Child Protection Policy

Our Forest Nursery, under Riverview Ashland Childcare Centre has a moral, professional and legal responsibility to report a child in need of protection in accordance with The Child & Family Services Act. In the event that Centre educators suspect that a child is or might be in need of protection (i.e. suspected abuse and/or neglect), Centre educators must contact local child welfare authorities and/or police. educators making a report will follow the procedures as outlined in the "Reporting of Child Protection and Child Abuse: Handbook and Protocols for Manitoba Service Providers, 2013".

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/pubs/handbook\\_child\\_protection\\_and\\_child\\_abuse.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childfam/pubs/handbook_child_protection_and_child_abuse.pdf)

Any event that suggests that a child is in need of protection will be documented and made available to investigating authorities upon request.

In the event that a Parent/Guardian/Emergency Pick-up person is suspected to be impaired and unable to safely care for their child/ren and/or is planning to drive a motor vehicle while impaired, educators will:

1. Ask the parent/guardian/designate to contact an alternate individual to pick up the child(ren).
2. If the parent/guardian/designate is unable to do so, educators will request permission to contact one or more of the individuals authorized as emergency contact persons to pick up the child(ren).
3. In the event that a parent/guardian poses an immediate threat to children and/or educators, the Winnipeg Police Services will also be contacted.
4. If the parent/guardian/designate refuses to grant such permission or an authorized emergency contact person cannot be reached, educators will contact the Child & Family All Nations Coordinated Response Network as the designated child protection intake agency in Winnipeg.

A meeting with the parents/guardians will be arranged to review the event in question and formulate an appropriate safety plan. In the event that a parent/guardian is unable to adhere to a safety plan and/or poses ongoing risk to children/educators, the Centre reserves the right to suspend/withdraw a child at the discretion of the Board of Directors upon recommendation by the Director, Assistant Director and/or ECE. Such a decision would be communicated in writing and open to appeal within 10 days of the written notification of suspension/withdrawal. This appeal will be heard by the Board.

### Custody Arrangements

RACC requires copies of current custodial arrangements. Parental access cannot be denied without a copy of your Court Order.

### Requests for Affidavit

Because the Board does not wish to be seen taking a position in domestic disputes and because evidence is generally available by subpoena, it is the general position and policy of Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre Inc. not to furnish affidavits to parents in domestic disputes.

When any employee is asked to furnish an affidavit related to matters arising out of their job duties, then the request is to be communicated to the Director. Educators will be required to attend court or court proceedings only if subpoenaed (unless the subpoena is rendered void before the appearance).

The policy of not voluntarily furnishing affidavits may be relaxed, at the discretion of the Director, if the Director feels that a legitimate child welfare concern would be better addressed if the evidence were made readily available to the party requesting it. The Director's decision is to be made final. The Board will hear submissions from parents or "appeals" of the Director's decision.

All information will be disclosed in accordance with provision of any legislation or court order.

Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre Inc. follows the Province of Manitoba document, "Understanding Custody Arrangements and Court Orders by the Criminal or Family Law Courts" located at [https://www.gov.mb.ca/education/childcare/resources/custody\\_arrangements.html](https://www.gov.mb.ca/education/childcare/resources/custody_arrangements.html).

## Learning and Development

Our program is a half-day Forest School Nursery Program offered weekday mornings throughout the year. This program was developed to build children's relationships with the wild, in-between, natural places in Riverview. We know that building stories - individual and collective - on our neighbourhood map is part of growing engaged citizens and stewards of the land.

At RAFS as at Riverview Ashland Childcare, we seek to provide child-centred care that reflects our strong values. Care is at the heart of our curriculum framework. We see and attend to each individual child, each day. Our success relies on strong relationships with children and their families. We are accountable, reliable and transparent in our communication and expectations. We acknowledge the great trust families put in us each day.

We understand that unencumbered play is vital to children's development and that this can look messy, risky and busy. Educators are well trained to recognise the needs of children in play including attentive distance, engaged play partnering, or supporting children to assess and trust their capabilities, strengths, and risk taking.

Our curriculum includes monitoring and allowing healthy, constructive conflict between children. Social-emotional learning is foundational work in the preschool and elementary years. Experiencing and navigating conflict is an essential part of healthy development. Educators are always present to offer caring and empathetic support to all children involved. Just like all play, social-emotional play can be messy and takes practice. Our curriculum recognises and supports this work.

Our curriculum unfolds to meet the interest and needs of the children. Educators observe and document children's play in order to offer meaningful experiences and activities. These offerings deepen understanding, and build skills. They are always optional. Educators bring with them elements of the community, their own experience, and the cycle of the seasons.

Our curriculum is developed with multiple identities and abilities of educators and children in mind. We respect a child's right to choose names, pronouns and other identity expressions that help them to explore or confirm who they are. We reject gender norms and expectations that limit the play and work offered to both children in our care and educators.

Our curriculum strives to be anti-discriminatory. In the words of the child friendly version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

"All children have all these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what language they speak, what their religion is, what they think, what they look like, if they are a boy or girl, if they have a disability, if they are rich or poor, and no matter who their parents or families are or what their parents or families believe or do. No child should be treated unfairly for any reason."

We recognise that racism occurs at the individual and systemic levels. Because it is deeply embedded in our history, racism requires intentional and continual acknowledgement and interruption if it is to be eliminated. We are committed to providing safe, respectful and inclusive space to play, work and grow for children, families and educators who identify as racialized. We are committed to helping our community raise anti-racist children.

Some of the care routines in our curriculum include using the bathroom, eating together, and changing clothes. We encourage healthy relationships with our bodies in the following ways: we use proper names for body parts when helping children change or bathroom (bum, nipples, anus, penis, vulva); we refrain from talking about “junk”, or “bad” food and any discussion of dieting or weight while eating together; we talk about people of all shapes, sizes and skin colour with respect and joy.

### Planning, Observation, and Documentation

At RAFS, we observe children’s play, interests and inquiries and respond with provocations and invitations that may help deepen, scaffold or refine their work. Sometimes, they don’t pick up what we put down, so we offer a different invitation and see what sticks.

Documenting along the way allows us to see the arc of a story, mark the growing experience, knowledge, skills and confidence children gain when they take the lead. Documenting also gives families a window into their children’s time at forest school.

### Behaviour Management Policy

All children belong at forest school. We aim to provide children with the space, tools, and opportunity to manage their own behaviour. We believe these experiences grow self-confidence, self-regulation, and self-reliance, as well as decision-making and communication skills. Forest school depends on each participant behaving in a way that keeps themselves and others safe. When dealing with challenging behaviour, we strive to:

1. Consider the child(ren)’s perspective first
2. Focus on the behaviour, not the child
3. Use dynamic risk assessment techniques to support problem solving
4. Observe and document recurring behaviour to understand underlying patterns or issues.

Some behaviours, such as continuously being unable to stay with the group, put the child themselves and others at risk. Where these behaviours are consistent, parents may be asked to withdraw their child. More information can be found in the RACC Behaviour Management Policy.

Forest school practitioners will never permit or practice any form of physical punishment or verbal or emotional abuse. Children’s physical necessities will never be denied to any child in our program.

### Inclusion and Accessibility

Our Forest Nursery, through Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre Inc. strives to recognize and celebrate the gifts and strengths of everyone. We work to remove physical, cognitive, social and emotional barriers that families may experience.

Forest Nursery provides developmentally appropriate group experiences for all children and encourages the socialization of every child with peers.

Forest Nursery respects and values all questions, concerns and/or comments from parents. Our Center encourages open communication between educators and home, making parents a part of the decision making process for their child. We recognize that parents have needs and goals for their children and strive to meet those needs to the best of our ability. Our

program further supports families by consulting with other early intervention professionals. We will work together with these professionals, our families and early educators to further meet goals and the needs of the child.

### Participant to Educator Ratios

Our Team includes one Forest School Practitioner and ECE II (Early Childhood Educator), one CCA (Child Care Assistant) and, whenever possible, a volunteer. We maintain a 1:6 ratio of Educators to Children, in line with FNS recommendations.

### Educator and Volunteer Responsibilities

The role of Educators and Volunteers at RAFS include but are not limited to:

- Ensuring the physical safety of participants by co-managing risks on a regular basis to build capacity, confidence and comfort with their natural setting
- Ensuring the socio-emotional safety of participants by fostering a caring and respectful environment that frees children to play, discover and learn.
- Modeling a reciprocal relationship with the natural world based in care, respect, curiosity, wonder and connection
- Collaborating and closely observing participants' play (their discoveries, interests, schemas and storylines) to scaffold further play and learning and share their journey with participants, families and caregivers.

Like our Educators, regular volunteers complete a vulnerable sector check before coming on site. If you are interested in volunteering regularly or for a certain project, please get in touch!

### Parent Involvement

We encourage you to become a committee member or member at large and to have input into your child's program. Please remember to read emails from the program which will have important information and updates.

Please feel free to share any resources you may be able to contribute to themes emerging in our play ( ie pictures, books, etc) and any other ideas you may have.

Parents/guardians are welcome to volunteer in the program regularly or for a certain project. Please speak to Esther about joining us as a volunteer.

Parents/guardians are asked to participate in various fundraising activities during the year. In the past there have been socials, chocolate sales, wine raffles, RACC merch sales, etc.

## **Communication Strategy**

### General Communication

RAFS primarily uses our cell phone and email for general communication. Please text/call 204-979-6809 or email [RACCforest@gmail.com](mailto:RACCforest@gmail.com). Please be sure to communicate about the following:

- If your child will be away or late
- If your contact information has changed



- If your child has a communicable illness
- If there are major events in your child's life that may affect their time with us (such as a move, change in family structure, new sibling, loss of a loved one, etc)

### Emergency Communication

In the event of an emergency at RAFS, an Educator will contact you by phone. If emergency services are needed, you will be called once EMS has been contacted.

### Questions and Concerns

Communication and understanding between our program and families is foundational to Forest School. If you have questions or concerns about part of our program, educators are on hand as children are received and released each day and are happy to talk with parents/caregivers at this time. If you feel a longer discussion is required, educators are happy to make arrangements for a meeting or phone call.

### Grievance Policy

Your concerns matter to us. Please discuss any concerns with educators directly, or through email. We are dedicated to resolving concerns as best we can. If an issue can not be resolved directly with educators at RAFS, please contact Corine Anderson, Director of Riverview Ashland Childcare at [director@riverash.com](mailto:director@riverash.com).

## **Fees and Payment**

The program fee is \$8.40 per day per child.

Payment is made on a four week billing period that can be found on our website ([riverash.com](http://riverash.com)). Fees are paid in advance of care at the beginning of the pay period. All parent fees are paid through Pre-Authorized Debit through Telecom Options.

You will receive a PAD (Pre-Authorized Debit) Agreement as part of your registration package. Please attach a "VOID" cheque or a print out of your banking information. Your child will not be considered enrolled until this is received by RACC.

Child care fees will be withdrawn automatically from your account on the billing period due dates found on your billing calendar, and are set by the Province of Manitoba.

Cheques are to be made payable to Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre Inc.

E-transfers need to be pre-arranged with the Director. As we are not set up to track E-transfers that have gone awry they will be accepted in emergency only and not as part of your regular monthly payment.

Cash payments are accepted only when the Director or Assistant Director is available to immediately write a receipt for the parent/guardian. No change is available to be given for cash. We discourage the use of cash for security reasons.

Receipts are emailed once a pay period and Official Tax Receipts will be emailed at the end of January, beginning of February annually. Please email the Director if you require a replacement receipt. Repeated requests for replacement paper receipts may be met with an additional administrative fee.

### Provincial Subsidies

Provincial subsidies are not available until ELCC provides funding for this program. At that time, a provincial government fee subsidy, based on net family income, is available to families who qualify. Subsidized families are responsible for an additional \$1.00 per day per child.

This cost is in addition to any amount given as their “family portion” on the subsidy approval sheet. Applications for subsidy can be completed online at

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/education/childcare/families/childcare\\_subsidies.html](https://www.gov.mb.ca/education/childcare/families/childcare_subsidies.html)

### Late Childcare Fees

Failure to pay fees on time will result in the following progressive actions:

1. The parents/guardians will be issued a written reminder the first Wednesday following payment due date.
2. The parents/guardians will receive a final written reminder the first Friday following the payment is due.
3. The parents/guardians will receive a telephone call from the Centre Director or designate Wednesday during the second week following payment due date (at the parents/guardians place of work if necessary).
4. The parents/guardians will receive a telephone call from the Treasurer of the Board of Directors the second Friday following the payment due date (at their place of work if necessary).
5. The parents/guardians will be advised that if payment is not received by the following Friday, their children will not be able to attend the program effective the next Monday.
6. A claim will be made through Small Claims Court or a Collection Agency.

### NSF cheques/Pre-Authorized Debit Payments

There will be a charge of \$25.00 for each Non-sufficient fund cheque or Pre-Authorized Debit Payment issued. After the third NSF charge, payment will have to be made by cash, e-transfer or money order. Repeated NSF payments could result in a loss of child care services.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for taking the time to read this handbook. We hope it has answered many questions for you. If you have any further questions or would like additional information please feel free to ask your Forest School Educators, Board members, or the Director.

This document is intended to work in conjunction with our Code of Conduct, Safety Manual and Behaviour Management Policy. You can find these posted at RACC or are available on our website or upon request.

Please note that the following forms must be completed before your child may attend RAFS. Please return the following forms to the office or complete and return by email before your child's first day.

- ☐ Child Registration form- electronic or paper version
- ☐ A copy of any legal agreements/documents regarding custody and parental access
- ☐ PAD Agreement
- ☐ Parent Agreement

## Parent Agreement with Riverview Ashland Childcare Inc

1. I understand that my child is not registered with Riverview Ashland Childcare (RACC) until all required registration documents are completed and returned. This includes registration form, PAD agreement and parent agreement.
2. I understand that:
  - a. Pay periods are 20 days on a predetermined schedule (billing calendar on our website).
  - b. I will be invoiced two weeks before the start of the pay period and fees will be withdrawn from my account on the second day (Monday) of the pay period.
  - c. Invoices will be mass emailed from our invoicing software Child Care Pro (Telecom Options) and I might have to check my spam folder for them and mark it in my contacts
3. If I pick up my child late (after 12:00pm), without notice, that I will be invoiced for late fees
4. Riverview Ashland Forest School will be closed for regular seasonal breaks, listed holidays, and WSDI inservices. All dates are outlined in the session calendar and available online.
5. In keeping with Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Licensing requirements, RACC will be closed for one Professional Development day a year. I will be notified well in advance of the closure date.
6. It is a requirement that I provide Riverview Ashland Chldcare Centre Inc with at least one working email address that is monitored regularly for invoicing, tax receipts and communication purposes.
7. It is my responsibility to update my contact information with RACC as changes occur.
8. I understand the importance of attending the AGM and supporting the volunteer Board of Directors.
9. I have read the Riverview Ashland Forest School Handbook and the Code of Conduct. I accept and agree to comply with all policies stated in the manual.
10. I understand and agree to abide by all policies set forth by the RACC board of Directors and that failure to comply may result in suspension or expulsion from Riverview Ashland Childcare Centre Inc.
11. I understand that RACC is not responsible for my child until they have been signed in by educators, and that I resume responsibility for my child once they have been signed out.
12. I understand that Forest and Nature School philosophy includes risky play and am comfortable with my child participating in forest school activities.
13. I understand the importance of preparing for forest school with proper outdoor gear and that the nature of this program prevents Educators from stocking extras if items are forgotten. If my child is missing outerwear items, I will be asked to drop those items off.

Parent Name (please print):\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name (please print):\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature:\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_