



EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES PROGRAM

# PARENT/GUARDIAN MANUAL

2023-2024





## Welcome to Pacekids!

### We are thrilled to have your family as a part of our ECS Program!

We hope this Parent/Guardian Manual will help answer some of your questions. Please keep it as a handy reference. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!

#### Our Mission:

Pacekids empowers children with diverse needs and their families through excellence in therapy, education, and play.

#### Our Story:

Pacekids Programs offers various programs to children in the Calgary area, including our Early Childhood Services (ECS) preschool and kindergarten program. Pacekids is an approved site for ECS programming, which is funded by Program Unit Funding (PUF) from Alberta Education. Our ECS program is led by teachers and includes interdisciplinary support for children from Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Behaviour Strategists, and Classroom Therapy Aides (CTAs).

### Overview of Our Program




**Programs:** Pacekids follow the standards set by Alberta Education for ECS programs. Our morning and afternoon programs focus on helping children reach their potential in multiple areas of development. Our morning program is an 800-hour program, while the afternoon is a 475-hour program.

**Therapy Involvement:** The Pacekids therapy team includes Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, and Behavioural Strategists. Our therapists are available onsite to provide support and strategies for the classroom team, which includes our teachers and classroom therapy aides (CTAs). We follow an evidence-based consultative model, which ensures that strategies are implemented consistently in the classroom.

**Common Approach:** Children in the Pacekids ECS program who are receiving Specialized Services through Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) are eligible for a collaborative approach. This allows for coordination and collaboration among the teams involved in both programs. If you currently have an FSCD contract in place for Specialized Services, please contact your ECS Coordinator.

**Transition Planning:** According to Alberta Education and the Alberta School Act, all relevant information in a child's file, which has been used to develop or implement program plans, can be sent to the child's next placement upon written request. Our teachers and coordinators will work closely with families and prospective schools to find the best-suited program for your child. We will start having these discussions with our kindergarten families to understand where families would like their child(ren) to transition. In January, we will host a transitions evening dedicated to helping families understand the transition process and provide them with valuable information. This event aims to support families in navigating the next steps for their child's educational journey.



## Key Contacts

Office Administrator	Crystal Lachance	403.234.7876 ext. 157	<a href="mailto:crystal.lachance@pacekids.ca">crystal.lachance@pacekids.ca</a>
ECS Manager	Kerri Witherspoon	403.234.7876 ext. 137	<a href="mailto:kerri.witherspoon@pacekids.ca">kerri.witherspoon@pacekids.ca</a>
ECS Coordinator	Rebecca Harrow	403.234.7876 ext. 512	<a href="mailto:rebecca.harrow@pacekids.ca">rebecca.harrow@pacekids.ca</a>
Transportation Coordinator	Janine Withell	Cell: 587-582-9747	<a href="mailto:janine.withell@pacekids.ca">janine.withell@pacekids.ca</a>
ECS Managing Director	Kacie Dougherty	403.234.7876 ext. 126	<a href="mailto:kacie.dougherty@pacekids.ca">kacie.dougherty@pacekids.ca</a>

## Your Child's Team

**Teacher:** Early literacy, concept development, numeracy, social skills, cognitive development, and transition planning

**Speech Language Pathologist:** Speech development, augmentative/ alternative communication, language development, swallowing/ feeding, social communication.

**Physiotherapist:** Mobility, adaptive equipment, gross motor development, body awareness, balance, and coordination

**Occupational Therapist:** Fine motor development, splinting, adaptive equipment, positioning, sensory integration, self-care skills (toileting, dressing, feeding), vision, wheelchair mobility.

**Behavioural Strategist:** Classroom behavioural support, play skills, learning and coping strategies, transitions/ rigidities.

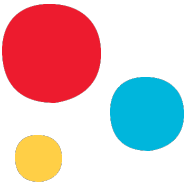
**Classroom Therapy Aide:** Support the development of key children, follow through on IPP goals and strategies provided by the teacher and therapy teams, support the overall running of the classroom.



## Enrollment, Fees, and Payment Terms

**Registration:** Each year there is a non-refundable \$40.00 registration fee to cover administrative costs. Before your child's first day of school, please ensure that you complete the intake package, which will be sent to parents/guardians via SignNow. Intake packages must be filled out before your child's first day of school. These forms are sent to parents/guardians by SignNow. It is important to submit any diagnostic letters and assessments before the start of school to secure funding for your child's programming.

**PUF Programming Supply Fees:** There is a \$30/ month supplies fee that supports purchasing sensory materials, special activities, art and craft supplies, and other classroom items.



**Mild/Moderate Supply Fees:** Due to the difference in funding, there is a \$75/ month supplies fee for children coded as mild/ moderate, that supports purchasing sensory materials, special activities, art and craft supplies, and other classroom items.

**Transportation Fees:** If your child qualifies for PUF programming and starts the program by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, there is a monthly fee of \$80. Additionally, you will be required to rent a Pacekids provided 5-point care seat (\$50/year) or a booster seat (\$15/year) depending on the weight and age of your child. Transportation fees can be paid in one lump sum at the beginning of the school year or monthly through HiMama. Please note that transportation services are not available for children accessing Mild/Moderate funding.

**Fee Payment:** Fee payment is set up through the HiMama App at the beginning of the school year. Fees are posted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month and payments are due by the end of the month.

**Fee Waiver:** Families requiring financial assistance can request a Fee Waiver Applications from the ECS Coordinator. Free waivers must be applied for annually, and proof of income is required.

**Child Information Changes:** Please inform the school of any changes to your child's information, including addresses and contact details.

**Extended Vacation:** If your child will be absent from the program for more than four consecutive school weeks, we cannot guarantee their spot will be available upon their return. Please communicate with your child's teacher about any vacations or extended absences.

**Withdrawal from Program:** If you plan to withdraw your child from the program, please give at least two weeks' notice to the ECS Coordinator.

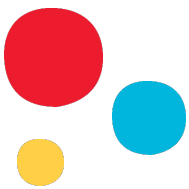
**Refunds:** Refunds are not provided for partial months, as our program costs are fixed. However, refunds will be provided for future months paid for in advance, with proper notice of withdrawal.

## **Documentation**

**Individual Program Plan:** Each child at Pacekids has an Individual Program Plan (IPP) tailored for their developmental level, needs, and family priorities. Our teachers and therapists regularly review and update IPP goals. The initial IPPs will be developed in October and formally updated in February and June. Families will receive the IPP via email.

**Year-End Reports and Assessments:** At the end of June, Pacekids prepares year-end reports for each child which are sent via email. If your child requires a formal assessment to secure funding for the following school year, the appropriate therapist will complete the assessment between March and June. The assessment results will be shared with parents/guardians and included in your child's file. If requested by the family or child's school, year-end reports and assessments can also be forwarded to the child's next school.

**Custody Arrangements:** If you have a legal agreement outlining custody or restraining orders, please provide a copy to the school for our records. Our schools will strictly adhere to the guidelines specified in the custody arrangement or restraining order that has been signed by a judge. Parents/Guardians are kindly requested to notify the School's Manager immediately if these legal circumstances change.



## **School Information**

**Daily Schedule:** Our program operates Monday through Friday. The morning program runs from 8:45 to 12:10, while the afternoon program runs from 1:30 to 3:45.

**Classroom Calendar:** Pacekids will provide a school calendar to all families at the beginning of the school year. Please note that the school will be closed for regular professional development days, winter break and spring break, which will be shown in the school calendar.

**Staggered Start:** To ensure a smooth transition for children and their families at the start of the school year, Pacekids implements a staggered start for all students. Your child's classroom teacher will inform you of the specific start date for your child, at least one week prior to school starting.

**Reporting Absences:** If your child is going to be absent, please notify the school as soon as possible using the HiMama app. If your child is being transported by Pacekids, please inform the driver and Transportation Coordinator's cell phone as early as possible, so they are aware to not pick up your child that day. If your child is ill, please notify us as to the nature of the illness, particularly if it is contagious, for the well-being of others in the program.

### **→ What to Bring to School:**

Please dress your child in comfortable, weather appropriate clothing for school. As our program is play-based, expect your child and their clothes may get messy. **We highly recommend labelling all personal items that your child brings to school.**

Send the following items with your child:

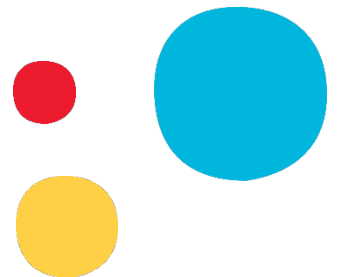
- A healthy snack that is TREE NUT FREE
- Indoor, closed toe running shoes
- Water bottle
- An extra change of clothing (messy play is a part of our program)
- Diapers and wipes as needed

Pacekids is a nut free and fragrance-free service provider. Please refrain from bringing any food containing nuts (including almonds) into Pacekids facilities. Additionally, kindly avoid wearing perfume, cologne, or any fragrant products when in Pacekids facilities.

**Celebrations:** We celebrate special occasions, including children's birthdays, in the classroom! However, we kindly request that you **DO NOT SEND FOOD OR GIFTS** as part of your child's celebration, due to allergies and other safety concerns.

**Diaper Changes:** It is not a requirement for children to be toilet trained to attend our program. Parents/ Guardians are responsible for providing disposable diapers and wipes for their child daily in their backpack. If your child requires diaper cream, please fill out a medication administration form to provide permission. Please ensure your child is in a clean diaper before leaving for school.

**Planned Outings:** Whenever there is a planned outing, staff members will provide written notification to parents/ guardians at least three days in advance. This gives parents/guardians ample time to their child will arrive on time. Parents/guardians will be required to give their permission by signing the field-trip form which will be sent to parents prior to the field trip.





**Music Therapy:** Pacekids is pleased to offer bi-weekly music therapy through JB music. Music therapy has proven to be incredibly valuable in opening doors to communication, supporting creativity and expression, and enhancing quality of life. Music therapy also promotes social interactions and helps gross motor movement skills.



### **Behaviour Policy**

Pacekids prioritizes the safety and well-being of our children, families, and staff in all the services we provide.

**Discipline Approach:** We believe in using positive behaviour supports and proactive strategies when addressing disciplinary action. If disciplinary action becomes necessary, staff members must ensure that the action is reasonable given the circumstances.

#### **Guidelines for Disciplinary Strategies:**

- The strategies should be in alignment with specific directions or guidance from a Behaviour Strategist and/or Psychologist, who will determine the function behind the behaviour and suggest effective replacement strategies.
- The strategies should be appropriate to the developmental level of the child.
- The aim of the strategies is to assist the child in learning appropriate behaviour.
- Strategies should be implemented as soon as possible after the incident.

#### **Prohibited Disciplinary Practices:**

- No form of physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation, or emotional deprivation will be inflicted or caused.
- No denial or threat of denial of any necessity will be imposed.
- No form of physical restraint, confinement, or isolation will be used or permitted.
- Children will not be left unattended for any period.

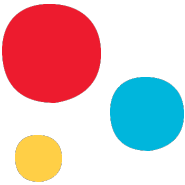
With the written approval of a Parent/Guardian and in consultation with a Pacekids' Behaviour Strategist and/or Psychologist, the use of punishment strategies (ie. Time outs or removing desirable objects/ activities) may be implemented, if deemed appropriate.

Our approach is rooted in creating a safe and supportive environment for all children, promoting positive behaviour, and using discipline to teach and guide appropriate behaviour.

### **Feeding and Swallowing Guidelines**

At Pacekids, our goal is for your child to be able to safely participate in a snack time routine in order to have adequate nutrition to learn and play. As well, our interdisciplinary team has capacity to support your child with developing independence during this routine through the following skills:

- Positioning during snack
- Encourage self-feeding
- Provide adaptive equipment and accommodations (i.e. extra time) as necessary
- Support communicating and socializing with peers at snack



Due to the educational nature of our programming, our interdisciplinary team does not have the capacity to support with:

- Recommending diet modifications or progressing food textures (i.e. different food and drink consistencies) for safe swallowing
- Recommending and implementing invasive treatment techniques for feeding and swallowing (e.g. exercises for making muscles of the mouth stronger)
- Performing a swallowing assessment (e.g. barium swallows, endoscopic assessments)

An Individualized Feeding Plan (IFP) will be created for your child and implemented in the classroom in the following situations:

- Your child is on a Physician recommended modified diet or is tube fed
- Your child requires support or accommodations (i.e. positioning, adaptive equipment, to be fed by an adult, etc.) to participate at snack time

In addition, to align with Pacekids' Discipline and Restraint Policy, no child will be 'force fed' or made to sit and eat any amount of food or be provided with Rewards for eating food. Instead, the responsibilities for snack time are as follows:

Parents/ Guardians Decide: What to be sent to school for snack

Children Decide: What to eat, how much to eat, and in what order

Classroom Staff Decide: When and where to eat and for how long (i.e., they will decide how long snack time is at the table, not how long the child should be actively eating).

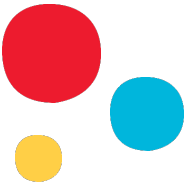
If you have concerns with your child's feeding and swallowing, or classroom staff have identified concerns that are outside of the capacity of Pacekids' staff, we will support you with receiving external services. In addition, if it is unclear what textures are safe for your child to eat at school, parents/ guardians may be asked, or therapists may request documentation from a pediatrician for their recommendations.

## **Health and Safety**

**First Aid & CPR:** All CTAs and Teachers are required to maintain updated certifications in Standard First Aid and CPR.

**Injuries:** If an incident or injury occurs during programming hours Pacekids has procedures to ensure proper documentation and reporting to administration and Parents/Guardians, including written documentation will be completed. If a serious injury or medical emergency occurs, an ECS staff member will call 911 and your family will be contacted promptly.

**Fire Evacuation and Lockdowns:** Pacekids buildings are regularly inspected for fire safety compliance. Evacuations and lockdown drills are practiced during the school year to prepare for potential emergencies.



**Medication:** A signed medication administration form, found in your intake package, is required for staff to administer any medication to a child, including non-prescription, during school hours. Should you need one of these forms after your intake package has been completed, please contact your ECS Coordinator. It is the primary responsibility for the administration of medication rests with each child's parents/guardians. Any changes in a child's medical condition or medication are to be brought to the attention of the ECS Manager, accompanied by a doctor's prescription. Please note that staff members are limited to actions that can be performed within a school setting and by individuals who are not trained in medical procedures.

**Illness/Vacation:** If your child is sick or going on vacation, it is your responsibility to notify the driver that transports your child and the Transportation Coordinator by text and their classroom through HiMama. Pacekids staff are not allowed to transport sick children, and they have the right to refuse transportation if they notice any symptoms. Please refrain from sending your child to school if they are unwell.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Fever (anything above 38 degrees celsius)
- Vomiting or diarrhea that has occurring two or more times in the past 24 hours
- Continuous cough
- Contagious viruses or diseases such as COVID-19, chickenpox, strep throat, hand-foot-and-mouth, pink eye etc.
- Unidentified rash
- Constant, thick, coloured nasal discharge
- Lethargic and/or unable to participate in class as usual

If your child is prescribed medication for a contagious virus or disease, they must be on medication for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to the program. Please note that if your child exhibits any of the above symptoms at school, they will be moved to an isolation space with a staff member, and you will be expected to pick up your child within one hour of receiving the notification. Children should not be sent to school if they require medication to alleviate any of the above symptoms. If your child has allergies that may result in some of these symptoms, please ensure that the school is aware of these allergies and symptoms.

**Progressive Accountability:** Pacekids employs a zero-tolerance policy regarding aggressive or abusive language or actions toward any Pacekids employee. This includes yelling, swearing, using intimidating or threatening language, engaging in physical and verbal aggression, harassment, or any behaviour that creates discomfort or unease for a staff member. If a Parent/Guardian or Family Member(s) demonstrates any of these behaviours, the Program Manager will meet with all involved Pacekids' employees as soon as possible. At this time, a plan of action will be discussed, and the Parent/Guardian or Family Member(s) contacted immediately following the meeting by the Program Manager. It is expected that all parties are expected to work together to find a resolution. However, if this behaviour persists or is severe enough in the first occurrence, it may result in the termination of our services.



## Families at Pacekids

**Communication to Families:** We are excited to provide family communication through the HiMama app. This app allows Pacekids staff to share activities and updates with you, giving you a glimpse into your child's experience in our program. Photos are stored securely in a journal format, providing a safe and convenient way for you to stay connected. We encourage parents/guardians to check the app daily and to communicate any changes or updates regarding your child, such as changes in sleep routines or upcoming holidays. Please note that our primary focus in the classroom is to spend quality time with your child, so while we strive to provide daily updates, there may be occasions where circumstances prevent us from doing so. The level of detail in the updates may also vary. Your child's work will be sent home in their backpack, so we kindly ask that you check it regularly.



**How to Participate:** Parents/Guardians are always welcome at our school. We invite you to participate in their child's programming in various ways such as joining field trips, attending bring your parent/guardian to school days, and participating in special events. Your involvement is valued and greatly appreciated as we work together to support your child's development.

**Pacekids Fundraising:** Pacekids is a registered charity and relies on fundraising efforts to support program delivery. While our ECS programs receive funding from Alberta Education, not all costs are covered. To continue delivering the best programs and services possible, Pacekids must fundraise approximately \$3,000 per child. The support of our generous donors and supporters ensures that every child can thrive!

**Champions for Children:** You can make a significant impact by joining Pacekids' monthly giving program, becoming a Champion for Children! By donating an amount that makes sense for your family each month, you can directly support the children at Pacekids. To learn more and become a Champion, please visit [Pacekids.ca/champion](https://pacekids.ca/champion) or email [getinvolved@pacekids.ca](mailto:getinvolved@pacekids.ca).

**Events:** Participating in our events, purchasing raffle tickets, or exploring our online auctions directly contributes to supporting Pacekids. We will always share event information on our website, social media platforms, and through email. We encourage you to share these events with your friends, family, and colleagues to help spread the word and make a difference.

**Community:** Our families play a vital role in advocating for Pacekids and creating a stronger community. Sharing our social media posts, connecting Pacekids to businesses and organizations, and sharing your experiences at Pacekids with family and friends are invaluable contributions. Stay updated on our community activities by following us on Facebook @PacekidsPrograms and on Instagram @Pacekids.

Our Fund Development team is always available to address any questions you may have about our fundraising efforts or to discuss any community connections you would like to share. Feel free to reach us at [getinvolved@pacekids.ca](mailto:getinvolved@pacekids.ca). Your support and involvement make a meaningful difference in the lives of the children we serve. We are deeply grateful for your contributions to our Pacekids community.

## **Transportation**

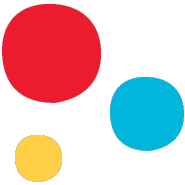
### **Driven by the Parent/ Guardian:**

- If you or a family member are driving your child to school, please ensure your child arrives on time. If you arrive early, you will be asked to wait with your child in the front lobby until the classroom staff are available 5 minutes before programming.
- Please do not park in any Pacekids van or CTA parking spots, or other parking that is designated for the surrounding businesses. At our south location, please park on the east side of the building (with the revolving door and entrance to the main building lobby).
- As per Alberta Education requirements, Parents/ Guardians will be required to sign a “Parent/ Guardian Transportation Agreement” document.

### **Driven by Pacekids:**

- Safety is our priority for transportation. All drivers must provide a driver’s abstract, proof of \$2 million liability insurance to transport a child, and appropriate licensing.
- Internal transportation training is provided to all staff involved in driving.
- Please be ready at the predetermined times for pick up and drop off, allowing for a 15-minute window to account for unforeseen circumstances such as traffic and weather. If a driver is going to be more than 15 minutes late or early, they are required to pull over and contact your family (if safe to do so). Drivers are not permitted to answer their phones while driving.
- If your child is not ready within five minutes of the pre-determined arrival time (as determined by the Transportation Coordinator, based on transportation routes and programming start time), the driver is required to leave and continue their route. By ensuring your child is ready on time, we can ensure that all children arrive at school on time, considering the driver may have other children to transport during the day.
- If your child is not attending school on a particular day, please notify your driver and the Transportation Coordinator by text or phone call as soon as possible, as well as the classroom using HiMama.
- An adult must come to the vehicle for pick up and secure your child into the car seat. In vans, staff may assist with this process. Staff members will check your child’s seatbelt before driving.
- For drop-off, you or a designated person (at least 12 years of age) must be present at the pre-determined drop-off time to receive your child. This person is expected to meet the child at the driver’s vehicle and remove them from the car seat.



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- Any pickup or drop off location or time requests or changes are not guaranteed to be accommodated. Requests for changes or accommodation must be directed to the Transportation Coordinator. Drivers cannot alter routes. Any changes may take up to two weeks to implement. In case of an emergency, please contact the school.
  - Please note that your pickup and or drop off time may change due to such accommodations to route changes, advance notice will be given as soon as possible.
  - You will be provided with the driver's name, phone number and vehicle information. We strive to have a consistent driver for each child, but changes may occur. You will be notified of any changes in drivers with as much notice as possible. Please note that new drivers will ask for proof of ID in their first instance of meeting you before the child will be released. If proof of ID cannot be verified the child will be returned to Pacekids and you will be required to collect them.
  - Occasionally, especially during cold and flu season, there may not be a substitute driver available for transportation. In such cases parents/ guardians are welcome to transport their child to and from school.
  - Please ensure that you have filled out the pickup and drop off location on your child's intake form. Additionally, fill out the permission to release form with alternate people to accept your child at drop off. Please note proof of ID will be required at drop off before the child is released to anyone we do not know, failure to do so will result in the child being returned to the school where you will be responsible for collecting them.
  - In the instance where no one is home to receive the child, or where notice and ID is not provided for a different caregiver who is receiving the child. The child will be returned to the school where you will be responsible for collecting them. A second drop off attempt cannot be accommodated.
  - For the safety of all children being transported, drivers will remove winter jackets and snowpants once the child is in the vehicle. The harness needs to be properly positioned close to the child's body for effective restraint. Drivers will put the jacket on your child before taking them out of the vehicle and into the school. Families are welcome to send a blanket with their child or dress them in a fleece jacket.
  - No siblings/ other children are permitted inside the Pacekids vehicle/ bus for safety reasons.
  - No food or drink is permitted to be consumed or held within the child's mouth while being transported.
  - We ask that children do not hold any items or belongings while in transit and that any such objects are to be kept at home or at least are able to fit into their backpacks.
  - Any open wounds are to be covered before entering vehicle.
  - On non-transportation days, transportation services may be suspended due to severe weather warnings, severe weather conditions, storms, or threat of storms. Families will receive mass communication to notify them of such decisions. These decisions are made citywide, prioritizing the safety of all children and staff.



**We look forward to working with you and your child  
during the 2023-2024 school year!**