

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center, Inc.



**Preschool and
Childcare Center**

3020 Court Street
Syracuse, NY 13208
(315) 471-4198

Parent Handbook

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The Gingerbread House: Past and Present

In 1982, Dorn Preschool was opened as a ministry of the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order on Michaels Avenue in Syracuse. In 1985, Dorn Daycare Center was opened for the children of employees of St. Joseph's Hospital on the first floor of the former Franciscan Academy. In 1988, both the preschool and daycare were combined to form what is now known as The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center. In October of 2014 the Center moved into a newly renovated location on the St. Daniels property of 3020 Court Street.

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center is fully licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and is a member of the Onondaga County Child Care Council.

The Center provides many activities and experiences relevant for developing a child's individual skills and creativity. The program involves a variety of teacher directed activities designed to spark a child's interest in learning as well as further a child's spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth.

In addition, each age level is equipped with interest centers that facilitate learning. These centers are developmentally appropriate for each individual child and include art, science, block building, a sensory table, dramatic play area, books, a listening area and manipulatives.

Today, The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center still operates under the sponsorship of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities and is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Sisters. In their role as a sponsoring agency, the Order ensures that the Childcare Center operates within Catholic values and the special charism of St. Francis of Assisi. Members of this religious community continue to be involved as staff and members of the Board of Directors.

Our Mission

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center, a Catholic ministry, is sponsored by the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Neumann Communities. The Center strives to recognize and accept each individual child as he/she fulfills and achieves his/her God-given potential from infancy through five years of age.

The Gingerbread House serves the city of Syracuse and the surrounding communities, and is committed to offering our parents and children a loving, nurturing Catholic environment. The Center encourages knowledge, wisdom, and understanding by providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum in early childhood education.

Application Process

When considering the Gingerbread House, we encourage parents or guardians and their child(ren) to visit the Center before submitting an application.

The following items are required as part of the Gingerbread House's application process:

- Completed Childcare Application form
- Non-refundable \$50.00 application fee per family

If a vacancy exists, the child will be placed in the appropriate aged room. In the event that no vacancy exists at the time of application, as openings become available, children on the waiting list will be permitted to register in the order of the date that the application was received.

You are required to complete an information packet prior to your child's start date.

Full time and part time care (at least 2 full days per week) is available in all rooms. Children attending 2 days per week come on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and children attending 3 days per week come on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Children attending 4 days per week may come any 4 scheduled days with the same day off each week.

Withdrawal

If it becomes necessary for a child to withdraw from the Center, we require a two week written notice. We ask for this courtesy in an effort for us to contact potential waiting list parents to advise them of upcoming openings.

Tuition

Tuition can be paid by check or money order (payable to The Gingerbread House) which should be dropped in the tuition box located by the main office. Cash is not accepted.

Tuition payments must be paid in a timely fashion. Each family is required to pay tuition in advance of services. All tuition payments are expected to be at the Center when you drop off on Monday or the first day of the week your child attends. All accounts need to be kept current. If an account becomes past due, the child may be removed from the Center. The child may be readmitted when the account is reconciled and space becomes available.

Hours of Operation

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center is open from 6:30 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday. In the event that these hours are changed for special circumstances, parents or guardians will be provided with as much advance notice as possible.

Holidays

The Center will be closed on the following days:

New Year's Day	President's Day (February)	Good Friday
Memorial Day Observance	Fourth of July (or Observance)	Labor Day
Columbus Day Observance	Thanksgiving Day & Friday	Christmas Eve
Christmas Day	Day after Christmas	New Year's Eve

Holiday closings are subject to change at our discretion. In the event that an additional holiday closing is added, parents or guardians will be provided with as much advance notice as possible.

Snow Days/Emergency Closings

The Childcare Center will usually not close because of snow days. Under most circumstances, the Childcare Center will remain open unless the City of Syracuse has declared a state of emergency. Listen to local news channels for updates. An email would be sent to all families announcing closure due to weather.

The Gingerbread House rarely closes early. However, should circumstances warrant an emergency closing, the staff will contact the names listed on the child's blue card so that arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Professional Development

The staff at the Gingerbread House has a wide range of educational and experiential backgrounds. These may include outside experience working with children, childhood development accreditation, or a degree in early childhood education or a related field.

Upon hire, all staff submit completed documents required by local, state and federal regulations. In addition, all staff receive an extensive orientation before being assigned to a classroom. To ensure the on-going quality of services provided, and in compliance with NY state licensure regulations, The Gingerbread House provides each staff member with at least 30 hours of on-going staff development every 2 years. Staff development topics

include, but are not limited to, teaching strategies, child development, behavior management, infant and child CPR, procedures for mandated reports for child abuse and maltreatment, and health and safety issues.

As a result of this regulatory requirement and our organizational commitment to staff development, the Center will be closed on designated Staff Development days. On these days, parents or guardians whose children regularly attend are still required to pay their tuition costs for that day. Advance reminder notices will be posted in an effort to plan for back-up child care on those days.

Arrival and Departure Policies and Procedures

Late Arrival: Parents or guardians are asked to call the Gingerbread House by 9:00 AM if their child will be kept home for the day or arriving late. Legal ratios are set for each age level and rooms are staffed accordingly based on attendance at 9:00 AM.

Late Pick-Up: In an effort to be considerate to our staff and to release them on time, we ask that parents or guardians are prompt in picking up their children. A late fee will be assessed for every 15 minute increment a child remains at the Center after 5:30 PM. Your total assessed late fee is due before your child can return to the Center. If you are late picking up more than three times in a calendar year, your child may be removed from the program.

Staff will begin calling the phone numbers you have listed and any other emergency numbers you have given us, if you are not at the center by 5:45 PM. If we have exhausted that list of phone numbers, and have not reached anyone, we will call the police after 6:30 PM to see if there has been an accident or emergency.

Authorized Release of Children: Children will be released only to those people who have been listed on the blue card. If parents or guardians wish to add additional names to their list of authorized individuals, they should provide the Center with written confirmation. Persons must be at least 18 years of age and be prepared to provide photo ID upon request.

Parking Lot Guidelines

For the safety of the children and others, extreme caution needs to be exercised by everyone entering the Gingerbread House parking lot. Maximum speed in the parking lot is 5 mph.

Parent/Guardian Visitation and Conduct

Parents/guardians are welcome to stop and visit any time during normal hours of operation or for special events. For security purposes, please stop in the main office to sign-in before going to the classroom. Parents or guardians are also welcome to phone the Center to check on their children at any time. If a child appears to be

experiencing unusual separation anxiety issues, it may be in the child's best interest if parents avoid on-site visitations with their child and check via telephone.

Under no circumstances will inappropriate and/or disruptive behavior (profanity, threats, violence, discourtesy, etc.) be tolerated at any time on Gingerbread House premises. If such circumstances should arise, the Gingerbread House will assess the severity of the situation and reserves the right to ask said individuals to leave our center temporarily or permanently.

Custody

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center assumes that both parents or guardians have personal and physical custody. In cases where this is not the situation, parents or guardians need to present a copy of that portion of the divorce decree or separation agreement that outlines the custody of the children to the Director. A signed transcript of the custody section of court documents typed on an attorney's letterhead is required.

The Gingerbread House will afford parents or guardians rights to information about their child unless it receives a court document that prohibits this.

Confidentiality

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center respects the confidentiality of families. Disclosure of children's records or personal information regarding children and their families will require written consent of parents and/or guardians.

Parental/Staff Concerns

Parents or guardians should feel comfortable that their child is enrolled in a program that seeks to provide a safe learning environment. If parents have concerns that a child has been harmed or is unsafe, they should contact the Director immediately.

In accordance with NYS Social Services Law, all Gingerbread staff are mandated to report to the state "reasonable suspicion" of concerns of child abuse, physical and/or sexual abuse and/or neglect.

Fire Safety

Gingerbread House Childcare Center complies with regulations to conduct monthly fire evacuation drills of all students and staff.

Biting

Our program recognizes that biting is, unfortunately, not unexpected when children are participating in a group-care setting. We do not focus on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. When biting occurs, our three main responses are:

1. To care for and help the child who was bitten
2. To help the child who bit learn other behavior
3. To work with the child who bit and develop a program so the biting will stop. This may include a transfer to a different classroom, sending the child home for a week or, if necessary, removing the child from the Center.

Illness

We will check a child's temperature if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- listlessness/sleeping
- extreme irritability
- watery/glassy eyes
- vomiting or diarrhea
- unusual or excessive crying
- skin is warm or hot to touch
- unable to participate in classroom activities

Any child who has a fever of 100.4°F or higher, has vomited once, has diarrhea twice, or is unable to participate in classroom activities will have to be picked up within a half hour of the time the parent is notified of sickness. If we cannot reach the parents or guardians, we will attempt to reach persons on the emergency contact list. The sick child is not permitted to return to the Center for at least one full day or 24 hours after symptoms have ceased without the use of medication.

If a child has had any of the aforementioned symptoms during the night, please do not bring them to the Center as they are probably contagious.

If a parent or guardian suspects their child is not well in the morning, please do not give them Tylenol and bring them to the Center. We try to take every precaution to cut down on the spread of disease in the Center and ask parents/guardians to do the same. Please make sure your child has recovered fully before being brought back to the Center.

If a strep culture is taken, they may not return to the Center until the results are known. If the results are negative, your child may return to the Center immediately. If positive, your child must be both fever free and on an antibiotic for 24 hours before they may return.

In case of communicable diseases, written communication from the physician must assure that the child may return to the group situation. This is for the health of the infected child as well as the health and welfare of all the children and staff.

Rashes can indicate a variety of health concerns. Due to the fact that rashes are associated with many contagious childhood illnesses, a parent or guardian may be contacted to pick up a child. Further assessment and a physician's release may be required for the child to return to class. Should the rash or skin condition require a topical cream in order to treat it, then it should also be applied for 24 hours before returning to the Center.

Lice – When a child has been checked and found to have dead/alive lice/eggs in their hair, the child must be taken home for at least a 24 hour period and treated with a prescribed treatment from a physician.

A child may return to school after 24 hours and must be checked again on the morning they return to ensure that the child is free and clear of all eggs/lice in their hair. If continued evidence of lice is found, the child must be taken home for another 24 hour period and treatment until no lice eggs are present.

Medications

Children will not be administered any medication (prescription or over the counter), variation in diet, or any other remedy or treatment, nor shall special medical procedures be carried out, without a written physician's order.

A blank ***Medication Consent Form*** is included in the registration packet and is available in the Main Office. Parents or guardians should take one of these forms with them to the physician's office should a child become ill and medication needs to be administered.

Allergy Plans

Incoming children with allergies are required to complete OCFS form 7006 "Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plans" and the "Individual Allergy and "Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Card" (yellow card).

Copies of Individual allergy plans and cards are kept in the Health Care Plan and the originals are kept in the children's files. A copy of the "yellow card" and allergy list is shared with classroom teachers.

Allergy plans must be reviewed and re-submitted yearly.

Cubbies/Clothing

Each child is assigned a cubby for his or her personal belongings.

Two complete sets of seasonally appropriate extra clothing should be kept in the child's cubby at all times. This should include a sweater or sweatshirt when applicable. It is important that all clothing be labeled on the inside with first and last name. For safety reasons, jewelry, watches or items hanging around the child's neck may not be worn when napping.

Appropriate footwear must be worn by the children in order to use the playground safely. Socks and sneakers must be worn. Smooth sole and open-toed sandals and "jelly" shoes may not be worn.

During the winter, children should have weather appropriate coat or jacket, snow pants, boots, mittens and a hat.

During the summer, children will enjoy the water sprinkler and water table. In order to participate in these activities, each child will need a bathing suit, bath size towel and water shoes. If parents or guardians would like their child to use sunscreen, they must provide the Center with the sunscreen (labeled) and written permission to apply it to the child.

The Gingerbread House is not responsible for any personal items that are lost, stolen and/or broken.

Naptime

During naptime, each child will need a crib-size sheet that will fit their cot and a blanket. Blankets and sheets must be taken home each Friday to be laundered. A stuffed animal may also be brought for naptime. The bottom bin of the cubby is for storing items used at naptime.

Nutrition

The Gingerbread House participates in the *USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)*. Monthly menus are reviewed and distributed to parents or guardians each month and are posted in each classroom. Annual income forms must be completed by all families in the program.

- **Breakfast** is served between 8:30 – 9:00.
- **Lunch** is served each day. Children will be encouraged to try new or different food, but will not be required to eat foods that they do not care for.
- **Snacks** are served each afternoon after naptime.

Dietary Concerns: It is imperative that parents or guardians provide written documentation from their child's physician regarding any dietary needs or food allergies. Meal Modification forms are available in the Main Office for your child's physician to complete.

Food Orders: Parents may order cupcakes made at the Gingerbread House as a peanut-free option for special occasion treats. Forms are available in the Main Office.

Special Gifts & Fundraising

A charitable gift to The Gingerbread House not only benefits the children involved but also benefits the donor through tax advantages available through charitable giving. Some employers may even match or contribute to charitable giving.

The Gingerbread House conducts fundraisers throughout the year for special projects that enhance our program. The participation of families in these fundraising projects is greatly appreciated.

Parent Resource Materials

The Gingerbread House has a wide variety of printed resources that deal with developmental issues. Parents or guardians are encouraged to request these resources from staff that would assist them in understanding developmental concerns. Other information is available through the Child Care Council of Onondaga County.

Photography/Media Consent

From time to time, your child(ren) may be photographed or recorded on video. These photos or videos may be used on the Gingerbread House website, in newsletters, or other publications. Occasionally video footage may appear on the local news. No personal information (such as a child's name) is released without parental consent. By signing the acknowledgement on Page 17 of this handbook you are giving The Gingerbread House permission to collect and use photos and/or videos as deemed appropriate. If you do not wish for photographs or videos to be collected and used, separate written notice must be given.

Therapist Services

Parents or guardians may arrange to have a therapist (e.g. physical, speech, etc.) come to the Center to provide services to their child. In these cases, parents or guardians must provide written authorization to The Gingerbread House to permit the therapist to deliver these services within the Center. All therapists authorized

to provide students with services on campus must sign in at the office upon arrival at the Center before rendering these services. The Gingerbread House recommends Children's Therapy Network.

Appendix A

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center

Childcare Financial Policy 2025-2026

Weekly Rates (effective 7/7/25):

	Full Week	4 Days	3 Days	2 Days	Extra Day
Infant	\$410	\$368	\$300	\$216	\$105
Toddler	\$378	\$330	\$273	\$200	\$100
3s/4s	\$365	\$320	\$263	\$195	\$95

Full-Time vs. Part-Time: Full-time children are registered Monday through Friday, 6:30 am – 5:30 pm. Parents may bring their child(ren) any or every day, part days or full days. Tuition is the full week rate regardless of attendance. Part-time children are registered for specific days during the week (e.g. Monday/Wednesday/Friday or Tuesday/Thursday). Tuition is the rate set for the number of days your child is registered for (see chart above) regardless of attendance.

Payment Schedule – Full-time Children:

- Tuition is due weekly on Monday for the current week. Any other payment schedule must be approved by the Finance Office.
- Tuition is due regardless of your child's actual attendance.

Payment Schedule – Part-time Children:

- Tuition is due on the first day your child attends. For example, if your child attends every Tuesday and Thursday, then tuition is due on Tuesday of that week. Any other payment schedule must be approved by the Finance Office.
- Tuition is due based on the number of days originally signed up for. If your child attends any additional days during the week, the Finance Office will be notified by the Head Teacher, and you will be responsible for an extra day charge (due Monday of the following week). Extra Day charges are shown in the rate table.
- If your child misses a regularly scheduled day, you are still responsible for that day's tuition. If you would like to have your child "make up" his/her absence, it may be done at no additional cost if: (a) the added day is during the same week so that your child is still attending the same number of days that week, and (b) the Director approves the request, since there may not be space in your child's classroom on the "make up" day.

Discounts:

- There is a \$10/week discount for each additional child (per family) enrolled in the childcare program.

Receipts:

- Receipts are available on request. Please call or e-mail the Finance Office with your request, specifying the time frame of the receipt. If you provide an e-mail address, the receipt will be sent electronically. Otherwise, it will be printed and left in your child's cubby.

Notice:

- A two week notice is required for terminating care. You are responsible for tuition through your termination date or the end of the two weeks, whichever is later.

Accepted Methods of Payment:

- All tuition payments must be made through Brightwheel.

Notices from the Finance Office:

The Finance Office reviews all accounts daily, and immediately updates parent(s) on any account abnormalities. Common examples:

- *Missed Tuition Payment* – Forgot a check? It happens. When you get the note, please drop the tuition check in the Tuition Box ASAP.
- *Over/under payment* – Paid too much or too little last week? This lets you know how to adjust the next tuition payment.
- *Balance Due* – If two weeks have been missed in a row, you will find this reminder in your child's cubby, along with a request for payment in full, due immediately. If your account gets more than two weeks behind, your child may be asked not to return to Childcare until the balance is brought to zero.

Other Fees:

Bounced Check	\$ 15	first occurrence
	\$ 25	second and each additional occurrence

Please note that the Finance Office reserves the right to request tuition be paid only by Money Order if more than one check is returned NSF.

Late Pick-Up	\$ 15	5:31 – 5:45 p.m.
(per family)	\$ 25	5:46 – 6:00 p.m.
	\$ 50	6:01 – 6:15 p.m.
	\$ 75	6:16 – 6:30 p.m.

*Please note that after **three** late pick-ups, childcare may be terminated.*

Appendix B

The Gingerbread House Preschool and Childcare Center

Contact Information

Phone: (315) 471-4198

Fax: (315) 471-7825

Web: <http://www.thegingerbreadhouseofsyracuse.com>

Email Addresses:

Executive Director:	David M. Cole	dcole-director.gbh@verizon.net
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Assistant Director:	Jessica Riess	jriess.gbh@gmail.com
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Program Coordinator:	Christine Boysen	cboysen579@gmail.com
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Program Coordinator:	Kathleen Lillis	kathleen.lillis@yahoo.com
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Program Coordinator:	Jessica Hogan	hoganjessica374@gmail.com
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Finance Office:	Sheila Zimmerman	gingerbread.finance@gmail.com
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The Gingerbread House Preschool and Child Care Center

Receipt of Handbook

2025-2026 Handbook and Financial Policy Acknowledgment

I have read and understand the handbook and financial policy of the Center.

Parent Signature

Date

Print Name

Child(ren)'s Name(s):

***** Please complete and return to the Main Office *****