

HANDS, Inc. is a Montana State licensed, non-profit corporation, sponsored by American Association of University Woman and Great Falls Public Schools.

HANDS Program encourages children of all backgrounds to attend.

HANDS will not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or familial status.



HANDS Office***Located in the Lewis & Clark Elementary, Room 8******Physical Address: 3800 1st Avenue South, Room 8
Great Falls, MT 59405******Mailing Address: PO Box 7056,
Great Falls, MT 59406******Office Phone: 406-268-6932 ~ Office Fax: 406-268-7005***

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CENTER TYPICAL SCHEDULE

3:20pm

Children arrive at HANDS.

3:30pm

Snack (nutritious food with juice or milk).

3:45pm

Group meeting. Small and large group activities vary each day.

Children are given the opportunity to make choices on afternoon activities that are appropriate to their age, abilities and interests.

Children are encouraged to explore new topics, materials and long and short term projects. Outdoor activities will depend on weather, but individual and group activities are encouraged.

4:45 – 6:00pm (close)

Clean-up and quiet activities. Free play, table games, puzzles, homework, reading books, listening to music and computer lab are offered.

THE HANDS PROGRAM

The “*Before and After School Program*” is the heart of the HANDS school age child-care program.

HANDS provides a safe place for children to relax, rest and stretch their bodies and minds, by exploring their own interests and play. Children that attend the HANDS program have already spent many hours in school each day learning, so HANDS is a place to unwind and have fun!

The program in the Great Falls Public Schools is licensed by the State of Montana, Department of Public Health and Human Services.

HANDS employs staff that have a love of seeing children grow while expanding their minds and physical activity through structured play and free time.

Activities your child(ren) will experience while at HANDS are: indoor and outdoor games, arts and crafts, creative drama and music, quiet time for school homework and free time to explore their own interests.

Child(ren) involved in organizations such as Scouts, Camp Fire, etc., are encouraged to attend those programs as well.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the **HANDS** Program. Our child care program has been organized to provide supervision for children in Kindergarten through Sixth Grade (ages 5 through 12 years old). The **HANDS** Program is a Montana State Licensed Non-Profit Corporation, Governed by a Board of Directors. The Parent Handbook is a valid part of the enrollment agreement between the **HANDS** Program and the Parent/Guardians of the children who are enrolled.

GOALS

The **HANDS** Program will offer a variety of activities including recreation and games, arts and crafts, reading, music, time to work on homework, and “*Free Time*” for children to pursue their own interests in a *Safe and Friendly* environment.

MISSION STATEMENT

The **HANDS** Program mission is to create a community supported program through collaborative effort of all organizations and individuals interested in school-aged child care. The result of such collaboration will be a community wide, on-going, non-profit, self-supporting school-based program for K-6 grade children.

EXPECTATIONS

PARENT/GUARDIANS Expectations of the HANDS Program:

- Children are cared for in a supportive, encouraging, and safe environment.
- May visit the **HANDS** Center staff about concerns related to their child's care or the **HANDS** Program.
- Will be notified of any significant behavior their child may be displaying.
- Kept informed of **HANDS** Center activities.

HANDS Program Expectations of the Parents/Guardians:

- Pay fees on time as explained in the **HANDS Registration** under the *Fee Schedule*.
- Keep the child's records up-to-date as explained in the Enrollment Form.
- Pick up children on time as explained in Hours and Attendance Policies.
- Follow health policy as explained in Health Policies.
- Communicate with the center staff regarding their child.
- Cooperate with all policies of the **HANDS** Program for the benefit of the child.
- Follow proper procedures to enroll child in *All-Day and Summer Program*.

CHILDREN'S EXPECTATIONS OF THE HANDS PROGRAM

- To receive nurturing and respectful care from **HANDS** Staff.
- To use all program equipment, materials, and facilities on an equal basis.
- To have a supportive, consistent, and behavioral guided environment that is fair.

HANDS Program Expectations of the Children:

- To be responsible for their own actions.
- Respect and abide by the rules while at the **HANDS** Program.
- Stay with the group and **HANDS** Staff at all times.
- To take care of **HANDS** material and equipment respectfully and put the item back where it belongs.

HANDS REGISTRATION

Openings are determined on the basis of FTEs (full-time equivalents) and the number of FTEs permitted by the program's license.

Registration Packet:

State Licensing requires parents to complete a "Registration Packet" for each child every year with up to date information.

Children may be registered at any time throughout the school year, but must complete a new registration packet the following school year.

HANDS School Year registration begins June 1st each year.

Child Eligibility:

HANDS offers “*Before-and-After School, All-Day Programs, and a Summer Program*” child care for children 5-12 years old. Children may not attend HANDS until after their 5th birthday.

Registration Fees:

- New Registration:
 - \$15.00 for New Child
 - \$20.00 for New Family

- Returning Registration Fee: (child/family attended previous school year)
 - \$10.00 for Returning Child
 - \$15.00 for Returning Family

NOTE: No child(ren) will be allowed to attend a HANDS Center without a completed registration packet, registration fee paid in full and immunization record. (see Enrollment Process)

Fee Schedule:

HANDS is considered a drop-in service. Child care is charged by the minute. So if your child only uses 22 minutes in an hour then your account is only charged for those 22 minutes. HANDS bills in arrears

as we bill for the actual time that your child attends the HANDS Program(s).

School Year Tuition Rate:

- Hourly Rate: \$4.60
(A family discount of 7% will applied to family accounts with two or more children. Families that receive scholarship assistance do not qualify for the family discount.)

- Late Pick-Up Charge: \$5.00
(for every 15 minutes after 6:00 pm.)

NOTE: A child(ren) picked up late 3 times may be suspended from the program.

All-Day and Summer Programs:

There is a “Reservation Fee” associated with these programs, as there is limited space available. The reservation fee reserves your child(s) spot for the program dates you sign them up for; and is non-refundable. We have approximately eight All-Day Programs throughout the school year and a Summer Program each year.

All-Day Program:

- Reservation Fee: \$5.00 per child
- ADP Rate - Less than 5 hour: \$18.00
5 hours and over: \$25.00

Summer Program:

HANDS Summer Program is a “Contract Program”. Which means that when you sign your child(ren) up for the summer program it is for the entire summer program. The summer program dates change depending on the GFPS calendar, but will generally run the week after school is out in June to a week and half to two weeks before school begins in the fall.

HANDS will post charges to the families account each week rather than requiring parents to pay up front. Families will see summer charges posted to their account each week, and then will receive their statement once a month as normal.

PLEASE NOTE: Reservation fee is non-refundable, and that family accounts will be charged each week whether the child(ren) attends or not. This is only for the summer program contract.

Summer Program Fee & Contract Rate:

- Summer Program Reservation Fee: \$25.00 per child
- Tuition rate is billed at \$125.00 per week per child (whether the child attends or not)
- A family discount of 7% will applied to family accounts with two or more children.
- Families that receive scholarship assistance do not qualify for the family discount.

HANDS ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Parents/Guardians are required to complete a NEW Registration packet for each child every year. This is a state requirement. All forms in the packet must be filled out completely.

Registration packets for each child along with the registration fee is required to be paid at the time the child(ren) are enrolled into the **HANDS** program. Completed registration packets and registration fee must be brought into the **HANDS** office located at Lewis & Clark Elementary, Room 8. **HANDS** generally requires 48 hours to enroll children into the program before a child can attend the **HANDS** Center.

Parents/Guardians will not be allowed to re-enroll their child(ren) in **HANDS** for the next school year program until the previous school year and/or summer program has been paid-in-full.

Parents/Guardians are required to keep the **HANDS** office updated on any changes regarding their family's accounts, including, but not limited to: mailing/home address, change in phone numbers, changes in authorized pickup people, etc.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Center Hours:

Before School - 6:45am to 10 minutes prior to the start of school generally around 8:15 am.

After School – School dismissal to 6:00pm. (School dismissal is generally 3:20pm M-T-TH-F and on Wed 2:40pm. These times are subject to change depending on Great Falls Public Schools)

Early Outs – School dismissal to 6:00pm. (Scheduled early out days, dismisses at 1:15pm.)

HANDS Office Hours:

The HANDS Office is located at Lewis & Clark Elementary in Room 8. Our office is open Monday-Friday 8:00am to 4:00pm. We do not close for lunch for your convenience.

The HANDS Office is open during our All-Day Programs, including our Summer Program. Occasionally the office will close to attend field trips, special outings with the HANDS Centers and seminars or conferences.

UNSCHEDULED PUBLIC SCHOOL CLOSINGS, DELAYS & EARLY DISMISSALS

- School Closed: **HANDS** Centers & Office will be closed.
- School Delays: **HANDS** Centers will be closed for morning session only.
- School Early Dismissal: **HANDS** Centers will not be open on days that school is let out early due to weather, or mechanical issues.

NOTE: HANDS is only open when there are engineers in the buildings.

CHILD(REN) CHECK IN/OUT

Parents/Guardians/Authorized Persons are required to bring children into the **HANDS** Centers and sign them in, and are also required to come into the **HANDS** Center to pick the child(ren) up and sign them out. This is done on a computer or on a paper sign in/out sheet. Every Parent/Guardian/Authorized Person will be given their own unique login when using our computer system to sign children in/out of the **HANDS** Program. Any child that is NOT signed out by an authorized person will be clocked out by **HANDS** at 6:00pm.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

HANDS takes your child(ren)s safety seriously, therefore your child(ren) will not be released to anyone that is not listed on your authorized pick-up or emergency contact form. An authorized pick-up person must be 16 years of age or older. We also reserve the right to not release your child(ren) to an authorized pick-up adult that appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

For children involved in special events or an extracurricular activity, the parent/guardian will need to make arrangements with the **HANDS** Office regarding being released from **HANDS**, if the individual is not currently on the child's emergency contact forms.

CHILD(REN) ABSENCES

HANDS is considered a drop in service, so we are always here when you need childcare. However, if your child(ren) attend **HANDS** consistently and will not be attending the **HANDS** program on their normal day(s), please notify the **HANDS** Center and/or Office to let us know your child(ren) will not be in attendance on those days. As our staff gets to know your child's regular schedule, if your child does NOT show up during the normal days and times, **HANDS** staff may think the child is missing. If your child(ren) do not arrive at the **HANDS** Center on their normal day(s) the **HANDS** Center will contact a parent/guardian. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached,

the HANDS staff will then try to contact the child(ren)'s emergency contact person(s).

PAYMENT POLICY

The HANDS Program salaries, supplies, and administrative expenses are supported directly by child care tuition fees. The Great Falls Public Schools provide space, utilities and custodial services as an "in-kind" donation to the HANDS Program.

- Statements are billed to the family's address on file once a month. HANDS bills in arrears as we bill for the actual time that your child attends the HANDS Program(s).
- Payments are Due Upon Receipt of the monthly statement or by the end of the month.
- Late fees will be assessed if payment is not received in the HANDS Office by the end of the month. *Example: February Statement comes out the 1st week of March, February Statement payment must be received in the HANDS office by the end of March in order to avoid a late payment fee.*
- Payment Late Fee: \$10.00 each month payment is not received.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible to contact the HANDS Office if they do not receive monthly statement. Statements are mailed if childcare services were used or if there is a

balance owing on the account. Statements are mailed to the parent/guardians last address on file.

Payments:

For your convenience HANDS accepts payments several ways: cash, check, debit and credit cards.

NSF checks will be charged a fee of \$25.00. HANDS reserves the right to not accept a personal check if checks continue to be returned for NSF (non-sufficient funds).

- **Tuition Express:** is a secure website where parents/guardians can make payments on their HANDS account at their convenience. Please call the HANDS Office (406) 268-6932 to receive your unique Tuition Express ID to set your account up today.
- **Payment by Phone:** you can call the HANDS Office (406) 268-6932 between the hours of 8:30am-3:30pm. HANDS will accept a debit or credit card payment over the phone.
- **Payment by U.S. Mail:** please send your check or money order payable to: **HANDS**
PO Box 7056, Great Falls, MT 59406-7056
- **Payment in Person:** Payments can be made at the HANDS Office located at Lewis & Clark Elementary–Room 8
3800 1st Avenue South, Great Falls, MT

(HANDS is unable to give change back. If paying by cash, please bring in the exact amount, or the remaining payment will be credited to your account.)

DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS

Family accounts that are delinquent in making regular payments may be sent to an outside collection agency. **HANDS** reserve the right to work with families to set up payment arrangements prior to sending the family account to collections. Once a family account is sent to an outside collection agency childcare is suspended and re-enrollment into the **HANDS** Program(s) will have the following stipulations:

- Proof the outstanding balance is paid in full to the collection agency.
- \$100 pre-payment must be made before the child(ren) are allowed to attend any of the **HANDS** program.

SUSPENDED CHILDCARE DUE TO LACK OF TIMELY PAYMENTS

Parents/Guardians that do not make regular monthly payments each month could have their childcare suspended due to “lack of payment”. **HANDS** understands that childcare is very important to working parents/guardians and we do everything to assist and work with our families. A suspension of childcare is not something **HANDS** likes to do, but if we are unable to contact you and the balance continues to grow we will have no other choice but to place the childcare on

temporary suspension. Once a substantial payment is made and payment arrangements are agreed upon for the remaining balance, childcare could possibly resume depending on the agreement made with HANDS.

OUTSIDE COLLECTION AGENCY ACCOUNTS

HANDS works with families that go through hard times, but reserves the right to send accounts to an outside collection agency. This type of service is used as a last resort. If an outside collection agency is required, ALL costs of collections, up to 45% of the balance, including attorney/court costs will be added to the balance of the families account.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

The HANDS Staff will check each child's health status upon entry to care and exclude and children with the following symptoms:

- Fevers – 101 degrees or greater. Children must be without fever for 24 hours before they can return to HANDS. (If the fever is immunization-related, children can remain in HANDS care as long as they are able to participate in the normal routine of the HANDS center.)
- Vomiting and Diarrhea – Children with bacterial infections must have antibiotic treatment for 24 hours before returning to HANDS. Vomiting includes two or more episodes in the previous 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as an increased

number of stools, increase water in the stool, and/or decreased form to the stool that cannot be contained by a diaper or clothing.

- *Bacterial Infections* – Children with bacterial infections must have antibiotic treatment for 24 hours before returning to **HANDS**, and must bring a physician’s note releasing the child.
 - Strep Throat
 - Scarlet Fever
 - Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)
 - Impetigo
 - Skin Infections (such as draining burns, wounds or infected hangnails.)
- *Generalized Rashes* – Including rashes that cover multiple parts of the body. *These rashes must be evaluated by a health provider to determine cause before the child can return to daycare.*
- *Chicken pox* – Children with chickenpox cannot attend **HANDS** until their sores dry up (usually five to seven days). Children cannot be exposed to chicken pox even with the parent’s permission.
- *Jaundice* – Children with jaundice must be excluded until evaluated by a physician and authorized to return to **HANDS**.

- Severe Illness – Symptoms of a severe illness, whether or not they would otherwise be excluded. (Uncontrolled coughing, breathing difficulty, wheezing, stiff neck, irritability, poor food or fluid intake, or a seizure. Such children must be evaluated by a physician before they may return to HANDS.
- Head Lice – Children with head lice will not be allowed to attend HANDS until they are cleared by a physician.
- Nasal Discharge – Children with a green nasal discharge will not be allowed to attend HANDS until being seen by a physician as this is a sign of a sinus infection.

If a child develops symptoms of an illness after the parent/guardian has dropped the child off, the HANDS staff will:

- Isolate the child immediately from the other children in a room or area segregated for that purpose.
- Contact parent/guardian or emergency contact person (if parent/guardian cannot be reached) as soon as possible to request the child be picked up.
- Call the local health department and report each case of suspected communicable disease that day.

NOTE: Physicians/Health Care Providers must provide a written statement authorizing the child to return to HANDS care after each instance.

Immunization record must accompany registration packet. Children will not be enrolled in the program with a religious exemption on immunizations as this is Montana State Law. Proof of Varicella (chickenpox) is required for licensed daycare centers.

DISTRIBUTION OF MEDICATION

Parents/Guardians must complete a “Prescription Drug Administration Form” whenever a child has a prescription medication that needs to be taken. The medication (labeled with the child’s name and is not expired) must be provided in the original or duplicate pharmacy container. If medication is to be kept at a HANDS Center for a chronic condition, only one month supply is allowed to be held at the Center at any time.

NOTE: HANDS will not dispense “over-the-counter” medication to children, nor is the child allowed to self-medicate while at HANDS.

ACCIDENT or ILLNESS

In case of accident or illness, parents/guardians or emergency contact persons (if parent/guardian cannot be reached) will be notified immediately.

In serious cases where the child is taken to a local hospital by emergency vehicle for treatment, parents/guardians or emergency contact persons (if parent/guardian cannot be

reached) will be notified as soon as possible as HANDS will attend to the care of your child first.

The Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) will also be notified. A report will be submitted to DPHHS within 24 hours in the event a child is hospitalized following an accident or in a facility where the Fire Department services have been required.

WEATHER CONDITIONS AND OUTSIDE PLAY

HANDS take into consideration the outside temperature and the wind chill factor before taking children outside.

HANDS does not take the children outside if the temperature is 20 degrees or colder, especially if the wind is blowing. We also take into consideration the wind chill factor.

SUSPICIOUS PERSONS

In the case of someone appearing on the school premises with a firearm, the emergency number (911) will be called and HANDS children will be moved to an appropriate location with school Lockdown procedures followed.

AUTHORIZED PERSON PICK-UP UNDER THE INFLUENCE

HANDS staff will make every effort to keep a child from getting into a vehicle with a parent/guardian or authorized

pick-up person that appears to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. **HANDS** staff will call the police and request a ride home for the family. Under **NO** circumstance will **HANDS** staff be allowed to provide transportation to the authorized pick-up person and children.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Montana State Law requires caregivers to report suspected child abuses. Suspected cases will be reported to the Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-332-6100 or the Department of Public Health and Human Services (406-727-7746).

VISITORS AND OBSERVATIONS

Parents and community members, who are screened by the **HANDS** Director and/or **HANDS** Center Head Teacher, are welcome to observe at the **HANDS** Center. For liability and supervision reasons, it is not possible for children who visit the program with their parents to take part in activities.

INSURANCE

The **HANDS** Program carries minimal liability insurance, and has no financial resources of its own. Families are encouraged to provide their own insurance coverage. Please check with your employer, licensed insurance agent or the elementary school office. Public

school students may sign up for accident insurance in the fall each year.

DAILY SNACKS

SCHOOL YEAR SNACKS

Morning Program – Children should eat breakfast prior to arriving at HANDS or check with your child’s school to see if a breakfast program is offered. Parents/Guardians may send a morning snack with their child if one is needed prior to the start of school. HANDS does not provide morning snacks

Afternoon Program – HANDS provides and serves a nutritionist approved snack in the afternoon. Parents/Guardians that would like to provide a snack or treat in honor of a child’s birthday or special occasion should contact the HANDS Center Head Teacher or HANDS Office to determine the number of children to be served on the planned day.

ALL-DAY PROGRAMS and SUMMER PROGRAM

HANDS provides and serves a nutritionist approved snack in the morning and afternoon during each All-Day Program. Parents/Guardians will need to send in a cold packed lunch for each day their child will attend the All-Day or Summer Program days. Water is provided throughout the day.

PLEASE DO NOT send children with peanut butter sandwiches or peanut butter snacks as many children are allergic to peanuts. Some of our HANDS children are deathly allergic to peanuts so we ask parents not to send these type of food items to HANDS.

CHILD'S PERSONAL PROPERTY

Children's personal property, coats, clothing, school bags, etc. must be removed from the HANDS Center after each session. The child's name should be written on ALL of their property. Any personal property that is left at the HANDS Center after each session will be taken to the "schools lost and found". HANDS does not allow children to bring their own toys, games, electronic equipment, etc. from home. The only exception to this rule is if the HANDS Center has a show and tell planned activity scheduled in advance.

HANDS is not responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged item brought to HANDS. ALL items should be clearly marked with the child's first and last name.

DISCIPLINE, BEHAVIORIAL SUSPENSION AND DISCHARGE

The HANDS Program strives to provide a pleasant and harmonious environment for school age children to enjoy.

Chronically Disruptive Behavior is defined as:

Verbal or physical activity which may include but is not limited to such behavior that requires constant attention from the HANDS staff, inflicts physical or emotional harm on other children and/or staff, ignores or disobeys the HANDS rules which guide behavior. If a child cannot adjust to the HANDS Program setting and behave appropriately, then the child may be suspended or discharged.

Disruptive Behavior will be dealt with in the following manner:

- The misbehaving child will be given a “Tune-Up Sheet” in order for him/her to cool off and think about his/her actions. Which is completed by the child (depending on child’s age, HANDS Staff will complete with child).
- If a second or third “Tune-Up Sheet” has already been given to the child for the same behavior issue, then an “Incident Report” will be written by the HANDS Staff. This report will be given to the parent/guardian to read and sign. A copy will be given to the parent/guardian, the HANDS Director and one placed in the child’s file.
- If a child receives three written behavior-related “Incident Reports” within a School Program Year, the child will be put on a behavior suspension. The HANDS Director will notify parents/guardians by a letter mailed to the home.

- In order for a child to be reinstated, a conference will be held with the parents, the child (if approved by the parent), and the **HANDS** Director. A member of the **HANDS** Board of Directors may attend if deemed necessary.
- If the severity of a problem is great enough that it could endanger the safety of the child or other children in the **HANDS** program, discharge will be effective immediately.
- Should a child bite, scratch, or spit on another child intentionally, the child's parents will be called immediately. The child that committed the occurrence will be sent home. An Incident Report will be completed for the parent to sign.

OTHER SUSPENSION OR DISCHARGEABLE ISSUES

- A child may be discharged if he/she is picked up late three times (after 6:00 pm).
- A child may be discharged for non-payment of fees.