



**WILD
ONION
PLAY**

2023-2024

Family Handbook

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Intro

This document is currently under development and may change at any time. We will notify participants of any significant changes, such as updated practices, community agreements, or policies.

Calendar

Summer 2023

June 5th - August 25th

Fall 2023

September 5th - December 22nd, 2023

Fall Break: October 16th through October 20th, 2023

'Gratitude' Break: November 22nd and 23rd, 2023

Spring 2024

January 8th - June 21st, 2024

Breaks TBD

Philosophy

At Wild Onion Play, we provide a safe and empowering environment that seeks to help the whole child grow at their own pace. Our philosophy rejects hierarchy between staff, children, and the larger community by embracing consensus decision-making and mutual trust. Adults act as *co-learners*, learning from and alongside the children, as *facilitators*, providing activities and materials, as *observers*, stepping back to assess and allow children to play freely, and as *caregivers*, assisting with care routines and setting appropriate limits. Days at Wild Onion have a flexible framework that can shift and grow to meet children's needs and interests while providing routine.

Wild Onion's philosophy is anchored in place. Here, children find opportunities to explore and



reflect on their physical, cultural, and ecological surroundings in order to better know themselves and participate in the community. When opportunities arise, facilitators invite children to investigate



existing power relationships and explore concepts of liberation. Being fully outdoors in most weather fosters comfort and familiarity with the natural environment, and encourages children to construct knowledge about the ecosystem.

Wild Onion's **programming** aims to be...

- *Anti-hierarchical* - Children, families, and coworkers have equal power within Wild Onion Play Collective. We work towards this value by utilizing consensus decision-making in staff meetings, inviting community members to participate in all aspects of the organization, operating transparently, and recognizing children's agency and intelligence.

- *Holistic* - Programming fosters the child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. We

recognize that children deserve to develop at their own pace in a nurturing and empowering environment.

- *Place-based* - Being fully outdoors, our direct environment is the beginning and end of all Wild Onion programming. We provide children with opportunities to explore and reflect on their physical, cultural, and ecological surroundings in order to better know themselves and participate in community. As a program, we seek to collaborate with our immediate and larger community.
- *Flexible and Emergent* - Days at Wild Onion have a flexible framework that can shift and grow to meet children's needs and interests while providing routine. Inspiration for activities will come from adults, kids, and the environment. All activities will be optional, engaging, and sensory-rich.

Wild Onion's **environment** is...

- *Stimulating* - We provide a variety of playthings including loose parts, arts, books, and tools in order to provoke play and exploration.
- *Comfortable* - We evaluate and supplement our surroundings in order to provide a predictable, challenging, and safe environment. We center on the principle that outdoor education should not happen at the expense of comfort, and seek to provide indoor arrangements in the case of

extreme weather (likely library rental rooms, museum visits, or spaces offered by community members).

- *Child-empowering* - Materials are sourced with children in mind and stored in ways that children can access them. Children are encouraged to move freely (within limits) and take appropriate risks.

Wild Onion **playworkers** act as...

- *Observers* - We step back, let children do their thing, and make thoughtful and informed observations about children's growth and needs.
- *Facilitators* - We introduce flexible activities, inspired by children's interests, that aim to develop children's creativity, fine motor skills, and inspire them to use the scientific method and the power of observation. We seek opportunities to educate through play, storytelling, and collaboration.
- *Caregivers* - We provide care and nurturing, and help with caregiving routines when needed. We believe that mutual trust and secure relationships between playworkers and children is important to creating a comfortable environment for children to explore and take risks in.
- *Co-learners* - We embrace curiosity and join kids as they explore and wonder. We acknowledge that education is never complete and that we can learn from kids, each other, and the ecosystem that we are a part of.

How Wild Onion lines up with existing pedagogies...

We are largely aligned with *Forest School* programs.

We are largely aligned with *Reggio Emilia* philosophy. Key differences include our setting, in that we are fully outdoors and materials are packed out every day.

We share *Montessori's* emphasis on thoughtful design of the learning space, and have a similar approach to age and developmental groupings. We differ from Montessori philosophy in that we embrace fantasy and adults' roles as co-learners.

We share *Waldorf* early childhood programs' emphasis on creating comfort and beauty, embracing magic, and encouraging all-weather play. We do not employ Waldorf theories of development and may utilize technology as a tool for learning.

We draw inspiration from *indigenous tradition* and *Critical Pedagogy*.

Playworkers

Annika "Ani" Tanus (*any pronouns*)

(661) 805-4518

Ani (or Annika) has been working with children for over 7 years in various settings. While attending Loyola University for Environmental Science in Chicago, she worked at daycares, nature centers, and schools, eventually finding forest schools. When the pandemic hit the US, they jumped from child care to plant care. Following a passion, for almost two years, Ani farmed and planted native gardens throughout Chicagoland. Ani has a unique view of the world and loves storytelling, making up silly songs, species identification, and creating things with his hands. When not with kids, Ani spends her time on her many hobbies; maybe making a blanket, baking gingerbread cookies, re-finishing their coffee table, or connecting with their California roots and re-learning to surf and skateboard.

Caroline “Lina” Spittel (*she/they pronouns*)

(603) 801-7375

Caroline’s love for nature play emerged while she was growing up in New Hampshire, making fort villages and dandelion soups in her backyard. After graduating from Oberlin College with a major in Environmental Studies, Caroline moved to Chicago and discovered a passion for nature interpretation and playwork. She finds joy in the humor and curiosity of learning alongside children, as well as in nurturing opportunities for social and emotional development.

Caroline is currently pursuing a Masters of Education in Nature Based Early Childhood Education at Antioch University. In her free time, she makes messy crafts, hunts for fossils, and watches reality TV.

Sunshine Soledá “Sole” deVries (*she/they pronouns*)

(616) 881-1854

Soledá Sunshine is a field naturalist, interpretive dancer and storyteller. She is a child at heart and ever curious about the wonders of the wild world. Soledá Sunshine grew up in a number of places around and about the continent, immersed in languages, friendships, and adventure; they bring scintillating stories of beautiful sights unsung, and of encounters with kindness in unexpected places. Alert to the challenges the Earth and humanity face, Soledá sees hope in playful creativity, in rooted adaptation, and in learning from the best teachers: the kin we have in all living beings and a queerly living planet.

Facilities

“Ted” Woods

Wild Onion Play primarily operates in Thaddeus “Ted” Lechowicz Woods Forest Preserve, located in the Edgebrook neighborhood of Chicago. “Ted” Woods is made up of diverse ecosystems, including a grassy field, hardwood forests, a small Oak Savannah, and the river. The location also has a non-potable water pump and picnic shelter.

Running water for drinking and hand washing is provided by water coolers. The primary bathroom is a kid-friendly camping toilet and privacy tent. There are port-a-potties on site that may be cleaned and used as needed.

Indoor Alternatives

In case of severe weather, Wild Onion will arrange museum visits or operate in an indoor public space as possible. Playworkers will communicate the details for these days as soon as possible. Some indoor day locations include:

- Chicago Park District rental rooms
- Edgebrook Library rental room
- The Swedish American Museum
- Peggy Notaebart Nature Museum
- Wonder Works Children’s Museum

We welcome suggestions for alternate locations and evaluate them based on cost, distance from “Ted” Woods, general availability, and ‘playability’.

Daily Schedule

Days at Wild Onion have a flexible framework that can shift and grow to meet children’s needs and interests while providing routine. Inspiration for activities will come from adults, kids, and the environment. All activities will be engaging, and sensory-rich.



Although every day promises to be a new adventure, we maintain a flexible schedule with predictable events throughout the day.

Daily Flow

This schedule represents a typical day at Wild Onion, but the exact times of activities will shift depending on group needs.

9:00-9:30 am Drop-Off

Families arrive and check in with the playworker by the backpack tarps. Kids place their things onto the tarp. (On rainy days, we have a shared backpack tarp under a shelter). A playworker looks over the child's gear to ensure they have everything they need for the day.

After gear has been checked, the caregiver heads out or stays through morning meeting.

9:30 am Morning Meeting

Morning meeting is called by a bell and song. We greet each other with a brief community-building activity. Then, we discuss the weather, community agreements, and the day's activities. We aim to keep these conversations brief so that the children stay engaged.

After morning meeting, we encourage drop-off caregivers who are still present to say goodbye for the day!

9:45 am Guided Exploration

A playworker facilitates an open-ended activity that is informed by the kids' interests and experience levels. These activities are typically designed to encourage group work and skill development. They may look like a large-scale art piece, 'play lab,' or tool practice.

10:30 am Snack

Participants gather their water bottles and snacks, put them at a spot on the snack quilt, and then wash their hands at the water coolers. During this transition, playworkers check in with children about going to the bathroom, gear, and other reminders as needed.

During snack, a playworker may tell a story or facilitate conversation.

After eating, participants put away their snack things, go to the bathroom (as needed), wash their hands, and transition into play.

10:45 am Free Play

This is an unstructured time for children to dive into play. This may look like building, climbing, acting out stories, creating art, or squishing mud. Playworkers step into 'watching mode,' making and documenting observations about each child, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and supplementing play as helpful.

The group will typically be close to the backpack tarp area at this time. We may occasionally go for a morning adventure.

12:00 pm Lunch

Participants gather their water bottles and lunch boxes, put them at a spot on the snack quilt, and wash their hands at the water coolers. During this transition, playworkers check in with children about going to the bathroom, gear, and other reminders as needed.

After eating, participants put away their lunch things, go to the bathroom (as needed), wash their hands, and transition into play.

12:30 pm Sit Spots

At the beginning of the season, children choose a special spot to sit for a short time every class. These spots are all within sight of each other, but distant enough to provide some solitude. Playworkers help children gain comfort in this practice by offering activity suggestions, art supplies, or books as helpful.

12:45 pm Free Play

This is an unstructured time for children to dive into play. This may look like building, climbing, acting out stories, creating art, or squishing mud. Playworkers step into 'watching mode,' making and documenting observations about each child, ensuring physical and emotional safety, and supplementing play as helpful.

During this free play time, playworkers and children may adventure into the 'beyond' (the Forest Preserves outside of typical boundaries) or practice tool use, depending on interest and energy levels.

2:30 pm Closing Meeting

We reflect on the day with a quick community-building activity. We say goodbye to each other. After closing meeting, children gather their things and help clean up some playthings.

2:45-3:00 pm Pick-Up

Caregivers arrive and sign their child out with the playworker by the backpack tarps. Playworkers communicate noteworthy events from the day, share accomplishments, and pass along preparation notes for coming sessions as needed. Caregivers are encouraged to glance at the lost and found pile before leaving.

Arrivals

- Wild Onion has a rolling drop-off period from 9-9:30 am.
- 9-9:30 am is 'community time' for caregivers to hang out, talk with playworkers, each other, and see their kids in the woods.
- The child must be wearing weather-appropriate clothes at the time of drop-off and have all items on the packing list with them.
- Circle time will begin at 9:30 am. Wild Onion encourages families to communicate with us if they will arrive after this time. Adults are welcome to stay through circle time, and then go.

Departures

- Wild Onion has a rolling pick-up period from 2:45-3:00 pm. During this time, playworkers will begin to clean up materials and organize belongings, inviting the children to assist.



Caregivers are welcome to hang out, hear about their kids' day, and talk to other community members at this time.

- Playworkers aim to begin clean up at 3:10 pm. If you would like to have a longer conversation with them, please reach out to schedule a meeting.
- If someone other than a guardian listed on the family documents is to pick a child up, playworkers must be given written notice (text, note, email). For identification purposes, a driver's license may be required prior to departure.
- Please be prompt when picking up your child. If you are running more than 5 minutes late, please contact us so that we can communicate that with your child. If a parent is later than 15 minutes and has not called, the staff will begin to contact the child's emergency contacts. There will be a fee of \$15 per child for pick up 15 minutes late and \$1 per minute thereafter. Late fees will be added to invoices.

Weather

- Wild Onion Play Collective (WO) playworkers will check the weather forecast daily, cross-referencing different weather services. When severe weather is in the forecast, WO will alert families about the potential of an adjusted day, as well as the tentative plan for an [alternate location](#) (including transportation and pay), delay, or cancellation. Communication will be issued to families by 5 pm the evening prior to the affected session about the definitive plan.
- When severe weather happens unexpectedly, WO participants will shelter in place under the picnic shelter (for things like lightning, hail, or intense rain) or in playworker cars (for things like wind, tornado warning, or severe cold). If the weather radar predicts that the severe weather system will continue for more than an hour, playworkers will contact guardians to pick the children up. If the weather system seems like it will pass quickly, the day may continue. In emergency situations (tornado warning, severe wind) guardians will be contacted regardless of the forecast.
- If driving conditions are unsafe, WO will be canceled or delayed. This will be informed by Chicago Public School closures, but may not strictly adhere to them.
- In order for playworkers to still be paid for their scheduled work days, WO will not offer refunds for days canceled or altered due to weather. Families may contact WO to schedule a makeup day if there is existing availability in the schedule.
- When considering weather cancellations or alterations, WO will take the time that the playworkers require to set up/pack out into account. Children may need to be picked up in advance of a weather system so that playworkers can get to safety by the time the system arrives.

- When lightning is observable, program participants, and playworkers will shelter under a picnic shelter. We will wait until 5 lightning-free minutes pass to go back out.

Conditions for an Indoor/Canceled Day

*Any **one** of these conditions will result in an indoor/delayed/canceled day:*

- 15°F or below by 10 am
- High winds of 20 mph or more
- Wind gusts of 40 mph or more
- Heat index of 95°F or above by 10 am
- More than 0.3 inches of rain/hour for more than 1 hour
- Thunderstorms lasting for more than 1 hour
- AQI above 125

*Any **combination** of the following conditions will result in an indoor/delayed/canceled day:*

- 25°F or below by 10 am
- Sleet/hail/freezing rain
- Heavy rain
- Wind gusts of 30 mph or more
- High winds of 15 mph or more
- Lightning/ thunderstorms

Gear & Clothing

Playworkers will perform a gear check for the children every morning before their caregivers depart. If important items are missing, playworkers will first try to source them from our extra gear. We will then request that the caregiver retrieves the items, as severe weather days are uncomfortable and dangerous without the proper gear. In this situation, we also recommend that caregivers reach out to other families to see if they might have anything the child could borrow.

Here are some gear guidelines:

- Clothing should be washable. Active exploration of the outdoors is encouraged and children will be permitted to splash in mud puddles, dig in the soil, make mud pies, play with paint and other things of that nature. Wild Onion encourages sending your child in clothes that can get dirty.
- Students need comfortable, protective shoes with gripping soles for climbing, running, and jumping. Sneakers or hiking shoes are best during dry weather. Rain boots are best during wet

or cooler weather. Waterproof, wool-lined boots are recommended for temperatures below 50 degrees. Sandals must have back straps and be worn with socks.

- Long pants and/or tall socks are recommended in all weather because of ticks and poison ivy.
- We suggest mitten clips or straps to prevent mitten losses.
- All clothing must be labeled including boots, mittens, snow pants, coats, etc. Although playworkers will do their best to keep track of clothing, many look the same and often end up close to each other.
- Children often push to wear fewer layers because of movement restriction and sensory needs, so it can be tricky to determine when a child is accurately representing their body temperature. [This infographic](#) has helpful tips to understand a child's layering needs.
- We understand that your child's personal belongings are special. As we do not wish that their items are lost or damaged, we ask that all personal items be left at home. If a child needs to bring in a special object, the child should be alerted of the risk that it will get touched by other kids or may get dirty.

Packing List

Regardless of the weather, participants should bring a complete lunch, a complete extra set of underlayers (bottoms, top, underwear, and at least one extra pair of appropriate socks), and two full water bottles. Sunscreen is recommended for exposed skin throughout the year, and bug spray is recommended throughout the warm season. An extra pair of shoes is highly recommended year round.

32°F and under

- 2 layers of non-cotton underlayers on top and bottom
- 1 pair of heavyweight wool socks
- Lightweight jacket, heavy flannel, or heavyweight wool sweater
- Midweight vest
- Waterproof snowsuit, or waterproof heavyweight coat and snow pants
- Well-fitting wool/non-cotton hat
- Balaclava or neck warmer
- 2 pairs insulated and waterproof mittens or gloves - 1 to wear, at least 1 for backpack
- Wool-lined, waterproof boots
- 3 pairs lightweight gloves/mittens - 1 pair to wear under waterproof mittens/gloves, 2 pairs for backpack
- 2 sets of handwarmers
- Mug for tea

32-50°F

- 1 layer of non-cotton underlayers on top and bottom
- 1 pair of midweight pants on bottom
- 1 pair of heavy or mid-weight wool socks
- Lightweight jacket, heavy flannel, or heavyweight wool sweater
- Midweight jacket or vest
- Rainsuit/snowsuit, or rain/midweight coat and rain/snow pants
- Well-fitting wool/non-cotton hat
- Balaclava or neck warmer
- 2 pairs insulated and waterproof mittens or gloves - 1 to wear, at least 1 for backpack
- Wool-lined, waterproof boots
- 3 pairs lightweight gloves/mittens - 1 pair to wear under waterproof mittens/gloves, 2 pairs for backpack
- Mug for tea

50-60°F

- 1 layer of non-cotton clothes on top and bottom
- 1 pair of mid or lightweight wool socks
- Fleece or lightweight down jacket, sweatshirt or heavy flannel, or heavy wool sweater
- Rainsuit, or rain/midweight coat and rain pants
- Well-fitting wool/non-cotton hat
- Rain boots
- 2 pairs lightweight gloves/mittens

60-75°F

- 1 layer clothes on top and bottom (non-cotton if wet)
- 1 pair of socks
- Sweater or sweatshirt (non-cotton if wet)
- Rainsuit, or rain coat and rain pants (worn if wet, in backpack if dry)
- Rain boots if wet, sneakers or hiking boots if dry
- Sunhat

75°F and over

- 1 layer clothes on top and bottom
- 1 pair of socks
- Rainsuit, or waterproof rain coat and rain pants (worn if wet, in backpack if dry)
- Rain boots if wet, sneakers if dry
- Sunhat

Gear Resources

- [Outdoor Gear Exchange](#) - online shop for used outdoor gear
- [Sierra Trading Post](#) - TJ Maxx-adjacent store for overstock outdoor gear
- [Patagonia Worn Ware](#) - used Patagonia gear

- [REI Used](#) - used REI gear
- [Steep & Cheap](#) - website with current outdoor gear sales
- Thrift Stores - Village Discount Outlet is a clothes-focused thrift chain with multiple locations throughout the North side
- Facebook Groups - Join gear exchange groups on Facebook to swap and buy used gear
- Wild Onion families - If a family is looking for a specific gear item, or looking to give something away, we recommend that they check with other community members first!

Physical Safety

Wild Onion playworkers are all trained to perform CPR on infants, children, and adults. There will always be a First Aid-certified playworker onsite. A comprehensive first aid kit will be on hand at all times during class.

Medical Emergency Procedure

After any physical injury or medical incident (i.e., asthma attack, break/sprain, wound, concussion, anaphylaxis), the responding playworker should determine, to the best of their ability, what happened, what they know about the incident, and if they can handle the situation with their experience and tools on hand.

They should then communicate with another playworker, who should either swap out with them if they have more experience or who should call 911 (if life-threatening) and bring supplies to the responder if they have the same amount or less experience.



If there are only two playworkers onsite, the one with more medical experience should attend to the injured child while the other supervises the other children (after contacting 911 and bringing supplies). If there are more than two playworkers onsite, the most experienced should attend to the injured child, one playworker should fill a 'support' role, and the remaining should attend to the other children.

The playworker(s) supervising the other children should move the other children away from the injured child, explaining what is happening in a calm manner. As soon as they are able, they should contact the injured child's guardian(s) with the

information that they have. If the child's guardian would like us to call 911/emergency services at this point, we will.

The responder should calmly assess the situation, talking the injured child through what they are doing. If they can apply treatment or get the patient into a better position, they should do so. Otherwise, they should stay with the child until emergency services arrive.

When/if emergency services arrive, the playworker should share all information that they have gathered with emergency services and continue to stay with the child, unless the child's guardian has arrived.

An [incident report](#) will be created and kept on file following every physical safety incident that occurs during a Wild Onion session.

Communicable Illness Policy

We rely on every family's help to keep the environment safe. Keep your child home if:

- The child has a temperature greater than 100°F. Children must be free of a fever for at least 72 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines, before returning to the program.
- The child has a cold, excessive drainage, recurrent cough, abnormal/excessive shortness of breath, or lethargy.
- The child has an inflammation of the eyes.
- The child has been vomiting.
- The child has lice.

The caregivers of a child who develops a communicable disease after recently attending Wild Onion should notify a playworker. A notice that maintains anonymity will be sent to families that have been in contact with the affected children. Further steps will be determined based on health agency guidelines.

A child will be sent home if there is a fever, vomiting, frequent coughing, abnormal shortness of breath, lethargy, or other symptoms of communicable illness. Our main goal is to keep the children healthy by preventing unnecessary spreading of illnesses. Before the child is picked up, we will help them maintain distance from other participants and/or provide them with a mask to wear.

COVID-19-specific safety procedures will be communicated to families prior to the start of the school year. These will complement, and in some cases supersede, the policies listed in this Handbook as the program follows the most current state and health agency guidelines for safety.

Proper hand washing is a simple and extremely effective way to stop the spread of unwanted germs. During the day, attendees practice hand washing habits before snack and after using the bathroom. Portable handwashing stations and/or hand sanitizer will be available wherever the group is located.



Immunization records or letters of exemption must be provided along with the registration form. In a disease outbreak, or after exposure to any of the diseases for which immunization is required, we may exclude children who are not vaccinated in order to protect all students.

*No refunds will be issued for sick days unless Wild Onion is able to fill the spot with another participant. This allows the program to pay playworkers for days that they're scheduled. Makeup days may be scheduled if there is existing availability.

Medicine Administration

Wild Onion playworkers will not administer medication without a caregiver's written consent, provided on the [medicine administration form](#). If a child has a new medication, the primary caregivers should fill out a form and submit it via email or in person. Wild Onion will have printed forms available at drop-off time if needed. Please note that medication must be in an original

container with pharmacy instructions.

Allergy Information

At Wild Onion, there will be times when participants come into contact with many different allergens in the natural world. Allergens might include tree nuts, egg shells, shellfish (crayfish and mussels), pollen, seeds, and grass. While we are always vigilant about your child's safety, due to the nature of outdoor education, we may not always be able to prevent accidental contact.

If your child has any known allergies, they must be communicated on the registration form.

Medications that the child may take during the day must be documented on a [medicine administration form](#).

All regular Wild Onion playworkers are trained in EpiPen administration. There is always an EpiPen in the on-site first aid kit. Wild Onion recommends that children who are prescribed an EpiPen or other emergency medication carry it with them in a small fanny pack or neck pouch. Please reach out to discuss alternative plans for children with severe allergies.

When there are participants with severe allergies in the program, Wild Onion may limit certain food items (such as tree nuts and peanuts).

Bathroom Policy

Please make sure that your child has recently used the bathroom prior to drop off.

Make sure that your child's clothing is conducive for easy care in the bathroom. Elastic waist pants are great. If your child has pants with zippers, snaps, or buttons, please prepare them to do this on their own. This will give the child a feeling of empowerment and independence.

Playworkers will provide (developmentally appropriate) bathroom assistance like taking off layers, changing clothing, getting onto the toilet, and wiping. If a child has several toileting accidents within a short time frame, playworkers will work with the child's caregivers to establish a plan to assist the child.

Hazards

Playworkers perform regular [site assessments](#) to determine the hazards and associated risks of a location. After analyzing the area, we make physical changes to the space and adjust boundaries to maintain safety and controlled risk. When possible, playworkers include the children in site assessments.

Here are some common hazards that we encounter onsite:

Poison Ivy - Poison Ivy is native to the area and provides food and habitat for many woodland creatures. For humans, contact with Urushiol, the compound secreted by the plant, can produce long-lasting rashes.

To prevent rashes, playworkers work with children to identify poison ivy and always look for the plant before going off trail or playing in a new space. If a participant does come into contact with the plant, the area is washed with cold water and soap, clothes are changed as needed, and caregivers are informed at pickup time.

If a rash does form, it typically starts out looking like a cluster or blisters or bug bites with yellow liquid at the center. If the rash is not at risk of spreading onto the face or genitals, it may be treated with topical ointments and iced to reduce itchiness. A doctor should be seen and may prescribe steroids if the rash spreads to sensitive areas, lasts for more than a few weeks, or is affecting quality of life.

The River - The North Branch of the Chicago River runs through Ted woods, providing a diverse and ever-changing ecosystem to play and learn in. The River poses risks of pollutant consumption, drowning, and discomfort via wet clothes. To mitigate these risks, playworkers perform daily assessments of the river's flow, depth, and turbidity.

If it is deemed safe to play by, we will find a sturdy, gradual bank to play at. Boundaries will be set according to children's gear, proximity to a handwashing station, and river conditions. All children by the river will be closely supervised, meaning that playworkers will take a step back from playing alongside the children and put all of their focus into ensuring that the children are safe. Playworkers will also carry a portable flotation device to use in the case of an emergency.

We always wash our hands after playing by the river and take time to change layers as needed.

Litter - While playworkers do their best to remove litter from the playspace every morning, trash remains a hazard in the playspace. Kids learn that if they see a piece of glass or other sharp object, they should leave it where it is and tell a playworker.

Children are often excited to get involved with cleaning up trash in the forest preserves. Because of the risk of contamination, kids only pick up trash while wearing gloves.

With a playworker's supervision and approval, children may establish a barefoot zone that has been thoroughly swept for hazards. On dry days, they may also take off their boots on the snack and reading blankets. Otherwise, we wear hard-soled shoes throughout the day so as to protect our feet from glass, metal, and wood.

Community Safety

Community Agreements

- We will care for *ourselves*
 - We will stay within the group boundaries, and ask a playworker if we would like to go outside of the boundaries.
 - We will wash or sanitize hands before and after meal times, and after using the bathroom.
 - We will make time throughout the day to check in with our bodies.
- We will care for *each other*
 - We will ask before we touch others. If there is a situation in which a playworker must physically intervene without consent to maintain participant safety, they will verbally explain to the child why they are doing so.

- We will get permission before touching or destroying someone else's creation. When possible, playworkers will give notice if a creation needs to be taken apart at the end of the day.
- We will show kindness to other people at the Forest Preserves. This might look like giving them space.
- We will care for *the environment*
 - We will fill up holes that we dig.
 - We will put our trash into a trash can or bag.
 - We will maintain distance from wild mammals and non-community member pets. Community members will only bring a pet to drop-off/pick-up if the pet has demonstrated gentle, predictable behavior with young children.
 - We will mind our ecological impact on the playspace and shift the way that we are using the land as needed.
 - We will be considerate of our materials and the consumption, wear, and waste of loose parts.

Safety Policies for Play

Playworkers perform [benefit-risk assessments](#), which inform the activities that are allowed at Wild Onion and their accompanying limits. When possible, playworkers involve children in this process to engage them in assessing risk.

We have a growing [folder of safety procedures](#) that we refer to when facilitating risky activities.

Wild Onion recognizes that every participant has unique needs and abilities. Guidelines around play may shift in order to accommodate and suit the community's needs. When guidelines/policies shift, participants and family members will receive updates.

Discharge Policy

The program reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of a child for any of the following reasons:

- Physical or verbal abuse of playworkers or participants by a caregiver;
- After reasonable efforts on the part of the program staff and the child's parent or caregiver to make accommodations and integrate the child into the program, the child's participation in the drop-off program may come to an end if there are behavioral or developmental concerns beyond the scope of what the program is able to accommodate. These decisions come from a place of love and care for the child - Wild Onion recognizes that the program may not be equipped to appropriately address every child's needs. Wild Onion firmly believes that punishment is not a tool of growth or education, and will always aim to make decisions through a restorative, rather than penal, lens.

Payment

Tuition

Wild Onion's drop-off tuition is charged at a flat rate of \$70/6 hour session (\$11.66/hr). As the fall session is 14 weeks long, excluding breaks, the total tuition for 1 session/week is \$980. For 2 sessions/week, the total fall tuition is \$1960.

This cost is calculated so that, at a 1:3 staff:child ratio, Wild Onion playworkers are paid \$22/hr for 7 hours/day and the organization can cover costs like curriculum materials, safety supplies, and fees.

Invoicing

Please send payment via Zelle to Annika Tanus at (661) 805-4518. This number is connected to Wild Onion Play, LLC's bank account. If you would like to pay with a card, please contact us and we will send an invoice via Helcim, our secure card payment service. Card payments do incur a small fee.

Invoices will be sent out on the 15th of each month, and are due on the 30th of each month. If the payment has not been received by its due date, Wild Onion Play Collective will follow up with the payer. If the payment hasn't been received within 7 days of the follow-up email, a late charge of \$10 for every additional unpaid week will be added.

Communication

Wild Onion will send a weekly newsletter with program updates, weather forecasts, and important reminders. During the week, updates will be sent primarily via Whatsapp groups that families will be added to prior to their start at Wild Onion. Families will be added to a Whatsapp group for each day that the child attends, as well as a community-wide group for general updates.

Families are welcome to reach out to playworkers via Whatsapp or to email wildonionplay@gmail.com with any questions, comments, or updates.

Photo Permissions

Wild Onion staff will refer to the photo-sharing preferences selected on the registration form before posting or sharing pictures of a child. If a family would like to change their photo preferences, they can do so by editing their response on the form or by notifying a playworker. Wild Onion will remove pictures from media when requested to do so by a family member.

If a caregiver or family member would like to share pictures taken at or shared by Wild Onion on social media, they should first seek consent from any pictured children's caregivers.

Legal Status

Wild Onion complies with Illinois Department of Human Services Rule 50.820 Staff Qualifications for License Exempt Providers that all staff members have the appropriate level of professional and educational qualifications and experience to work with youth, as well as with Illinois Department of Human Services Rule 50.830 Training Standards for License Exempt Providers which addresses facility staff members' initial orientation and annual trainings.

Wild Onion Play LLC has a permit from the Forest Preserves of Cook County to operate out of Thaddeus Lechowicz "Ted" Woods.

Wild Onion Play LLC is insured as a homeschool group by NCG for up to \$1 million dollars per occurrence.

Wild Onion Play LLC was established in May 2023, and is owned in equal shares by Annika Tanus, Caroline Spittel, and Sunshine Soledá DeVries. The organization's Federal Tax Identification Number is 92-3874673.