



State FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Childcare and Preschool to End Services on September 30

The board of directors of United Childcare and Preschool (UCP) has voted to end all service operations as of the close of business on September 30, 2022. The nonprofit corporation will then proceed to an orderly process for formal dissolution.

UCP was founded in 1970 and has operated childcare services within the facilities and memoranda of understanding with Asbury United Methodist and First United Methodist Churches in Sioux Falls. Currently, approximately 60 children are served by UCP in the two locations.

Parents, staff, other stakeholders, and the two churches where services have been provided were informed today of the decision. Staff will continue to work with children and be paid through the end of September, with retention pay and other incentives available for those who choose to remain through the end of service provision. Management staff have been asked to serve through October 31, 2022, to assist staff and parents and to perform other activities. They, too, will be eligible for retention pay and other incentives to maintain employment through the period.

“Continuity of care for our children in service and for our staff is of our utmost consideration as we transition through this difficult time”, said Jim Gray, United Childcare and Preschool, Inc. Board President. “Childcare is in a critical state in our community. We are saddened that we are not able to see any other path forward at this time.”

Several factors weigh into the decision being made to curtail childcare services. The ability to secure stable executive leadership for the childcare service is the most pressing. To run a state-licensed center requires a credentialed professional. “With a program of this size, seeking and securing a professional at a cost the organization can afford is a critical challenge” says Gray. “We have a dedicated staff and the state of South Dakota, overseeing our licensing compliance, has been very helpful in assuring we are in compliance, for now. It is just not sustainable over time to have the staff leadership we need to assure continuity of care.”

The eleven-member staff has worked tirelessly to assure the services and supervision of children is in continued compliance and meeting the needs of children. This has included the engagement of dedicated volunteers who have become certified through background checks and other requirements to make sure proper adult-child ratio coverage is assured. The inability

to secure, train, and retain personnel on an ongoing basis creates untenable safety and quality assurance concerns, according to board members' comments.

The size of the childcare program, and that it is split between two locations, add to the challenges of staff, transportation, and coordination of providing care. "The children in our care deserve the highest quality care and learning in a faith-centered structure," says Gray. "We cannot guarantee this quality and continuity, and this weighed heavily into making the decision, now, not to move forward with the program."

The timing of the announcement also was factor in making the decision to cease operations. A large number of children served will be transitioning to kindergarten and other educational settings in the fall which eliminates the concern to families of making transitions during the school year. Families needing assistance to find care will be provided with support by current United Childcare and Preschool leaders who will provide technical assistance to secure options for care.

"Asbury United Methodist and First United Methodist Churches have opened their doors to help this program of services throughout these many years." said Gray. The decision for the nonprofit organization of United Childcare and Preschool, Inc. was made fully independently as an organization dedicated to the childcare mission. "The delivery of childcare services by the organization is simply not of a scope and size to be sustainable under the current nonprofit corporation model. We owe it to children and families to give them the best quality and continuity of care. We are not able to meet that standard," he reported.

Families currently receiving childcare services from United Childcare and Preschool have also been encouraged to contact the Helpline Center at 211 to inquire about other childcare options.

The UCP board has retained the Sioux Falls-based consulting firm of Sumption & Wyland to coordinate the nonprofit dissolution process, which should take approximately six months to complete.