

2023 GIGI'S ANNUAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE EDUCATE • INSPIRE • BELIEVE

CONFERENCE TOOLKIT

November 1-5, 2023

We are so excited to host our 2023 Annual Leadership Conference in Itasca, Illinois. We are looking forward to learning, sharing, and growing with you and our network of playhouses. The information below will help you prepare for the conference and get you where you need to go throughout the weekend.

Each year, GiGi's dedicates 4-½ days of training and inspiration for our national network of 58+ playhouses and startups at our Annual Leadership Conference. Attendees will include playhouse volunteers, staff, and board members from across North America who come together for networking and learning opportunities related to our mission.

#GiGisConference

#GenerationG

#GiGisPlayhouse

For any last-minute questions, please contact conference@gigisplayhouse.org

GIGI'S PLAYHOUSE, INC | 2350 W Higgins Rd, Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

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Overview

Conference Website

The Conference web page, <https://gigisplayhouse.org/gigis-playhouse-national-conference/> can also be found at [GiGisPlayhouse.org](https://gigisplayhouse.org) under the EVENTS tab. Please check the conference website for a preliminary schedule, general updates, breakout session details, and more!

Registration

Conference registration is required, and it is not the same as booking your hotel room. Please register [HERE](#) with Whova. This is the only way we know how many seats we need and how much food to prepare. If anything changes, please be sure to update your registration answers. Link is also on the conference website above.

NEW Conference App – Whova

The official GiGi’s Playhouse Conference app is available on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#) (logo above). Download **Whova** and search for “GiGi”; choose 2023 GiGi’s Annual Leadership Conference to access updated information on schedules, speakers, and locations. Make sure you also update your profile information and add a picture. Pictures cannot be added through the app, but they can be added by computer.

Please DO NOT put GiGi’s Playhouse headline/organization field. Instead, please write your playhouse location and (optional) title. e.g., Annapolis, Site Manager

Dress & Culture

The dress for the conference is business casual. Be comfortable and wear your GiGi’s swag on Saturday! Adult participants with Down syndrome are welcome to attend and please make sure they register as a self-advocate. Please note that we will have specific sessions for adult self-advocates in attendance on Saturday. Since this is a business conference, please find alternative options for young children.

Schedule Outline

The official hourly agenda will be available in the GiGi’s Playhouse Conference App in Whova. This will be the most accurate and current source of information about the schedule. A printable version will also be available onsite.

Breakfasts

Please use your breakfast voucher included in the price of the hotel rooms for the cafe at the hotel prior to the conference start time. In the mornings, only coffee and tea will be served in the conference center. Dining options at the hotel are listed below.

Food options in hotel:

- **Market Place** – Open daily from 6 am to 1:30 pm, stop by for delicious grab and go options. Breakfast features sandwiches, pastries and of course caffeine to get your day moving. They also feature daily Lunch specials. PLEASE COUNT ON LONG WAIT TIMES IN THE MORNING.
- **400 Park Bistro** - open daily from 7:00am - 11:00pm. For the perfect place to connect when you arrive, grab a glass of wine and enjoy favorites like burgers or nachos. The kitchen closes at 10pm each evening.

Wednesday, November 1, New Staff Training

3:00 pm – 8:00 pm

You’re welcome to arrive as early as 2:30 pm to do some shopping and for coffee and gelato at Hugs + Mugs!

- GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates, Hugs + Mugs Café & GiGi's National Office
2350 W Higgins Road
Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

Please join us at the National Playhouse for our **New Staff Training** where we offer you the chance for a tour of the flagship Playhouse, training for new staff, an opportunity to get to know your peers and enjoy a light dinner together.

**The best way to get to/from the Playhouse is through the Ride Share option with other attendees in the conference app, or through Uber/Lyft. There will be no hotel shuttle to/from the Playhouse.*

Thursday, November 2, Training Sessions for All Staff

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Check-in and packet pickup begins at 8:30 am

- Westin Chicago Northwest – 400 Park Blvd., Itasca, IL 60143

Thursday Evening, Staff Mixer Hosted by TriNet

6:00 – 8:00 pm

- Itasca Country Club
400 E Orchard Street
Itasca, IL 60143

**This is approximately 2 miles away from the hotel. The Hotel Shuttle is an option, or you can carpool or take your preferred car service (Taxi, Lyft Uber).*

- *If you would like to use the Hotel Shuttle, please sign up at the front desk in advance. You will then meet at the front entrance near the bell stand for departure.*

Friday, November 3, Conference Sessions

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

Check-in and packet pickup begins at 8:30 am

- Westin Chicago Northwest

Friday Evening Networking Event

5:00 – 7:00pm

- GiGi's Playhouse Hoffman Estates*
2350 W Higgins Road
Hoffman Estates, IL 60196

Please join us at the National Playhouse for our Networking Event where we offer you the chance for a tour of the flagship Hoffman Estates Playhouse, Hugs + Mugs Café, and GiGi's National Office. Enjoy heavy appetizers, drinks, and network with your peers. We also welcome continued networking back at the hotel afterward.

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Saturday, November 4, Conference and Banquet

8:00 am – 4:40 pm

Check-in and packet pickup begins at 7:30 am

- Westin Chicago Northwest
- Be sure to go to the group photo at 4:40 pm!

Saturday Evening Banquet and Awards Ceremony

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Cocktail Reception in atrium

6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Banquet Dinner, Annual Awards Ceremony, & Dancing

- Westin Ballroom

Sunday, November 5: 2023 Strategic Planning Workshop, at the Hotel Conference Center

9:00 am – 12:00 noon

- Westin Chicago Northwest – Ballroom III and IV

Travel and Accommodations

Hotel Location and Travel Times

Westin Chicago Northwest

1551 Thoreau Dr N

Itasca, IL 60143

- O'Hare to Hotel - *15 miles. Approximately 20-25 minutes.*
- Hotel to the National Playhouse - *12 miles. Approximately 20 minutes.*

Transportation to/from Hotel and GiGi's National Playhouse

Hotel Shuttle: The hotel shuttle is free but is only available within a 5-mile radius of the hotel. This includes the dinner on Thursday evening and Woodfield Mall. The airport is unfortunately just outside this range.

- Thursday, November 2 – Staff Mixer, Itasca Country Club

Uber/Lyft/Taxi: Always a great option for ultimate flexibility.

- Please be careful NOT to use the standard Taxi line at the airport, as those taxis are for going into the city and will charge 150% of the fare to go to the suburbs.
- If you choose to use a taxi, be sure to call American Taxi at (847) 252-9237

Ride Sharing with Other Conference Attendees:

- Within the Whova app, under “Community,” search “Ride” to access ride sharing communications.
 - ***If you have your own vehicle:*** Your assistance is requested to help transport guests. If you are able, please share your availability using the “Ride Sharing” Community. Meet at the designated times and locations to take any overflow in your vehicle so everyone can arrive on time. THANK YOU!
 - ***If you need a ride:*** Simply post your needs and review the ride availability from other attendees!