

Parent Handbook

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Discovery Preschool & Childcare Center, Inc.

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Discovery Preschool & Childcare Centers, Inc.

Discovery Centers are State licensed programs providing day care services to children 6 weeks to 5 or 6 year old, and full day preschool program to children 3-5 years old. We are open Monday to Friday, from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

Our Mission at Discovery is to provide children with a safe and nurturing learning environment and varied age-appropriate experiences which help them develop socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally. We encourage respect toward others and our environment. We offer a variety of creative and educational activities to meet the individual needs of your child. There is a balance of quiet and active periods, structured play and activities, and individual and group play.

- We believe children learn through play, hands-on activities, and exploring the world around them.
- We believe each child is unique and we help each to fulfill his/ her potential.
- We believe physical activity is essential for continued growth in both large and small motor development.
- We believe in the importance and value of the arts in children's learning and development.

Our programs offer experiences in visual and dramatic arts, creative movement, music, children's literature, early childhood physical education and cultural awareness. The curriculum is created with age appropriate themes each month or week. Projects and classroom play focuses on these themes. We use observed assessments throughout the year to assist us in developing lesson plans and creating an environment and invitations to create that will meet the needs of every child.

Teachers post weekly lesson plans and experiences in each classroom or provide an information board of the days experiences and explorations for parents. We also document children's experiences, play, and activities through photography to display, as well as share on class dojo or Facebook.

We believe that YOU are the most important teacher your child will ever have! Open lines of communication between center staff and family members are essential to facilitate your child's growth and learning. Our Parent Bulletin Boards, Information board, Class Dojo and newsletters provides classroom news about activities that your child is participating in, important notices, and other important information. Your own personal space is a Parent Cubby that should be checked daily for newsletters, special artwork, notes from director or staff, tuition bills, and the occasional found items.

We promise to recognize, honor, protect, and nurture your child as long as they are in our care and to respect the integrity and diversity of all families enrolled at Discovery.

Daily Schedule (example)

7:30-8:30	Arrival & Breakfast
8:30-9:00	Breakfast Clean Up & Free Play
9:00-9:15	Circle time
9:15-9:45	Art Experience/ Free Play areas
9:45-10:15	AM Snack (for under 2 classes)
10:00-10:30	Outdoor Play or Gross Motor Indoor Activity (ie Dance)
10:30-11:00	Story & Hand washing
11:00-11:30	Lunch
11:30-12:00	Free Play & Lunch Clean Up
12:00-12:30	Outdoor Play or Indoor Gross Motor Activity
12:30-1:00	Story/ Bathroom before Quiet Time
1:00-3:00	Quiet Time/ Nap
3:00- 3:30	Snack
3:30-4:00	Clean Up & Free Play
4:00-4:30	Outdoor Play or Indoor Gross Motor Activity
4:30-5:00	Art Experience & Free Play
5:00-5:15	Story time
5:15-5:30	Free Play until Pick Up

Food Program

We observe Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutritional guidelines in planning our daily menus. Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack is served to all children. Additionally, a mid- morning snack is available for children under 2 years old. Please note serving times on our daily schedule. We encourage but do not force children to try new foods, helping them develop healthy attitudes toward a wide variety of foods. The menu is posted on

the Parent Information Board. Please do not send your child to the Center with CANDY, POP, or GUM.

Field Trips

Occasionally the children ages 3-5 will take field trips. Field trips to the park or walks around our preschool may occur during the day if weather permits. Any other destinations will be posted in advance. Please make sure you complete the Emergency Contact form and provide your consent for field trips as requested on the form. Children under 4 will only travel by foot. Children over 4 may travel on public transit.

Infants and toddlers may go on neighborhood walks in the stroller, however teachers will discuss this with parents prior to going on walks.

Dress

Dress your child in play clothes. We encourage active play, and your child WILL most likely get dirty, etc. Clothing should be clearly marked with your child's name. Dresses are not appropriate for outdoor play. Please send proper clothing for the season changes. Also, PLEASE SEND AN EXTRA CHANGE OF CLOTHES to leave at the Center.

Toilet Training

State licensing regulations state we can not begin toilet training a child until they are at least 19 months old. We will work with families as their child is ready to toilet train, however we can not force a child to sit on the toilet. We will use praise and encouragement, and can reward with hugs and a sticker, however we will not reward with candy or other foods. We do ask that your child is able to pull his/her own pants up and down on their own. Additionally, please provide pull ups with velcro sides to allow ease of changing.

Diapers

We ask parents to supply their own diapers and wipes for their child, either disposable or cloth. If you choose to use cloth diapers please speak to the Director about specific needs. If your child is using pull ups PLEASE provide the type that have velcro fasteners on the sides, for easier changes. Please check your child's board and notes for information on needed items at the Center.

Naps/ Quiet Time

Preschool children need naps or at least time to rest. A day care environment is very stimulating. We like to encourage all of the children to take naps or at least rest quietly for a while. For children over age 2 please provide a blanket and a small travel size pillow to be kept at the Center. Infants up to 12 months old will sleep in individual portable cribs, and according to licensing regulations can not have any toys, pillows, or heavy blankets, nor swaddling. At 12

months old, as stated in our Safe Sleep Policy, children will then sleep on a mat. We create a relaxed nap environment, with lights down and music.

Infant/Toddler Program

Infants up to 12 months old will have an individual crib for napping. There are napping cribs located both in the classroom, as well as a darker and quieter nap room. All children over the age of 12 months will have a nap mat. A safe sleep policy will be provided upon enrollment and needs to be signed and returned.

We support Breast Feeding at Discovery, and will do our best to provide a quiet nursing space for parents who wish to come to the Center to Breast Feed.

We ask parents of infants under age 12 months to provide an adequate supply of breast milk or formula, as well as their infants daily bottles to be used and sent home at the end of the day. Upon enrollment we will ask for a list of the baby foods that your infant can have. We will supply these foods only after they have already been introduced at home. Older infants, who are eating table foods, will be provided with the Food Program menu, and foods will be cut accordingly to allow for finger feeding.

Discovery Community

When your child enrolls at Discovery your family becomes an integral part of our community and your child's learning experience. Each year we have a series of social (pot luck and open house) and fundraising events. As with any community, it's strength is only as great as it's members commitment.

Birthday Celebrations- Birthdays are celebrated at the Center whenever possible. Treats are welcome for the children in your child's class. We encourage healthy treats, please no cupcakes.

Holidays- Several Holiday celebrations are held throughout the year. Halloween costume party, healthy treats, and games are played. Christmas is celebrated with songs and a pot luck afterwards, an evening program. or a cookie or gingerbread house decorating family gathering. We also hold a year end Preschool Graduation and pot luck.

Fundraisers- We participate in a few fundraisers throughout the year to aid in purchasing classroom supplies and learning materials.

Scholastic Book Club- We participate in Scholastic Book Club, and provide club order forms throughout the year. When you purchase books through the club you will find wonderful books for your child at a wonderful price. Your purchase also earns us points towards classroom books and learning materials.

Additional Discovery Policies

Key Card Entry (*Brooks Street Location*)

Upon enrollment a key card, for entry into the Center, will be provided to you. There is a small fee for the keycard. For the sake of recycling, we request the keycard is returned if you terminate your provider contract. Additional key cards may also be requested for a small fee. A replacement fee of \$10 will need to be provided for lost cards.

Contracted Days

Your contract is a binding agreement for the number of days you are contract for. If you are a University student and/or State Pay parent you are still responsible for payment of the days you are contracted for. University students, who are state pay, are not covered during holidays, spring break, etc. Be aware, you are still contracted for those days and will be charged accordingly. More on State Paid Childcare on last page.

Drop off/Pick up Procedures

We will NOT allow anyone to pick up a child if they appear to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. We will ask that person to call for an alternate person to pick up the child.

Please walk in with your child in the morning and come inside to pick up your child in the afternoon. Never leave or pick up your child without talking to a staff member. We must have your permission to release your child to another person if you are unable to do so personally. Please inform us in advance either by phone, a note or in person in the morning. If another individual is picking up your child please inform them that they MAY be asked for photo identification.

Please sign your child in at the beginning of the day, and sign out when picking your child up. This is a Licensing Requirement, as well as important when we must leave the building in an emergency such as fire.

REMEMBER TO CHECK YOUR PARENT CUBBY EACH DAY FOR IMPORTANT NOTES, NEWSLETTERS, OR OTHER COMMUNICATIONS.

Attendance

We appreciate notification when your child is kept home due to illness or other reasons. Please notify Discovery staff by 9:00 am if your child will not be coming for the day or will be late. This helps us in determining numbers for meal preparation and proper staffing. If your arrive later and have not notified us we may have to deny services for the day. Because of our tuition policy and staffing regulations, absences are not credited nor is swapping of days allowed.

Illness

A complete Illness Exclusion Policy, as well as Discovery Health Policy, is available to review upon request.

At Discovery Preschool and Childcare Centers we want to keep all of our children and Staff healthy and safe. We believe that ill children need special additional care that may require exclusion from the group setting. The decision to exclude a child from care will be based on whether there are adequate facilities and staff available to meet the needs of both the ill child and the other children in the group. The child care provider, not the child's family, will make the final determination about whether the acutely ill child can receive care in our program. If your child becomes ill while at the Center he will be separated from the other children and a parent will be contacted. You are expected to pick up your child within one hour of this call.

The following is our policy concerning illness as required by the STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT and Child Care Licensing Rules:

The day care staff shall exclude from the facility any child, as well as staff, showing signs or symptoms of illness (a runny nose without fever is permissible). If a child has any of the following conditions, he/she will be excluded:

- a) A temperature of 101.5 or greater.
- b) A draining ear infection.
- c) Diarrhea and frequent runny stools with abdominal discomfort, or diarrhea that can not be contained. Diarrhea being more than one loose stool, or gray or white stool.
- d) Chicken pox (until the sores are dry).
- e) Thick mucous discharge from the nose which is green or yellow in color.
- f) Presence of ringworm, lice, scabies, impetigo, pink eye or other body parasites. ***Pink eye MUST have medication treatment for 24 hours before a child can return to school, and must be treated. This is a State rule.***
- g) Severe coughing- getting red or blue in the face or making a high pitched croupy or whooping cough.
- h) Yellowish skin or eyes.
- i) Unusual or suspicious rash or spots, infected skin patch(es)- crusty, yellow, oozing skin.

j) Sour throat or trouble swallowing, or presence of Covid like symptoms.

A child with fever, vomiting or diarrhea must be symptom FREE without medications for no less than 48 hours to return back to school. A child who is too ill to participate in the daily scheduled activities at Discovery Preschool should be kept home until they are able to participate. Parents will be asked to find back up care for a child who is lethargic, unable to go outdoors, or who is still in need of more medical attention that can be provided at Discovery.

Medications and Medical Emergency Procedures

While it is preferred that medications be administered by parents at home, we can administer a limited amount of OTC and Prescription meds with proper authorization. In the event your child will need to be given medicine, please ask for a medication administration form and medication log. These forms must be filled out in order for us to administer any medications. All medication **MUST** be brought in its original container, and must be marked with their name. Please give the medicine and paperwork to the Director or Lead teacher. (More information can be found in our Medication Administration Policy and in our Health Policy located in the hall entry way)

Parents must give written authorization to get necessary medical treatment in case of an emergency. This release is part of the emergency information sheet in your enrollment packet. In the event your child becomes ill you will be called immediately. (Complete policies available to review) **If your child's illness is life threatening, or injury has occurred, we use the Emergency Medical Release Form. You will be contacted immediately as your child is being transported to the Emergency room. In the event of poisoning we first contact Poison Control 1-800-222-1222**

If you have given any medication to your child at home before they come to school, you must let us know in writing. This should include the name of the medication, dose, and time given. This helps us keep an eye on your child for symptoms when it wears off and to watch for drug reactions, which can appear hours after taking a medication and can happen even if you have used a medication before.

A note about fever reducers: If your child is sick enough to need a fever reducer, they are probably sick enough to stay home, and if their fever was above 101.5 degrees they **MUST** stay home.

Allergies

Parents need to inform the Center of any allergies their child has concerning foods, medications, etc. A written statement from a physician is needed. For food allergies, please provide a list of food substitutes.

Injuries and Accidents

We make every effort to keep your child safe; however, active children will have some unavoidable accidents and minor injuries (bumps, scrapes, etc). As a partner in the care of your child, we realize that you will want to be aware of your child's injuries or illnesses that occur at the Center. We will provide you with an Accident/Injury/ Incident Report for each occurrence that requires first aid. In cases of injury that requires your attention or serious injury, we will immediately contact you. If we can not reach you, we will call the Emergency Contact person indicated on your contact form. (See above)

Mandatory Reporting of abuse and neglect

Child care workers are state mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect; we immediately report suspected or witnessed child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS).

Staff who is suspecting and/or witnesses the abuse will document the said abuse following specific guidelines set out in our Mandatory Reporting Policy. This policy is available on request, and is included in our Health and Safety Handbook available on our website.

The staff member that suspected/ witnessed child abuse or neglect will contact CPS **1-866-820-5437** as soon as possible especially if they feel the child is in danger.

The state licenser is notified of any CPS report made by the facility.

Discipline & Guidance

Child management techniques focus on preparing the environment to prevent conflict, as well as teaching age-appropriate behaviors and expectations in a group setting. Rules are simple and consistent. We use behavioral guidance and redirection in the classroom. We use "calming time" only when other forms of redirecting behavior are not working. Occasionally problems arise that are more challenging and we may find it necessary to contact the parents in order to work together to help the child learn appropriate problem-solving behaviors.

Enrollment Procedures

In order to enroll your child, we need the following forms completed prior to attending:

1. Enrollment form & Childcare Contract
2. Immunization Record
3. CACFP Income Eligibility Form (All families must complete)
4. Emergency Medical Release & Contact Form
5. For Infant/Toddlers- Physicians Health Statement, Feeding Schedule and signed Safe Sleep/ Shaken Baby Syndrome Policy

6. OTC Medication Authorization Form for Sunscreen, diaper creams, etc
7. Field Trip and Photo Release Forms
8. For Children with special health issues, allergies, asthma, etc. please see the Director for additional State required documents needed.

We suggest that you visit the program at least twice with your child, to better acquaint them to the environment and other children. As we accept State Paid Childcare Best Beginnings Scholarships, we need state forms and confirmation of status in order for your child to begin.

Rates & Fees

Our monthly rates are provided separately with this handbook

Payments are due no later than the 5th of the month, unless otherwise arranged. Bills for the month are placed in parent cubbies at the beginning of each month. Payment not received by the 5th of the month may jeopardize continuing care for your child. A fee of \$10 a day, after the 5th of the month, will be added to your account, unless prior arrangements have been made.

If problems occur where you need to change your payment schedule, please speak to the director.

Return Check Fee (NSF)- \$35.00

Late Pick Up-

Parents are responsible for picking their child up on time! We close at 5:30pm, please arrive prior to that to give time to get your child's items together. (Unless prior arrangements have been made for extended hour care.) A fee of \$10.00 is immediately applied at 5:31, and an additional \$1.00 for every minute that your child is late being picked up after closing will be charged to you. **You will be asked to pay the closing staff member directly, as they go off the clock at closing to avoid overtime hours.**

Occasionally weather will cause delays, please make every effort to leave work earlier to arrive safely to the center, but in the event severe weather causes delay we will not charge you a late pick up fee.

School Closures-

We will close when weather conditions make it hazardous for staff and families to travel. A call, text or email will be sent out as far in advance as possible. If the city declares Emergency Travel only on roadways we will be closed. These closures are still charged. Please understand we make every effort to avoid these closures.

Discovery has very few "paid provider" observed holidays or breaks for staff training, when we will be closed. You will be charged your usual rate, as our staff will be paid. These dates will be provided each year,

State Paid Childcare

State pay scholarships do not cover the entire daily rate of tuition at Discovery. You will be responsible for paying the Co-Pay, as well as the daily difference, as well as any difference not paid by state coverage. Please make sure your child is in attendance for the minimum of 6 hours per day to fulfill your contract, so that we can receive the appropriate amount from the State, otherwise you will be charged that difference. If you are not covered for 6 hours, you will be charged the difference the state does not pay for the days you have contracted. The state will not pay for Paid Provider Holidays, which you will be responsible for. Over 10 hours a day may not be covered by the state and you will be charged a fee of \$7.00 or \$8.00 an hour when your child attends over 10 hours. (Depending on the age of your child)

If you are a Student at the University please remember you may not have state pay coverage during your Breaks. Please be aware you are contracted for childcare and will be responsible for childcare costs not covered by the state, whether your child is here or not. We still have staff and overhead costs. You will be responsible to pay for these days, regardless of attendance.

You are responsible for all costs not covered by the State, in addition to a paid 4 week notice, if your state pay is discontinued. Payments towards overdue accounts are applied first to the difference and any balance on your account, before fulfilling your co-payment.

Grievance Policy

We make every effort to make Discovery Preschool Centers a great place for children and families. Our employees are familiarized with the policies contained in this Handbook, as well as the expectations we have for them. They are given regular training and support, however we know there will be times when there are differences of opinion or possible miscommunications or misunderstandings between families, teachers, and Directors. We have thought very carefully about the policies contained in this Handbook, and they are in place for the safety of all students. Although we want to be as flexible as possible, in general, we cannot make exceptions to these policies to fit the individual preferences of a single family.

As a parent, your first step should be to calmly and respectfully address any issues, concerns, or questions **with your child's lead teacher**, at a time they have to talk. Pick up and drop off may not be the best time to talk, as the teacher is responsible for supervising and greeting students. You may need to schedule another time when the teacher can give you their full attention. If this is not possible please call the Director to schedule a meeting with the teacher or Director, or both at a time that is convenient for you.

We want our families to be happy, and communication is key to understanding wants, needs, and any concerns our families have.

Termination of Childcare Contract

If a child is to be withdrawn from the program, ***a one month written notice and immediate final payment for that month must be given to the director.*** If no notice is given you will be charged

the month tuition. Any unpaid balance is due prior to your termination date. Unpaid balances after a final date of attendance are immediately placed into collections.

Costs incurred by Discovery in enforcing this contract, including collection agency and/or attorney's fees, may be sought through the court and paid by the parent(s) as a party to this contract.

** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability or political beliefs. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Target Center (202) 720-2600.*

** To file a complaint of discrimination, write, USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*