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## Welcome to Discovery Developmental Center!

Discovery Developmental Center was founded in 1992 as a place where children with special needs and developmental delays could receive preschool programming, full day childcare, and early intervention services in an integrated setting with their typically developing peers. Through word of mouth the program grew and developed, eventually outgrowing the leased space it was started in. In August 2005, Discovery moved into our new facility, designed and built with young children, families, and staff in mind.

We are a non-profit 501(c)3 organization run by a volunteer Board of Directors. An Executive Director manages the day-to-day business. We hope you and your child will soon feel at home at our center. Included in this packet is information about Discovery and our philosophies and policies. Please take time to read through this information and note questions you may have or items needing further clarification. We hope by providing you with this information, we can promote a higher level of understanding and cooperation between ourselves and families, as we work together to ensure a positive, enriching experience for your child in their most important growing years. The program's philosophy remains committed to the belief that children learn best through play with their peers.

### STAFF

Discovery employs a supportive, knowledgeable staff that is educated, experienced, and committed to developing relationships with the children and families in their care. Classroom teachers have backgrounds and degrees in education, child development, family relations and/or special education. A low student to staff ratio ensures everyone receives special attention and quality services. Speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists can be made available for consultations and offer private therapeutic sessions (onsite or offsite) to children needing early intervention services.

### ACCREDITATION

Discovery has been accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 2000. More than 20 years ago, NAEYC created an accreditation system to improve the quality of education and care provided in programs for young children. NAEYC-accredited programs must:

- promote positive relationships for all children and adults,
- implement a curriculum fostering all areas of child development,
- use effective teaching approaches,
- provide ongoing assessments of children's learning and development,
- promote the nutrition and health of children,
- employ and support a knowledgeable and professional teaching staff,
- establish and maintain collaborative relationships with families,
- use community resources to meet program goals,
- provide a safe and healthy physical environment, and
- implement strong management policies leading to high-quality experiences for all children, families, and staff.

For more information about NAEYC accreditation, please visit [www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org) or [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

### PHILOSOPHY

- At Discovery, we believe **children learn best through play!** Children develop self esteem and an enthusiasm for learning through a creative, non stressful educational experience. Discovery's curriculum focuses on a hands-on, social skills and play-based approach to learning. Classrooms offer play and learning choices at developmentally-appropriate levels for each age group and individual children within the groups. There is space for art, dramatic play, reading, science, blocks, manipulative table toys, language arts, music, and large motor activities. Children have opportunities to explore a variety of materials and to solve problems, make decisions, and interact with peers.

- We believe in an integrated setting where children become aware of the various gifts and abilities they possess. Children develop respect for each other's strengths and weaknesses as their ability to be sensitive and supportive of one another grows. Adult-directed activities teach children the social and language skills necessary to communicate in an appropriate manner. A healthy, positive self-image develops when a high degree of success is experienced in social situations.
- We believe the most important teacher a child ever has is their family! Open lines of communication between staff and family members facilitate the child's growth and learning. We promise to recognize, honor, protect, and nurture all children as long as they are in our care, and to respect the integrity and diversity of all families enrolled at Discovery.

## ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Please complete the yellow emergency contact information form in your orientation folder and bring it to Discovery on your child's first day. This form lists individuals we may release your child to, daytime contact information, and any allergies, disabilities, and/or special health concerns your child may have. **State regulations require that prior to admission each child shall have appropriate immunizations** (religious exemptions are no longer allowed in licensed childcare facilities). It is your responsibility to ensure timeliness of immunizations. Discovery also requires the following documents, all found in your orientation folder:

- a signed guidance and discipline policy
- a signed health policy
- a signed video and photo release (you may indicate "no" on this form!)
- health information privacy (HIPAA) documents
- a general field trip permission slip
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) paperwork
- an over the counter medication (OTC) authorization form
- a family share preference form, and
- a signed child care and tuition contract.

### WHAT TO BRING YOUR FIRST DAY:

- 4-6 ounce plastic water cup labeled with your child's name (please, no sippy cups or lids for children 3 or older!)
- A change of clothes, including underwear and socks
- A nap blanket labeled with your child's name
- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)

## DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

*This is a broad overview, as each classroom maintains its own seasonal daily schedule*

- 7:30–8:30 a.m.     **Arrival of children, quiet play in living room** – music, reading, fine motor manipulatives
- 8:30–8:45 a.m.     **Breakfast**
- 8:45–9:15 a.m.     **Child-initiated activities** – children select activities from blocks, dramatic play, books, and manipulatives in their respective classrooms
- 9:00–10:30 a.m.    **Small group time and learning centers** – art and science activities using a variety of textures and mediums, table toys and theme-related manipulatives, block play, dramatic play, and pre-math, writing, and literacy activities
- Circle time** – adult-directed activities, including music and movement, circle songs and finger plays, social skills lessons, and cognitive games, modeling appropriate classroom behaviors and encouraging participation from all children
- 10:30–11:00 a.m.   **Outdoor recess** – large muscle activities including running, climbing, bike riding, and exploring the outdoor environment (*children play outside every day except in cases of downpouring rain or when temperatures are below zero degrees*)
- 11:00 a.m.–noon    **Small group time and learning centers (indoors or outdoors)** – art and science activities using a variety of textures and mediums, table toys and theme-related manipulatives, block play, dramatic play, and pre-math, writing, and literacy activities
- noon–1:00 p.m.     **Lunch time** – lunch is done in two 30-minute shifts. Playgroup children eat first, while the older two groups enjoy another recess
- 1:00–3:00 p.m.     **Rest time/quiet time** for *all* children who stay the entire day
- 3:00–3:30 p.m.     **Clean up, large group story, toileting, and afternoon snack**
- 3:30–4:30 p.m.     **Large muscle activity** – indoor or outdoor play
- 4:30–5:30 p.m.     **Child-initiated/adult-directed activity (indoors or outdoors)** – children choose between free play or an adult-directed music and dance or art activity
- 5:30–6:00 p.m.     **Quiet play and closing**

## **PROGRAMMING**

Discovery provides full-day, year-round childcare for children 15 months through 6 years of age during the school year, and up to age 8 during the summer and school holidays. School year programming includes a Playgroup for 2-3 year olds, a Pre-School for 3-4 year olds, and a Pre-Kindergarten for 4-5 year olds. Children's schedules range from a two-morning-a-week preschool program to fulltime childcare. Historically, about one-third of Discovery children have had some level of special needs. An average of 25 percent of families served over the years have qualified for childcare assistance through the state of Montana. This diversified range of family needs sets us apart from organizations intended to serve specific populations or segments of our economy. Discovery promotes full inclusion in preschool and childcare programs with the hopes of fostering an awareness and respect in our children for each other's unique abilities.

Discovery's preschool programming calendar follows School District 5's lead regarding Christmas and Spring breaks, though we remain open during those weeks for mixed age activities. As a general guideline, children are placed in their respective classes based on when they will enter kindergarten. Children move from one class to the next in September of each year, based on decisions made jointly by families and staff. Our goal is to meet each child where they are at.

## **CURRICULUM**

Broad-based thematic units and realistic curriculum goals and objectives for the children are based on assessments of their developmental stage, programming needs, and current interests. Our daily schedule provides a balance of activities, including indoor/outdoor, quiet/active, individual/small group/large group, large muscle/small muscle, and child-initiated/adult-directed play. Routine tasks like hand washing, toileting, diapering, eating, dressing, and resting further children's developing self-help and social skills. A complete copy of our curriculum is available onsite or by visiting our website (<http://www.ddckids.org>).

## **ASSESSMENT**

Staff use everything they learn about each child—including learning styles, interests, and preferences, personality and temperament, skills and talents, challenges and difficulties, and family goals—in developing lesson plans that will support their individual learning and development. Throughout the school year, both formal and informal methods of assessment are utilized in planning, as well. Portfolios sent home at the end of the school year serve as documentation of your child's growth and their days at Discovery. Formal methods include the Ages and Stages Questionnaires®. Informal methods of assessment include observation and documentation of children's work, play, behaviors, and interactions, information collected from families about their child's history, experiences, family values and beliefs, and personal contacts with families, including family chats held twice a year. A complete copy of our assessment plan is available on our website.

## **TRANSITIONS**

We try to ensure smooth transitions between classes by making sure all staff have an opportunity to know most of the children. Staff schedules are intentionally planned so staff members have an opportunity to interact with mixed age groups at the beginning, middle, and/or end of the day. Staff begin talking to the children in the spring, and through the summer, about their new classroom and teachers. Because we have had the same group names for years (Squirrels, Mountain Lions, and Eagles), the children have a concrete way of thinking about the change.

## **SUMMER PROGRAMMING**

Summer programming runs June through August, and includes field trips, games, music and movement activities, sensory activities, water play, and creative art projects—outdoors whenever possible! Movies and popcorn round out some afternoons when the weather is too hot to play outdoors. We welcome returning kindergartners and first graders to our summer program. Though summer programming is not as structured as the school year program, routines are established to give comfort for everyone.

## **YOUR CHILD'S CARE**

### **DIAPERING**

If your child has diapering needs, please send one large bag of disposable diapers labeled with your child's name, and one box of wipes. You will be notified when supplies need replenishing. We are happy to accommodate families using cloth diapers; however you must provide a covered plastic container with liner and bring it home daily. We do not rinse soiled diapers (or underwear) due to health considerations and licensing regulations.

### **TOILET TRAINING**

We believe that until age 2½, most children are not ready for the often frustrating experience of toilet training. They have little control over the sphincter muscle that controls their bladder and little cognitive abilities to recognize when they need to void. Starting too early can be discouraging for your child, you, and our staff. If you feel your child is ready before this age, we are happy to discuss your concerns and ideas for implementing a toilet training plan at Discovery. However, we ask that your child be able to pull down and up their own pants with minimal assistance. If your child is unable to do this, they may not developmentally be ready to be toilet trained.

### **REST TIME**

Children staying all day are brought together for a rest time after lunch. Please bring a blanket labeled with your child's name. Blankets are stored at Discovery and washed at least once per week. Books are available for older children to look at while younger children are helped to sleep. Non-sleeping children who have rested quietly are transitioned to quiet play activities. All children are wakened by 3:00 p.m.

### **CLOTHING**

Please dress your child for active play and exploration, as your child may often get colorful and/or dirty. Clothing that is easily washed and manipulated by your child promotes independence in self-help skills. Shoes should be comfortable, easy to put on, and suitable for active outdoor play. We also provide space for a spare change of clothes (appropriate for the season and the correct size) near your child's cubby. Snow pants, boots, a hat, and gloves are required in winter and spring months. Please label all clothing with your child's name.

### **TOYS FROM HOME**

A small stuffed animal for rest time and/or for comfort is allowed, but other than that, you are encouraged to leave your child's toys at home. We recognize it can be easier to get out of the house in the morning by not arguing with your child, but please realize we will not be responsible for keeping track of toys brought from home. Small cars, for example, tend to get incorporated into classroom collections. Toy weapons of any kind are not allowed.

## MEALS

Discovery provides a breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack for children enrolled during those hours. A weekly menu is posted near the kitchen, as well as on our website. Discovery participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and follows their guidelines for meal components and minimum portion sizes:

- Breakfast consists of *one of each* of the following components: milk ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup), bread/bread alternate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  slice), and one fruit/vegetable ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup).
- Lunch consists of the following components: milk ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup), two fruits and/or vegetables ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup *total*), meat/meat alternate (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces), and bread/bread alternate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  slice).
- Afternoon snack consists of *two of the four* following components: milk ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup), fruit/vegetable ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup), meat/meat alternate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce), and bread/bread alternate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  slice). Water is offered alongside the snack.
- Children are offered at least one Vitamin C and three iron sources each day, as well as one Vitamin A source every other day.

Your child will be exposed to foods like spinach and romaine salad with ranch dressing, rice with peas, tuna pasta salad, roasted carrots, vegetable trays, and a variety of in-season fresh fruit. They will be encouraged, though never forced, to try everything. We recognize some foods may need to be served up to seven times before a child will try them! However, alternative snack options are not given.

Meals are planned on a four-week rotation menu. A typical weekly menu for Discovery would be as follows:

	<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>
<b>BREAKFAST</b>	Oatmeal Oranges Milk	Honey wheat bagels Apples Milk	Whole wheat toast Bananas Milk	Waffles Mangos Milk	Blueberry muffins Oranges Milk
<b>LUNCH</b>	Turkey sandwiches Apples Carrots Milk	Tuna noodles Corn Strawberries Milk	Cheese and bean quesadillas Romaine salad Pineapple Milk	Stir fry chicken Rice Broccoli Mandarin oranges Milk	Mini pizzas Bell peppers Bananas Milk
<b>PM SNACK</b>	Breadsticks with tomato sauce	Banana bread Milk	Pears Pretzels	Cheese slices Whole wheat Ritz crackers	Yogurt Granola

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, we are prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, political beliefs, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. S.W., Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800)795-3272 (voice) or (202)720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## **THE DISCOVERY COMMUNITY**

Your family becomes an integral part of Discovery's community when you enroll at Discovery. We maintain a strong, committed community by having children, their families, and staff share in social and fundraising events throughout the year. These opportunities allow families to get to know each other and establish relationships with their children's friends.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

We strive to provide a variety of ways to communicate with families. A bulletin board displays daily and/or weekly classroom news, as well as photos from the week's activities. Family mailboxes hold newsletters, artwork, notes, accident reports, tuition bills, and the occasional lost sock. Conferences, called "family chats" at Discovery, give you a chance to speak with your child's teacher about your child, the curriculum, and classroom goals and objectives. (These are scheduled two times a year, but can be arranged anytime upon request.) We are committed, as much as possible, to incorporating family values and goals into our teaching. Your child's classroom teacher will contact you within the first month after your child enrolls and/or when they transition to a new class, in an effort to learn about you and your family. Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) that incorporate all the professionals involved in your child's life can also be arranged to ensure your child's developmental needs are being met.

We maintain a website at **[www.ddckids.org](http://www.ddckids.org)**. The "DDC Login" button on the homepage will take you to a private families-only section. Check periodically for current breakfast and snack menus, monthly newsletters, wish lists, and other announcements posted in this section.

### **FAMILY EVENTS**

Discovery hosts family breakfasts, brown bag lunches, and evening dinners at various points throughout the year, sometimes in conjunction with holidays, and at other times "just because." We stagger these events to accommodate varying family schedules. Holiday themes like Halloween and Christmas are incorporated into our curriculum. If you have religious or other concerns about this, please let our staff know.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Many children (and staff) celebrate birthdays at Discovery. Treats from home are welcome either for all of the children at Discovery or for your child's class only. *Child-size* portions of ice cream, cookies, and muffins are all appropriate items. We especially love creative, nutritious treats and non-food surprises as well. Because of food sensitivities, sugary bakery goods with artificial dyes will not be served!

### **FAMILY SHARE**

Our "Family Share" program formalizes family volunteerism and gives all families the opportunity to involve themselves in the life of Discovery and their child's care and education. Tuition typically covers about 85% of our operating costs, with fundraising and special project grants covering the rest. Rising operating costs, along with increasing wage and benefit costs, necessitate an even larger percentage of our budget be covered by outside sources. To help bridge the gap, Discovery's Family Share program asks each family to fulfill a minimum of 15 hours of volunteer service each school year (these hours may be fulfilled by immediate or extended family members). A current list of new and ongoing projects is developed and shared with families at the beginning of each school year. The support given through this program has allowed us to achieve more with less financial output. To make a payment in lieu of committing to volunteer time, please make a check payable to Discovery for \$10 per hour (\$150 for the year). Please refer to the Family Share information packet and preference form in your orientation folder for more details.

## FUNDRAISERS

Discovery sponsors three to four fundraisers each year. Families participate by joining committee meetings, selling tickets, volunteering time, soliciting donations from area businesses, and of course, attending the functions. Some fundraisers are also family social events—a time to meet your child's friends and their families and show your child that you value where they spend their days. Because fundraisers are central to our operation and our mission, the participation of all families is vital to their success!

Successful fundraisers have included our annual "Sailing into the Future" regatta sponsored by the North Flathead Yacht Club each summer since 2004, various theme basket raffles, Silpada Designs jewelry sales, and "Grapes, Barley, and Hops," a wine and beer tasting event.

## OTHER POLICIES

### ABSENCES

Please notify Discovery by 9:00 a.m. if your child is not attending for the day. Please inform us about any illnesses/health concerns. Because of our tuition policy and staffing regulations, absences are not credited and swapping of days is not allowed. Please see the tuition policy in your orientation folder for more details.

### ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE TIMES

Please accompany your child inside the building every morning. We prefer that all children arrive before 9:00 a.m. so staff can greet them before beginning class. This makes for a smooth transition for your child and the rest of the class, and it also allows time to touch base with your child's teacher to share information about your child's health, mood, morning routine, or changes in the day's schedule. Please call Discovery when anyone other than you will be picking up your child, as staff are required to check your child's emergency contact information form before releasing your child to an unfamiliar person. *Discovery will not release a child to an intoxicated driver without notifying police.*

### CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Child abuse includes physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse/exploitation, emotional abuse, parental substance abuse, abandonment, and/or maltreatment of a child. Staff members are *required by law* to report suspected child abuse to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Service's Child and Family Services department.

### CLOSURES

Discovery closes on the following holidays or recognized holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday, two days at Christmas, New Years Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day. We close at 3:00 p.m. on Good Friday, Christmas Eve, and New Year's Eve. We reserve the right to close on any early closure days if there are not enough children scheduled to attend. We also close one Thursday and Friday in October (usually during School District 5 MEA days) so staff can attend the Montana Early Childhood Conference. These days are noted in calendars distributed at beginning of school year. **Discovery also closes for one week before the start of fall programming for cleaning and classroom preparation.** The above outlined closures have been taken into consideration prior to setting tuition rates, therefore no tuition credit will be granted.

## **EMERGENCY WEATHER AND HEALTH CLOSURES**

Discovery follows School District 5's lead in determining early dismissals and/or snow days due to severe weather. The school district closes schools when road conditions, snow, visibility, and/or temperatures make driving unsafe. Discovery calls in to KOFI, B98, and KALS radio stations to announce our closure. *Remember if there is no school for District 5 schools, Discovery is closed!* For School District 5 early dismissals due to severe weather, Discovery staff will make calls requesting you pick up your child and will then remain open until all children are gone. Power outages or problems with the water supply are considered a health and safety issue and may also warrant that your child be picked up early. We also follow current recommendations from Flathead City-County Health Department in regards to flu epidemics and other health emergencies.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

Discovery's child management techniques focus on preparing the environment to prevent conflict, as well as teaching appropriate behaviors for a group setting. Rules are simple and consistent and handled firmly and fairly. Staff use positive discipline techniques such as redirection, positive reinforcement, and ample praise to help children learn to manage their own behavior. Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and ideas; helping children identify and describe their feelings about another person or situation helps them recognize their emotions and become more empathetic. Corporal punishment is in direct opposition to our program's philosophy and is forbidden by licensing regulations.

Discovery participates in the Montana Behavioral Initiative (MBI), an offshoot of a national program called Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS). MBI stresses the importance of proactively teaching expected behaviors as a way of decreasing undesirable behaviors. More information can be found at [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org) or [opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/MBI/index.html](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/MBI/index.html), as well as on our website.

As part of MBI, Discovery staff strive for a 4 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions. We have also established centerwide expectations, as well as rules within those expectations for specific areas of the building (e.g. classrooms, lunchroom, bathrooms). The expectations and rules are posted throughout the building and are discussed frequently with children. Our four centerwide expectations are:

- Be Safe
- Be Responsible
- Be Respectful
- Be a Learner

Individual meetings can be requested by your family and/or teacher throughout the year—we strive to involve families before undesirable behaviors escalate. These meetings may include the Director, and often result in a behavior plan to be shared with all staff interacting with your child. Phone calls are also welcome when conflicting schedules make it difficult to touch base with your child's teacher. We are happy to discuss any concerns or ideas you may have regarding your child's discipline. **Please read, sign, and return the Discovery guidance and discipline policy included in your orientation folder.** A copy will be provided to you for your personal records.

## ILLNESSES

Your child will be exposed to more illnesses at Discovery than children who are not in a group setting. In order to keep this to a minimum, **we require all children displaying any symptoms listed in our health policy standards be kept home.** Any child displaying these symptoms at Discovery is expected to be taken home within *one hour* after being contacted by staff. Please have backup care lined up for your child for both the immediate day and the following day. Some symptoms include temperature of 100 degrees or higher, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, head lice, and any unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or behavior totally out of character for your child. Prescription medications must be in the original bottle, properly labeled with your child's name, with medication name, date issued, and instructions, along with written parental authorization on file. Nonprescription medications provided by families are dispensed only at the dose, duration, and method of administration specified on the manufacturer's label for the age and/or weight of your child, and only with written parental authorization on file. Outdoor play is a central part of your child's growth and development and it provides fresh air, so a good rule of thumb is *if your child is too ill to be outdoors, they are too ill to be at Discovery.* **Please read, sign, and return the Discovery health policy standards included in your orientation folder.** A copy will be provided to you for your personal records.

## LATE PICK-UPS

Please respect your child and our staff by promptly picking up your child by 6:00 p.m. Unless a phone call or prior arrangements have been made, there is a \$2.00 per five minute late pick-up fee after 6:00 p.m. This fee increases to \$1.00 per minute for any time after 6:15 p.m. **After a third late pick-up, fees increase to \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 p.m.** If no one has called or come for your child by 6:30 p.m., we will contact the Kalispell Police Department for any news and/or advice on where to take your child.

## TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Your child's first month at Discovery is viewed as a trial time, where we give everyone involved an opportunity to decide whether Discovery is the optimal environment for your child. Oftentimes, children start out really well, getting excited about the new things they are involved in, and the people they are meeting; we refer to this as the "honeymoon" period. Sometimes, though, usually around the third or fourth week, a child may rebel about coming—usually it is no more than the newness of Discovery wearing off. We urge you to discuss any problems or concerns you may have at this time, but most children come through this period if families remain calm and confident. Occasionally there is a child or family who would be better served in a smaller environment. We ask you to give us the first month to see if the placement can be made to work, but after that initial month, you may be released from your contract if you so choose. Sometimes children may display behaviors that are more challenging than Discovery's program resources can handle. We reserve the right to disenroll a child in cases where we believe a child's pattern of behavior can no longer be changed in our setting, the safety of other children is at risk, or the morale of the staff is endangered.