

## Welcome to Discovery Developmental Center!

Included in this packet is a variety of information about Discovery as well as policies and procedures to understand and be aware of. Please take time to read through this information and note questions you have or items that need further clarification. Providing this information is the base for a high level of understanding and cooperation between the center and families as we work together to ensure a positive, enriching experience for children in these important growing years.

### I. ABOUT THE CENTER

Discovery Developmental Center (DDC) is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and is licensed as child care center by the State of Montana ([MT licensing regulations](#)) to provide care for up to 45 children each day. DDC provides full-day, year-round child care for children **19 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. Summer time programming includes 3 age groups as well, and includes many off-campus field trips and outdoor activities. For additional information on programming options, see PROGRAMS on page 14.

#### **History**

DDC was founded in 1992 by 2 pediatric therapists as a place where children with special needs and developmental delays could receive preschool programming, full day child care, 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 its current facility - designed and built with young children, families, and staff in mind. Historically, about one-third of children attending DDC have had some level of special needs. In addition, an average of 25 percent of families served over the years has qualified for child care assistance through the state of Montana. This diversified range of family needs set DDC apart from organizations intended to serve specific populations or segments of our economy. DDC still maintains its focus of promoting full inclusion with the hopes of fostering an awareness and respect in our children for each other's unique abilities.

#### **Philosophy and Core Values**

Discovery's philosophy is firmly grounded in the concept that **children learn best through play!** Children develop self esteem and an enthusiasm for learning through a creative, non stressful educational experience. Our core values guide our work and philosophy of early learning:

- **Children are competent and capable.** Respecting and trusting that children can participate and contribute to the daily learning experiences are key factors in developing appropriate programming.
- **Children need empathy and a sense of belonging.** Helping children become aware of the gifts and abilities they and their peers possess promotes respect for each other's strengths and challenges, and heightens their ability to be sensitive and supportive of one another.
- **Children have the right to explore.** Children have the right to explore the arts, sciences, languages, and relationships within a community of caring, nurturing adults and in beautiful environments that are interesting, well-cared for, and reflect the culture of our community. They have a right to explore and experience the natural world, both indoors and out, with enough time and space to imagine and explore in ways that nurture deep learning.
- **Children need respectful relationships.** Children need adults who intentionally plan learning experiences that are important to them, and who teach them the social and language skills necessary to communicate with adults and peers in an appropriate manner.
- **Children come from families.** Families are a child's first teacher and hold the key to the healthy development of their children. We cannot do our work without them.

## **Governance**

DDC is overseen by a Board of Directors which typically includes both current and past family members and other community stakeholders. Day-to-day leadership and management activities and tasks are the responsibility of the Executive Director, who also oversees a staff of both seasoned and emerging teaching staff who implement the programming itself. Approximately 85% of program operations are covered by family tuition fees. The balance of the budget relies on fundraisers, community donations, Family Share contributions, and State incentives from participation in the STARS to Quality program, Montana's QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System.) DDC has maintained a STAR 4 level since September 2013.

## **Staff**

DDC 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 child to staff ratio allows for individual attention and quality care. Ongoing professional development is required by annual licensing requirements, accreditation, and participation in the State STARS to Quality system and is encouraged for both teaching staff and assistants and support staff.

## **Accreditation**

DDC has been accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 2000. Accredited programs have met NAEYC's 10 standards for high-quality early childhood education. They have demonstrated that they provide a safe and healthy environment for children, have teachers who are well-trained, have access to excellent teaching materials, and work with a curriculum that is appropriately challenging and developmentally sound. 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 <http://families.naeyc.org/> OR [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

## **II. ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT**

DDC admission and enrollment policies are governed by Montana state licensing regulations, STARS to Quality criteria, and NAEYC accreditation criteria, as well as DDC programming needs.

### **Enrollment Requirements**

- Registration form (orange) – provides initial family and child information. In addition, a \$50 registration fee is required for each child. See Tuition Policies for additional financial policies.
- Immunizations records (blue) - **State regulations require that prior to admission each child shall have appropriate immunizations** (religious exemptions are not allowed in licensed child care facilities). Children with incomplete immunization records may attend with a Conditional Attendance form signed off by family physician, Director and Parent / Guardian that indicates the timeline for completion of immunizations.

### **Other Required Paperwork**

- Emergency Contact information (yellow) - lists individuals that children may be released to, day time contact information, and any allergies, disabilities, and/or special health concerns a child may have.
- Physical Form (pink) – Well-child physician signature required for children under the age of 2; requested for all children.
- Child Guidance Policy signed off on
- Health Policy Standards signed off on
- Child Assessment Plan signed off on
- Permission to Screen (CDC, hearing and vision, ASQ, etc.)
- Video and photo release (approve/decline for promotional, web-site, facebook, etc)
- Health information protection privacy (HIPPA) doc
- Emergency Transportation Permission card
- General field trip permission slip
- Over the Counter Medication (OTC) authorization form (annual)
- Medical Statement to Request Special Meals and/or Accommodations (as needed/annual/ongoing)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) paperwork (annual)
- Child care Enrollment tuition contract (annual)
- Family Share preference form

### **Changes in enrollment / schedules and/or withdrawal from center**

Changes to children's schedules are accommodated whenever possible. Changing days and/or adding days is on a first-come basis, dependant on available openings. Two weeks' notice is required for changes in schedules that lessen the number of days a child is enrolled, as well as for disenrollment purposes. No guarantee will be made that dropped days for seasonal purposes will be available when needed again. For additional information about schedules and tuition, please see current Tuition Policy.

### **Termination of Enrollment**

A child's first month at DDC can be viewed as a trial period, where everyone involved has an opportunity to decide whether the center is the optimal environment for them. Oftentimes, children start out really well, excited about the new things they are involved in, and the people they are meeting. This is often referred to as the "honeymoon" period. There is oftentimes a period around the second or third week when a child may rebel when getting dropped off. Usually it is no more than the novelty wearing off. Most children come through this period best when families remain calm and confident. DDC Director and staff are available to help strategize the transitions.

Occasionally there is a child or family who would be better served in a smaller environment. After the initial month, families may be released from their contract if they choose, with no loss of tuition deposit. In addition, sometimes there are children with behaviors that are more challenging than DDC program resources can accommodate without outside support. Under these circumstances, DDC Director and staff will work with families to find additional services, resources, and/or a more appropriate placement. DDC reserves the right to disenroll a child in cases:

- When there is no family support for creating / following through with behavior plans.
- When there is consensus that a child's pattern of behavior cannot be accommodated in our setting without additional outside resources.
- When the safety of other children is at risk.
- When the morale of the staff is endangered.

### **III. ATTENDANCE POLICIES**

As a child care center licensed by the State of Montana and contracted with the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), **DDC must comply with State and Federal regulations regarding attendance and meal participation.** Our attendance records are legal documents. The check-in computer should only be used by adults signing children in and out. It is NOT to be used by children.

#### **Arrival Times**

Children should be walked into the center by an adult who is authorized by the family. Adults should check-in with a staff member and accompany the child into the appropriate area, depending on time of day (common area, lunchroom, or classroom.) It is preferred that children arrive before 9:00 a.m. so staff can greet them before beginning class. This promotes a smoother transition for children and also allows time for families to touch base about child health, mood, or changes in the day's schedule. To ensure adequate communication between home and center during arrival and departure times, we request that cell phones be turned off when in the building.

#### **Departure Times**

Please call DDC when someone other than regular pick-up persons will be picking your child up. Staff will make note of this information in common area as way to share information between staff shifts. If this information is not posted, staff will not release a child to an unfamiliar person, even if they have a Procure registration number, without making a verification phone call. In the case of custody disputes, a current court-ordered parenting plan must be on-site for DDC staff to release children to a non-custodial family member. Please be aware that **DDC staff will not release a child to an intoxicated driver without notifying police.**

#### **Daily Sign In / Sign Out Policy**

All children in attendance MUST be signed in and out daily by a parent or other authorized person as designated on yellow Emergency Contact form. If a family has multiple children, each child will be signed in and out separately. Parents or other authorized persons must sign in/out using the ProCare child care management software. Attendance records are kept on file electronically and can be made available to authorized service agencies such as QAD-Licensing, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and others.

#### **ProCare Administration Override Verification**

In the event that a child is not signed in or out by a parent or authorized person, a family member signature is required to verify a child's attendance and corresponding time in/time out that was inputted into ProCare by authorized DDC staff. Completed forms will be kept on file for future reference and made available to authorized State agencies. DDC reserves the right to charge a fee for excessive number of times a child is not signed in/out correctly.

### **Classroom Daily Attendance and Daily Health Check**

In addition to daily electronic sign-in/out requirements, each classroom will have daily attendance taken. Classroom teachers are responsible for ensuring each child in attendance is accounted for on this form. These forms will be used throughout the day for head-check counting both indoors and outdoors, in the event of an emergency, and on field trips. Attendance forms will also be used for Daily Health check documentation and as a way to pass on information from families at drop-off time to classroom and other relevant DDC staff.

### **Absences**

Please call by 9:00 a.m. if your child is not attending for the day, regardless of whether there are illness/health concerns or child/family is taking a day off. This information is used to help track health trends in the center. It also helps with programming, including meal planning. Because of tuition policy and staffing regulations, absences are not credited and swapping of days is not allowed. Please see Tuition policy for more details.

### **Late Pick-up Policy**

DDC charges a late pick-up fee for pick-ups past 6:00 closing time. 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 a child by 6:30 p.m., the Kalispell Police Department will be contacted for any news and/or advice on where to bring child.

### **Closures**

DDC is closed for the following holidays, depending on annual calendar year:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas and either day before or day after (close at 3:00 on Christmas Eve when we are open, assuming enough children need care.)
- New Years Day (close at 3:00 on New Year's Eve.)
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day.

DDC closes one Thursday and Friday in October (usually during School District 5 MEA days) for staff to attend the Montana Early Childhood Conference. These days are noted in calendars distributed at beginning of school year. **DDC is also closed the week before Labor Day to transition between summer and fall programming.** 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**

DDC 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. DDC calls in to KOFI, B98, and KALS radio stations to announce any closure. **Remember if there is no school for District 5 schools, DDC is closed!** For School District 5 early dismissals due to severe weather, DDC staff will make calls requesting that children be picked up, and will 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 children be picked up early. DDC follows current recommendations from Flathead City-County Health Department about closures during times of flu epidemics or other health emergencies. A complete Emergency Preparation Plan is located on the Family Page of DDC website.

#### **IV. YOUR CHILD'S CARE**

Children enrolled at DDC will have opportunities to explore and learn in a variety of environments and with a variety of staff members throughout the day. All children will have a Primary Classroom that consists of two and sometimes, three staff members. Each child and their family will have a "primary" caregiver who will be the staff person participating in formal family communications, though each classroom maintains a team-teaching philosophy and practice and develops relationships with all children in the classroom. In addition, early morning arrivals and afternoon activities provide opportunities for staff and children from different classrooms to play and get to know each other, intentionally providing a "family-feel" to center-based child care. To help all staff and families be consistent with center "rules", the following guidelines have been developed.

##### **Clothing**

Children should be dressed for active play and exploration, both indoors and out. Clothing that is easily washed and manipulated lessens stress over getting dirty and promotes independence in self-help skills. Shoes should be sturdy, comfortable, easy to put on, and suitable for active outdoor play (toed shoes are best.) Each child has an extra clothes box to store a spare change of clothes (appropriate for the season and the correct size.) Snow pants, boots, hat, and gloves are typically required from November to April for both warmth, snow, AND mud purposes. Swimsuits, towels, and water shoes are required in summer months. Rubber boots are welcome during the shoulder seasons. For staff organizational / tracking needs, all clothing should be labeled with children's names.

##### **Toys from Home**

A small stuffed animal for rest time and/or for comfort is allowed, but other than that, please leave children's toys in the car or at home. DDC staff will not be responsible for keeping track of toys brought from home. Toy weapons of any kind are not allowed.

##### **Diapering**

Families with children in diapers should bring large bag of disposable diapers labeled with child's name, and one box of wipes. Notes will be posted when supplies need replenishing. Cloth diapers can be accommodated. However families must provide a covered plastic container with liner and bring it home daily. Due to health considerations and licensing regulations, soiled diapers (or underwear) will not be rinsed.

##### **Toilet Training**

Because most children are not ready for the often frustrating experience of toilet training, DDC does not promote starting until after age 2½. Experience has shown that children have little control over the sphincter muscle that controls their bladder and little cognitive ability to recognize when they need to void. There are always exceptions. DDC staff are happy to discuss concerns and/or ideas for implementing a toilet training plan before this age. However, starting too early can be discouraging for children, families, and DDC staff. A **Toilet Training Agreement must be completed and signed off on** with staff that describes DDC and family responsibilities for initiating and maintaining a toilet training plan. In most cases, we expect children to be able to pull pants up and down with minimal assistance and resistance. If children are unable to do this, they may not developmentally be ready to be toilet trained.

##### **Rest Time**

All children who remain at DDC after lunch will have a quiet time in the early afternoon. 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 2:45 p.m. Children need a small blanket and crib sheet labeled with their name. Blankets and sheets are laundered at least once per week.

## Guidance and Discipline

DDC child management focuses 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 acknowledgement of efforts 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.

DDC staff utilizes a variety of strategies to help children with challenging behaviors be more successful in a classroom setting. Staff strive to involve families before undesirable behaviors escalate. Individual meetings can be requested by families and/or teacher throughout the year. These meetings may include the Director, and often result in a behavior plan to be shared with all staff that interact with the child. Phone conferences can also be accommodated when conflicting schedules make it difficult to touch base in person. Staff are happy to discuss any concerns or ideas you may have regarding your child's discipline. **Please read, sign, and return the DDC Child Guidance policy included in orientation folder.** A copy will be provided for your personal records.

## Meals

DDC provides nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack for children enrolled during those hours. Menus are posted for the current week and the week ahead. DDC participates in the Federal USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and receives reimbursements for meals served which meet certain nutritional requirements. Meal times, components and minimum portion sizes include:

- Breakfast (8:30 am) consists of *one of each* of the following components: milk ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup), bread/bread alternate (cereal, oatmeal, pancakes, etc), and one fruit/vegetable ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup portion).
- Lunch (12:00 or 12:30) consists of the following components: milk ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup),  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fruit and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vegetable, meat/meat alternate (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces), and bread/bread alternate (rice, pasta, tortillas, etc.)
- Afternoon snack (3:15 pm) consists of *two of the three* following components: fruit/vegetable ( $\frac{1}{2}$  cup), meat/meat alternate ( $\frac{1}{2}$  ounce), and bread/bread alternate. Milk and/or water is offered alongside the snack.

Morning snacks are eaten in individual classrooms and include a variety of different crackers or special healthy snacks provided by families, which DDC supplements with milk. Classroom snack calendars and ideas for snacks are posted on bulletin boards. Family snack contributions are considered a voluntary donation to the CENTER and not to individual classrooms; though efforts will be made to serve contributions on the day they are brought it so children receive acknowledgement.

Children will be exposed to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, meat and vegetarian main courses, dairy products and local milk. Menus are developed with the intent of including at least one item most children will be comfortable eating / trying. Milk is always offered as well. Meals are served Family Style, with staff sitting at each table to facilitate passing of food, pouring of milk, and filling of plates. Children will be encouraged, though never forced, to try everything. Some foods may need to be served many times before a child will try it. However, there may be days children go home hungry until they get comfortable with trying new foods.

Children with special dietary needs will need a **Medical Statement to Request Special Meals and/or Accommodations** in their file. Parents/guardians must give staff information and instructions about how their child is to be fed. In the case of a disability – which CACFP defines as “a food allergy that is severe enough to result in a life-threatening reaction or an impairment which limits one or more major life activities” – DDC will provide substitutions to the CACFP meal

pattern, including milk, unless it creates undue hardship for the organization. Staff will document what the child eats throughout the day. This information will be put in family mailboxes at the end of the day. In the case of an allergy or other medical reason requiring special meals and/or accommodations, determination on how those accommodations will be made will be decided upon together with staff and child's parent/guardian.

In both the above instances, **the name and signature of a licensed physician is required** along with the parent or guardian's signature. Documentation should list foods to avoid and foods to substitute. Accommodations for requests for special meals and/or food preferences (including fluid milk substitutions) for children without a disability will be determined on a case by case basis. Please note that any non-dairy milk substitutions to be offered to children at the center must meet USDA Nutrient Standards, except in the case of a disability.

A typical DDC weekly menu:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
BREAKFAST	Oatmeal Oranges Milk	Honey wheat bagels Apples Milk	WW Toast Bananas Milk	Waffles Mangos Milk	Blueberry muffins Oranges Milk
LUNCH	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	Pulled Pork sandwiches Bell peppers Bananas Milk
PM SNACK	Vegetable tray w/hummus, Triscuits	Banana bread Milk	Pears Pretzels	Cheese slices Whole wheat Ritz crackers	Yogurt w/ Granola Fresh fruit

*In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in an program or activity conducted of funded by USDA.*

*To file a program 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. (Statement updated May 2016.)*

## **V. KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE AND HEALTHY**

Child Health and Safety policies and procedures are developed with guidance by licensing regulations, a belief in strong home and center communications, and a regard for the environments that children and staff spend their days in.

### **Illnesses**

Young children are exposed to more illnesses in large group settings than children who are not.

In order to keep this to a minimum, **all children displaying any symptoms listed in DDC health policy standards should be kept at home.** These include the following:

- Temperature of 101 degrees or higher (un-controlled by OTC medications)
- Vomiting / diarrhea
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Head lice
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or behavior totally out of character for your child.
- Any child displaying these symptoms at DDC are expected to be taken home within *one hour* after being contacted by staff, and should remain at home for a minimum of 24 hours before returning, or in some cases, with doctor release.

Health Alerts will be electronically sent out and/or posted when staff becomes aware of potentially infectious viruses and bacterial illnesses the center may have been exposed to. One reminder - outdoor play is a central part of DDC programming. Unless we have written request from a medical practitioner, children who are too ill to be outdoors, are too ill to be at the center.

**Please read, sign, and return the Health Policy Standards document included in orientation folder.** A copy will be provided for your personal records.

### **Medical Administration Policies**

DDC Director and all primary caregivers are required to take 6 hours of Medicine Administration coursework and a refresher course every 3 years that reviews correct protocol for storage, administering, and record-keeping for any medication administered while at the center.

- Over The Counter (OTC) medication – OTC form must be signed annually to indicate which non-ingestible medications may be given. **Sunscreen is one OTC we must have permission to apply.** DDC provides NoAd 30 SPF or families may choose to provide their own. To administer other non-ingestible OTC medication, including insect repellent, medication must be brought in by families in original container with legible label, child's name, and expiration date.
- Prescriptions and non-prescription medicines - 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.

All medications, refrigerated or unrefrigerated, shall have child-protective caps, be stored in a closed container at the proper temperature, and kept in a location inaccessible to children (typically in upper kitchen cabinet) or in a locked box.

### **Special Needs Health Plans**

Written forms, signed off by medical practitioners, are required for any medical special need that requires either emergency administration like an Epi-Pin for allergies, or monitoring of asthma, diabetes, or other medical conditions that require ongoing medicine administration. Primary teaching staff and other staff as needed must be trained in the procedure.

## **Medical Emergencies / Incident Reports**

All DDC staff are required to maintain current Pediatric First Aid and CPR certification (which includes Infant and Child CPR and Rescue Breathing.) Should a child be injured while at DDC, staff will provide immediate care and attention utilizing First Aid principles as per training or First Aid manual. An Incident report will be created indicating what the injury was and how it was treated (cleansing, antibacterial, ice packs, etc.) Parents will be contacted when more serious injuries occur, including extensive bleeding, major falls to the head, or other circumstances where staff prefer family judgment for additional first aid or treatment. When a parent or guardian cannot be reached, and it is the judgment of the Director or other staff in charge that IMMEDIATE medical attention is required, an ambulance will be called to take an injured child directly to the Emergency Room at Kalispell Regional Medical Center for treatment. Once located, a parent or guardian will be responsible for continuing treatment or for making other arrangement.

Licensing regulations require that accidents causing injury to a child which result in the child being hospitalized, requiring ambulance transport or intervention, or physician treatment must be reported to the appropriate local office of the department within 24 hours. A copy of all incident reports will be kept on file for three years.

## **Confidentiality Policies**

Employees are required to maintain the confidentiality of all information related to past AND present families. All children's files contain immunization records and other relevant medical information which are considered Protected Health Information (PHI). Upon request, parents and/or legal guardians may request access to a child's file. In addition, families sign an authorization (HIPPA) for the use and disclosure of health information so that teaching staff may be aware of allergies or other physical or medical needs. This form also indicates that regulatory agencies have a right to look at this information. Medical records, as well as any personal family information found in a child's file or otherwise made known, is confidential and will not be revealed to outside sources without written consent.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

DDC has an Emergency Preparedness plan in place that is posted on our web-site and reviewed regularly. Protocols and drills we have established include Fire, Earthquake, and Severe Storm plans, as well as Missing Child, Lock-down, Emergency Evacuation, and other potential emergency situations. A few important notes about this plan:

- All families are required to sign an Emergency Transportation card that allows DDC staff to evacuate children from the premises in whatever way they can during an emergency. This might include transportation in personal cars, and/or without seat belts in an effort to get children to a safe place. Emergency transportation card should include an out-of-area contact person in the event that there is disruption to local phone service.
- DDC has a Memorandum of Understanding with Head Start (located on 7<sup>th</sup> Ave EN by Finnegans), Gateway Community Center (across the street), and Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (directly behind us) that gives us safe places to move the children, depending on the particular emergency.
- DDC maintains 2 tracphones for field trip and emergency purposes. Current numbers are included in the emergency plan on web-site. Emergency contact information for all children is kept in on-site, in classroom backpacks and in a central emergency "Go Bag". Families will be notified as indicated in the Emergency Plan.

## **Indoor / Outdoor Environmental Health**

- **Smoking** - DDC is a non-smoking campus. Smoking is prohibited in the parking lot, outdoor play areas, and inside the building.
- **Parking and Car Idling** - DDC staff park in the south parking area whenever possible in order to save north-side parking spots closest to the building for family use. For the safety of the children and other pedestrians, families should pull into these spots rather than parallel park in front of the building. In addition, families should turn engines off before entering the building. Idling vehicles (car exhaust) release pollutants that are harmful to

health (especially to children) and the environment. Pollution from idling vehicles can enter the building via open windows and doors, thus affecting the indoor air quality of our environment as well. Children's lungs are still developing. When they are exposed to high levels of pollutants, they have an increased risk of developing asthma and/or other respiratory problems.

- **Air quality** – Air quality issues in the Flathead Valley typically arise from smoke due to wood stoves in the winter and/or forest or grass fires. Air Quality is monitored through DEQ web-site ([www.deq.mt.gov](http://www.deq.mt.gov)). The various stages of air quality are defined in depth at this web-site and used as needed. Outdoor activity may be limited during times of high alerts.
- **Tree and Yard care** – Trees and shrubs on the property are maintained for insect and disease control by a professional lawn and tree care company that utilizes the least hazardous method of control possible. Any spraying is done by appointment only, when children and adults are not present. Weed control will be done by hand whenever possible, utilizing chemical sprays only on weekends, and only in areas where children do not play everyday.

### **Child Abuse Reporting Requirements**

DDC staff members are mandated reporters, and must participate in required training on recognizing the signs of child abuse within the first 3 months of their employment. Child abuse includes physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse/exploitation, emotional abuse, parental substance abuse, abandonment, and/or maltreatment of a child. DDC 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 and to cooperate with ongoing investigations.

### **Accusation of Employee Abuse or Neglect**

Any staff accused of neglecting and/or abusing a child while employed at DDC will be released of all primary care-giving responsibilities and placed on probation. Staff without primary care responsibilities may not be left alone with children, nor may they lead a class. Accusations will be pursued as swiftly as authorities allow. Should accusation prove to be false, staff will be reinstated to previous position. Persons with a conviction or CPS Substantiations on record may not work in a child care facility and will be terminated.

## **VI. THE DISCOVERY COMMUNITY**

When families enroll at DDC, they become an integral part of the center. As noted in our Core Beliefs, the most important teacher a child will ever have is their family. Families are the foundation of the DDC community. Open lines of communication between staff and family members facilitate a child's growth and learning and help them reach their optimum development.

### **Communications**

DDC utilizes a variety of strategies to help ensure good communications with families. **Staffing schedules** are arranged to help ensure as much as possible that at least one of the classroom teachers is available in the early morning and/or late afternoons for families to touch base with on a daily basis. **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. Other ways we use to communicate include:

- **Intakes** – Each family will have one classroom teacher who takes primary responsibility for family communications, though all classrooms utilize a team-teaching approach when planning for the children's experiences. That **"primary"** teacher will contact you within the first month after your child enrolls and/or when they transition to a new class, to set up a meeting to learn more about your child and your family.

- **Family Chats** – Family Chats are scheduled two times a year, typically in January and again towards the end of the school year, but can also be arranged anytime upon request. Family chats are opportunities for families to talk to classroom teachers about their child, the curriculum, and classroom goals and objectives. DDC staff are committed, as much as possible, to incorporating family values and goals into the curriculum.
- **Weekly Classroom Newsletters** – Classroom teachers create a pictorial and informational newsletter that includes a brief peek into the children’s past week. Hard copies are posted on bulletin board, emailed to classroom distribution lists, and posted on DDC web-site Family page. Families may also request black/white hard copy in their mailbox. Newsletters are a great tool families can use at home to get children remembering and talking about what they do at DDC.
- **Center-wide Newsletters** – DDC Director and/or Administrative staff send monthly newsletters and updates via DDC email distribution lists and will include information about upcoming events, calendaring updates, staffing news, and Family Share information. Hard copies can also be requested.
- **Web-Site** – DDC website address is **www.ddckids.org**. The “DDC Login” button on the homepage will take you to a private families-only section. Usernames and passwords are changed annually. The site continues to evolve each year, so check regularly for current menus, newsletters, wish lists, and other announcements posted on this page.
- **Like** Discovery on Face Book and receive notifications of Community Nights, special events, pictures of special projects, and other community information.

### **Family Gatherings**

Another way DDC maintains a strong, committed community is by having children, families, and staff share in social and fundraising events throughout the year. These opportunities allow families to get to know both the staff caring for their children and the families of their children’s friends. DDC hosts family breakfasts, lunch-time events, and evening dinners at various times throughout the year, sometimes in conjunction with holidays and at other times “just because.” (Holiday themes like Halloween and Christmas are sometimes incorporated into our curriculum. If you have religious or other concerns about this, please let DDC staff know.) In addition, individual classrooms might host special activities where families are invited to attend throughout the year.

### **Family Visitors to the Center**

Families are welcome to participate in DDC programs as they are able. There are formal opportunities available through our Family Share program (see below). In addition, DDC maintains an “Open Door” policy for enrolled families. Families are welcome to join the children for snack or other meal times, or to stop in for a quick hug during a work break. Please check in with the Director or other staff upon entering the building. We DO ask families who plan to visit frequently to follow the classroom routine, and avoid disturbing classroom schedules and activities. Grandparents and other family members are ALSO welcome to visit. If you are going to have a family member visit us, please let us know so we can prepare the children. We reserve the right to limit any visits which prove disruptive to the children, staff, and/or routines of the day. Appointments should be made if you wish to meet with the Director or a staff member.

### **Birthdays**

Many children (and staff) celebrate birthdays at DDC. Treats from home are welcome either for all of the children 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, **icing with artificial dyes will be removed before serving bakery goods to children.** Please inform staff if you are planning any special celebration activity and/or bringing visitors to the center.

## **Breast-Feeding Friendly Center**

DDC supports and encourages a breastfeeding mother's decision to continue to breastfeed her child. In keeping with this philosophy, DDC strives to provide a welcoming atmosphere for both breastfeeding staff and mothers of enrolled children. Breastfeeding mothers may choose the common living room area couch or request to breastfeed in staff room where a rocking chair and more privacy is available. Plans can be developed for families who wish to continue to supplement their child's DDC diet with expressed breast milk as needed.

## **Family Share**

The DDC *Family Share* program formalizes family volunteerism and gives all families the opportunity to involve themselves in the life of the center and their child's care and education. DDC'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. To make a payment in lieu of committing to volunteer time, make a check payable to Discovery for \$20 per hour (\$300 for the year). Please refer to the [Family Share information packet](#) in orientation folder for more details.

## **Fundraising**

Fundraising offers another way for DDC staff and families to work together for the better of the DDC community (and fulfill *Family Share* hours as well.) Families can participate by helping plan a special event, soliciting donations from area businesses for raffles and/or special auctions, or selling tickets for these activities. Other ways to get involved include:

- **Smith's Food and Drug** - Sign up for Smith's Inspiring Donations program [www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/inspire](http://www.smithsfoodanddrug.com/inspire) and earn dollars for DDC just by shopping using your Smith's card.
- **On-line Shopping**
  - [GoodShop.com](http://GoodShop.com) - Go to the link and hit the **JOIN NOW** button to enroll. Name Discovery Developmental Center as the organization you shop for. Start any on-line shopping session, including Target, Staples, Expedia, Travelocity, and hundreds of other major retailers, with the GoodShop link and your purchases will automatically include a Merchant donation of 1-5% of sales back to DDC.
  - [Smile.Amazon.com](http://Smile.Amazon.com) - Do you shop a lot on Amazon? Connect yourself to Discovery Developmental Center and Amazon will donate up to 5% of your purchase to DDC.
- **Special Events** - Attend DDC community nights and/or special events. Events may be family social times —an opportunity to meet your child's friends and their families, an adult night out, a raffle or silent auction, or an on-line community event like Flathead Gives. Participation of all families is vital to their success!

## **Community Involvement**

DDC plays an active role in the community, participating in a variety of organizations and programs that both promote and elevate the importance of early childhood education. DDC is a member of the [Flathead Best Beginnings Community Council](#) (FVBBC) and the [Kalispell Chamber of Commerce](#) and utilizes the networking opportunities available through the [Non-Profit Development Partnership](#) (NpDP) and the [Montana Non-Profit Association](#) (MNA). DDC staff participate in District 5 Freshman Career Days, College for a Day, and other school initiatives. School District high school students, FVCC Early Childhood Education students, and University of Montana university system students utilize DDC to complete observations, class projects, and/or practicum experiences with young children. United Way Leaders of Tomorrow have utilized DDC for job shadowing experiences. Staff participate in local professional membership organizations like Flathead Chapter-Montana Association for the Education of Young Children (MtAEYC) for networking opportunities, professional development, and volunteerism. DDC staff also maintain good relationships within our neighborhood, building relationships with Prestige Assisted Living Center and Three Rivers Bank, and visiting Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, the Kalispell Post Office, and the Gateway Community Center on a regular basis.

## **Annual Program Evaluation**

As part of on-going program improvement and assessment needs, DDC completes an annual program evaluation, typically in February of each year for families and staff, and in April or May with State assessors. In addition, beginning in 2016, State regulations require an unannounced inspection by child care licensing. Our accreditation through NAEYC requires a year-long process to renew accreditation every 5 years. Results of all these evaluations and assessments inform ongoing strategic planning, budgeting, future programming, and environmental priorities and improvements and are reported out on when relevant.

## **VII. PROGRAMMING**

DDC provides full-day, year-round child care for children 19 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. Summer time programming includes 3 age groups as well, and includes many off-campus field trips and outdoor activities. Programming calendar follows School District 5's schedule regarding Christmas and Spring breaks, though we remain open during those weeks for mixed age activities.

As a general rule, children are placed in respective classrooms based on when they will enter Kindergarten. Typically, children move from one class to the next in September of each year, allowing 9-12 months for the children to be with the same teaching staff – a good relationship building strategy. Children's schedules can vary between a two-morning-a-week schedule to five full-days per week and are dependent on available space utilizing the following child/adult ratios and class size limits.

- Playgroup for 2-3 year olds – Class size limited to 12 children (3 staff.)
- Pre-School for 3-4 year olds – Class size limited to 14 children (2 staff minimum.)
- Pre-Kindergarten for 4-5 year olds – Class size limited to 16 children (2 staff minimum.)

DDC classrooms are not meant to be self-contained. Two indoor common areas and two outdoor environments allow for expanded learning experiences both during morning programming, and during mixed-age times in the early mornings and afternoons. Mixed-age times give children an opportunity to engage in relationships with children both younger and older than themselves, as well as time to engage in relationships with all the adults in the environment. Having those relationships helps ensure smoother transitions when children move to a new group.

### **Curriculum**

Broad-based thematic and emergent units and realistic curriculum goals and objectives for the children are based on observations and assessments of their developmental stage, programming needs, and current interests. The 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 are included in the curriculum as well to further children's development of self-help and social skills. A complete copy of our curriculum is available onsite or by visiting DDC website ([www.ddckids.org](http://www.ddckids.org)).

### **Assessment**

DDC staff use what they know and learn about each child—including learning styles, interests, preferences, personality and temperament, skills and talents, challenges and difficulties, and family goals—to develop 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. Formal methods include the Ages and Stages Questionnaires®(ASQ-3) and the ASQ-SE (Social Emotional). Hearing and Vision screenings are provided by MSU 3rd year nursing students, typically in the spring. The Child Development Center (CDC) completes developmental

screenings upon request. Informal methods include observation and anecdotal notes of children's work, play, behaviors, and interactions. Information is collected from families about child's history, experiences, family values, beliefs, and goals through both the enrollment and registration process and a Family Intake during the first weeks of enrollment. Parent-teacher meetings (Family Chats) are scheduled twice a year. Staff utilize on-line portfolios to document milestones reached throughout the year. These portfolios are shared with families during these meetings. Please read, sign, and return the Child Assessment Plan document included in orientation folder.

### **Children with Special Needs and/or Disabilities**

DDC maintains relationships with area Speech and Language Pathologists, Physical Therapists, and Occupational Therapists who are available for consultations and offer private therapeutic sessions (onsite or offsite) to children needing early intervention services. We have relationships with area school districts and other early intervention organizations serving children and families as well – all with the goal of helping children grow, learn, and be successful. Families must sign a Release of Information (ROI) form that allows DDC staff to communicate with professionals outside the center. This form also authorizes permission for these professionals to visit the center for observations and/or treatment. Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) that incorporate all the professionals involved in a child's life can be arranged to ensure children's developmental needs are being met in all settings

### **Transitions / Changes to Primary Classroom**

Placement in a classroom is typically based on when children will be entering Kindergarten. As a general rule, transitions between classrooms happen in September, though some might make the switch in June, depending on enrollment trends and individual child needs. Younger Playgroup children might end up in the same classroom for 18-24 months, depending on their birth date when they started. DDC staff schedules help ensure easier transitions between classrooms by giving all staff an opportunity to know most of the children. Schedules are intentionally planned so staff 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 throughout the summer about upcoming new classrooms 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. Transition documents are completed with families that line out the strategies and activities classroom teachers will utilize to encourage a good transition, including visiting the new classroom several times before making the switch. Families are also encouraged to participate.

### **Family / Staff Conflict Resolution Process**

DDC staff are committed to sustaining positive relationships with the families we serve. Occasionally though, disagreements about a program policy or an aspect of a child's care might lead to conflict within this relationship. Families who are experiencing a conflict or complaint with a DDC staff member are encouraged to work through it via conversations with the staff person they are in conflict with. Upon request, a formal meeting time could be scheduled during work hours to facilitate those efforts. The meeting could also include the Director if it appears that interpretation of a policy is part of the conflict, or that the conversation would benefit from a third party. The goal of meetings would be to discuss the issue and improve communication. Not only does this lead to better understanding between both parties, it also helps identify organization policies and procedures which need to be clarified or modified.

In some situations this may be difficult or inappropriate, particularly if families are in conflict with the Director. In these cases, the family may request a meeting with the DDC Board of Directors President to discuss the problem. All requests for conflict resolution will be confidential and will be treated with respect.

### **Field Trips and Transportation**

DDC curriculum goals are enhanced by getting children out of the building and into the community, whether it be a neighborhood park they can walk to, or a community business they

drive to. DDC vehicles are equipped with both car seats and car vests (Ride-Safer Travel Vest, from Safe Traffic System, INC.) Emergency Contact information, as well as a Field Trip permission form with a current photo for each child is taken whenever the children leave the premises. Staff typically has families sign-off a field trip form as acknowledgment the children are leaving the building during the school year. Summer field trips are posted several weeks in advance. All field trips are supervised at the minimum of regularly established child-adult ratios, and typically are lower. Family volunteers are always welcome on field trips and can use that time *for Family Share*.

### **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. Returning Kindergartners and First graders are welcomed back for summer programming as well. Though summer programming is not as structured as the school year, routines are established to give comfort for everyone.