

Discovery Place

Early Learning Center



Parent Handbook

Effective: 1/1/24
Last Revised: 12/21/23

Parents,

Welcome to Discovery Place! We offer dedicated staff and an environment designed with your child's educational and safety needs in mind. Our goal is to provide your child with a rich and varied learning experience and to instill in your child a lifelong love of learning.

This handbook is designed as a parent's guide to Discovery Place. In the handbook you will find answers to many of the questions and concerns that you may have. Please read this handbook and keep it for future reference. We look forward to working with you in caring for and educating your child. We encourage your participation, cooperation, comments, and support.

Discovery Place Staff

Center Director Contact:

Discovery Place Early Learning Center
305 Nora Street East
Thief River Falls, MN 56701
218-681-5202

Email Address Coming Soon (New email will be associated with the website)

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OUR PROGRAM

Discovery Place Early Learning Center is a non-profit childcare center that provides quality care and early education for children 6 weeks - 12 years of age.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Discovery Place Early Learning Center is governed by a volunteer board of directors, who meets monthly to discuss the program and make appropriate decisions for the business. Parents who are interested in becoming a part of the board of directors are encouraged to discuss this with the Director.

GOALS

It is the goal of Discovery Place Early Learning Center to provide children with loving and nurturing care in a safe environment with an educational experience. All aspects of the child's development are considered as their needs are met. We strive to keep parents actively involved in the care and early education of their own children while pursuing their own goals.

PROGRAM OPERATION

Discovery Place Early Learning Center is licensed for 91 children. We are inspected and licensed by the Minnesota Department Human Services, 444 Lafayette Road North, St. Paul, MN 55155-3842, (651)-296-3971.

Discovery Place Early Learning Center is open 52 weeks per year, Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM until 6:00 PM. Our center will be closed on the following holidays and any other days around them, depending on where the holidays fall during the week. They will be reviewed and voted on by the board of directors. Parents will receive the list with fall registration packets in August of each year.

Memorial Day	Friday after Thanksgiving
4th of July	Christmas Eve
Labor Day	Christmas Day
Thanksgiving	New Years Day

PERSONNEL

Staff are qualified teachers, assistant teachers, and childcare aides with many years of combined experience. All staff members are required to participate in on-going training designed specifically for the center to ensure consistency with our program goals. All staff are required to be trained in CPR and First Aid.

CURRICULUM

INFANTS (6 WEEKS - 15 MONTHS)

Children in the infant room follow individualized schedules which are planned cooperatively by the parents and infant staff. Each schedule is modified as the child's development and parent's desires dictate. The staff's primary goal is to help infants develop a sense of trust and pleasure in relationships with their caregivers and in their new environment.

TODDLERS (16 MONTHS - 32 MONTHS)

A structured day is planned indoors and outdoors for the toddler children dependent on their schedules. Appropriate activities that foster the growth of each toddler's self-help skills, language development, social awareness and positive, non-aggressive problem solving are incorporated. Nap time is scheduled in the afternoon.

PRESCHOOLERS (33 MONTHS - 1ST DAY OF KINDERGARTEN)

Activities of social, motor, language, cognitive and sensory experiences are planned for the preschool children. They include large and small group activities for the day, music experiences with song or dance, storytelling, role playing, finger plays, arts and crafts, outdoor play and some field trips. Naptime is scheduled in the afternoon.

SCHOOL AGE (KINDERGARTEN - 5TH GRADE)

Programming provides care for elementary age children before and after school hours, as well as on non-school days and the summer months. Children in the school age room participate in an enriching recreational program conducive to learning and social interaction. Children are encouraged to pursue their interests and develop friendships, independence, and confidence. There is no nap/rest time for this age group.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

WAIT LIST

The first step in applying for any of the center's childcare slots is to call and be placed on our waiting list. We have limited enrollment and are usually at capacity. Applicants are placed on the wait list according to age of child and date of call. We also advise monthly callbacks from parents so that we are sure of their continued interest. When openings in each age group occur, families are contacted according to the information supplied by parents on the waiting list and offered the slot.

REGISTRATION

Upon accepting the position to place your child in the care of Discovery Place Early Learning Center, you must complete and return all forms listed below along with a registration fee: \$25 per student with a maximum of \$50 per family. All forms provided to families must be signed by both parent(s) or guardians involved with each child.

1. Family Information Form

This form will help us to better understand your child so that we can provide individualized care. Also, this provides us with all your contact and emergency information. Please keep this form up to date and inform us of changes when necessary.

2. Health Care Summary Form

In accordance with Minnesota State Licensing requirements, parents/guardians must submit a Health Care Summary, completed by the child's physician before he or she can be enrolled in the center.

3. Immunizations Form

The Minnesota Department of Health requires your child's immunizations to be up to date for him or her to be enrolled in the center. The recommended schedule is available at your doctor's office or at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html#table-1> (If your child is exempt from vaccines, the exemption form must be provided)

4. Family Size and Income Data Sheet and Child Enrollment Form

This form is necessary for the center's enrollment in the food program. It helps to ensure your child receives healthy and balanced meals.

After all the above requirements are completed, you will be given a starting date. You will also be required to visit the center and bring your child to meet their teacher.

SCHEDULING

When you enroll your child at Discovery Place Early Learning Center, you will fill out a Permanent Schedule Form from which your bill will be generated each week. If you need to change your schedule for the upcoming week, please inform your child's teacher in a timely manner. A week prior is preferred so staff can plan accordingly.

If a child lives in more than one household, a calendar/schedule will need to be given to the director for at least one month at a time. Teachers need to know who to expect each day for pick up and drop off, along with any communication needs regarding the child.

LATE PICK-UP

According to the terms of our license and liability insurance, we are not allowed to provide care or have children in our building after 6:00 PM. Parents must pick up their children and vacate our building by 6:00 PM to avoid a charge.

A \$1.00 per minute, per child charge will be assessed for families in the building after 6:00 PM. Parents that are late more than two times in one month, Discovery Place Early Learning Center has the right to remove your child from the center.

WITHDRAWAL

A two-week written notice is required before your child's last day at Discovery Place Early Learning Center. Any previous balances must be paid in full upon departure.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If your schedule and hours at Discovery Place Early Learning Center are reduced significantly (i.e. summer months, maternity leave, layoffs) you will need to contact the Director to make arrangements to keep your spot. A fee will be assessed by the Director.

GRIEVANCE

If a parent has a complaint or concern about some aspect of the program, they should first try to settle the grievance with the teacher or other adult involved. Policy matters or unresolved conflicts should be discussed with the center director. Further unresolved matters may be taken to the Discovery Place board of directors.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 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 any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. Discovery Place is an equal opportunity employer.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. 1400 Independence Avenue SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- Email: program.intake@usda.gov

TERMINATION

In the event any of the following occur, a child and parent(s) may be excluded from the center:

- Non-payment of tuition fees
- Abuse of staff or children at the center
- Inability of staff to adequately care for child's needs
- Chronic lateness in child pick-up
- Parent is hostile, uses profane language, and is verbally or physically threatening or abusive toward staff or clients of the center
- Abuse of center policies

TUITION PROCEDURES

TUITION SCHEDULE

Our center is a non-profit program funded by 99% of parent tuition. Our costs remain the same for each day whether your child is here or not. Our teachers need to be able to count on their working hours, just as you need to be able to count on us being here. To be as fair as possible to everyone and maintain a consistent, well-staffed program, we will charge for all hours you have scheduled for your child. If your child is not attending or is arriving late, please contact the center by 8:00 AM so we can either hold the spot for your child's late arrival or accept a drop-in child.

TUITION PAYMENT

Discovery Place Early Learning Center is a non-profit organization and relies on tuition for 99% of its operating expenses. Therefore, it is essential that tuition be paid promptly and regularly.

Tuition bills will be distributed each Saturday for the current week and full payment is needed on or before Thursday of the same week. If your payment is late, you will be charged a \$25 late fee. If your tuition is not paid by Monday of the next week, your child may not attend the center.

As of January 1, 2024, Discovery Place will be requiring all billing to be completed through Brightwheel with automatic payments taken out weekly for tuition. This will ensure accurate and

timely payments each week for daycare services and processing. There will be a \$25 late fee for each payment not received or declined.

If your payment is returned for non-sufficient funds (NSF), we will require a \$50.00 fee (\$25.00 NSF fee and \$25.00 late fee) This can be a one-time occurrence. If this process is returned a second time, you must enter a credit card into the center's app for automatic charge. Until payment is made on your account, childcare will not be provided.

If no payment of any kind is made on your account for two billing cycles, Discovery Place Early Learning Center has the right to remove your child from the program.

Any other billing adjustments to your tuition outside of normally scheduled hours will be on the following week's bill. Adjustments to your bill include billing for additional days, NSF charges, late fees, absentee credit, and unexpected facility closure credit.

Missed payment policy:

After 2 missed payments, a 30-day notice will be given to discontinue daycare services through Discovery Place. At the end of the 30 days if full payment is not received with a zero-balance account, Discovery Place will not allow your child(ren) to return to the facility. If payment is corrected within the 30 days, services will continue as prior. If the account becomes overdue within a calendar year for a second time, a 2-week notice will be given if not paid in full. If the account becomes overdue for a third time, a 1-week notice will be given if not paid in full. And if the account becomes overdue for a fourth time, a 1-week notice will be given along with the full payment required and services will be discontinued indefinitely at the end of 1 week. If any questions or concerns arise, along with the need for payment assistance, please contact the director and/or administrative assistant for help with this.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

ORIENTATION MEETING/TOUR

Families who have recently enrolled their child at Discovery Place Early Learning Center and have completed all the enrollment papers are expected to schedule an orientation tour with the Director and their child's teacher. During this time policies and procedures will be explained and parents may have questions answered.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Parents and authorized adults must accompany children into and out of the center at all times and must sign children in and out when coming and going. If your child is outside on the playground, parents need to come to the playground to get him or her.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Parents must designate at least two individuals who are authorized to pick up their child in emergency situations. Only those persons authorized by the parent on the Authorization to Pick-Up Form may sign-out, pick up, or visit a child. Parents must notify the center when people other than themselves will be picking up their children, so we are prepared. If a phone call from the parent is not made, the child will not be released until confirmation is received.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

A number of methods are utilized in communicating between the center and your family.

Here are the best ways to ensure good communication:

- Talk to your child's teacher or other staff at drop-off and pick-up (or use the centers app if their teacher is not readily available for a face-to-face conversation)
- Read special event notices on the monthly calendar handout for your child's room
- Examine the various methods of photo and art documentation of children's work throughout the center
- Check child's cubbies for notices
- Visit the center - you are welcome to stop by any time!
- Follow the Discovery Place Early Learning Center page on Facebook to see some of the fun activities happening day to day!

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are offered to parents two times a year (fall and spring), where they may talk with teachers about their child's development. Both parent(s) and staff may wish to call for additional conferences as needed. A written progress report will also be given out at these times. This is a great opportunity to connect with your child's teacher.

ROOM/AGE TRANSITIONS

When a child 'ages' from one room into the next, parents, teachers, and director will consult about how to accommodate the move. The child will start the transition by spending increasing amounts of time in the new room. Once the child's age requires placement in the next room, teachers or director will notify the parent(s) about the move, date, and talk about new routines, expectations, and responsibilities.

CHILDREN'S NEEDS

CLOTHING

Play is children's work, so they need to wear washable and comfortable clothing. All children should have the following:

- One change of undergarment and socks
- One change of outer clothing (pants, shorts, shirt)
- Appropriate seasonal outerwear (jacket, hat, mittens/gloves, boots if winter)
- Tennis shoes for everyday wear. This is the safest for your child as they run and play each day

TOYS

Toys brought from home present problems for the children and the staff. Personal possessions are often difficult to share or may get broken. If it becomes necessary for a child to bring a toy from home, it must be something that can be left in the child's cubby. Toys that resemble weapons are NOT acceptable at the center. If your child has a special toy, an expensive toy, or toy with many pieces, please keep it safely at home.

CUBBIES

Children are provided with cubbies at the center as a means of keeping their belongings together. Please check your child's cubby each day for communication, art projects, wet or soiled clothing, etc. that needs to go home.

BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

Your child's birthday is a special day to share with friends. You are welcome to send a birthday treat to be shared with the children. The treat must be store bought as required by our Department of Health, Food and Beverage license. This also pertains to treats that are brought for holiday parties. Also, be sure to communicate with your teacher about allergies or other children in the room.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

The center's daily schedule, curriculum plans, classroom arrangements, and staffing patterns are designed to promote positive and enjoyable learning experiences, including respectful and trusting relationships among adults and children. When guiding children's behavior, we help children learn acceptable behavior and develop inner controls. A child's age, intellectual development, emotional make-up, and past experiences will be considered in guidance and

consistency will be maintained in setting rules and limits for your children. The following is a list of some child guiding techniques we will use:

- Tell the child what he or she CAN do
- Establish eye contact when speaking with the child
- Give choices whenever possible, but only when the child really has a choice
- Encourage children to solve their own problems and work out conflicts
- Re-direct a child to another activity
- Help children learn how to join play

EXTRAORDINARY BEHAVIOR

We will not tolerate swearing or biased language. If your child uses such language, you will be informed and asked to discourage the behavior.

When a child engages in persistent unacceptable behavior, parents are required to meet with teachers and/or director to find a solution to the problem behavior and resolve the difficulty. Outside professional consultation may be necessary.

Occasionally, a child does not adjust to the center environment or a child's repeated behavior interferes with daily activities of the center. In such cases the center reserves the right to request the child leave the program when there is no improvement in the child's behavior subsequent to the implementation of the plan agreed upon by the parent and teacher.

BASIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

EMPLOYING OUR STAFF

It is not the mission of the Center to provide childcare for any of its clients in any location other than at the Center during regular operating hours. Any arrangement for childcare which does not take place at the Center is strictly a private arrangement between the parents and the individual staff member. No such private arrangements shall be made for childcare during the work shift of

a staff member or interfere with the operation of the Center or the individual's job performance. Parents and staff should understand that such arrangements are not within the course and scope of the staff member's job duties and that staff members are free to either accept or reject such requests from parents.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Children are a huge source of enjoyment and provide a constant supply of great stories. As you and your child attend Discovery Place Early Learning Center, you will become familiar with the other children and families. Please maintain confidentiality of identity when talking about your child's activities and place of care. We expect the same of parent users that we do of our staff - that conversations outside the center do not identify children and families to others.

PETS

Due to allergy and liability issues, the only pets allowed at Discovery Place Early Learning Center are the ones that we have in the rooms, which are usually fish. Please do not bring your pets to our center.

SICK CHILDREN

Parents should notify the teacher when they drop their child off if the child did not eat well or seems to be out of sorts. Parents should also notify the teacher if their child has been diagnosed with pink eye, strep throat, chicken pox, measles, lice, scabies, etc. If a child becomes ill at the Center, you will be notified to come and pick up your child immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will call the persons authorized by you to pick up the child.

Our policy is stringent: we do not care for sick children at Discovery Place Early Learning Center. Therefore, each parent must make other arrangements for their child when they are sick. We keep sick children out of the center, so the healthy children remain healthy. Your child should remain home when any of the following situations arise:

- The child is ill enough to require one to one attention to be comfortable

- The child's temperature is 100.4 or above. A temperature above normal, 98.6, is an indicator that a child is ill. Do NOT give your child Tylenol or Motrin to reduce fever and then bring them to the center.
- The child has any communicable infectious disease such as pink eye, measles, chicken pox, mumps, strep or bronchial infections.
- The child has profuse, thick yellow or green nasal discharge or discharge from eyes or ears.
- The child has any infectious skin disease or rash, such as active fever blisters, thrush, or impetigo.
- The child has persistent, non-productive, excessively forceful "barking" cough that interferes with their program day.
- The child has an intestinal disorder accompanied by nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting. To prevent the outbreak of gastrointestinal disease in the center, the center must exclude all children with diarrhea from the facility for 24 hours or until resolved.
- With influenza or other illnesses with fever, children shall be excluded from attending the center until the child is fever-free for 24 hours without the aid of Tylenol or Motrin.

MEDICATION

According to the terms of our license, all medication administered by the Center must be prescribed by a physician and accompanied by written instruction for administration.

Parents will fill out a medication form provided by the center. Medication must be labeled with the original pharmacy label.

Non-prescription medicines such as cough drops, children's aspirin, cough syrup, or decongestants will not be administered by the center unless we receive a physician's written permission. Your physician must indicate the exact dosage as well as the dates we are to administer it.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Discovery Place participates in the Food Program through the Minnesota Department of Education. Every child will be offered breakfast, lunch, and a snack if they are in attendance at the time the meals are served.

Breakfast will be at 8:00 for Preschool Rooms and 8:30 AM for Infant/Toddlers, lunch at 11:15 AM, and snacks at 3:00 PM. Menus are posted on the Parent Bulletin Board and screen in the lobby when you enter the building.

Infants will be fed appropriate foods for their developmental level and are fed on their individual schedules. If you are a nursing mother and are able to take time from your job to feed your baby, we welcome you to do so.

REST/NAP TIME

Naptime is a scheduled part of the daily schedule for all preschool children and is required by DHS licensing guidelines for childcare centers. A child who has completed a nap or rested for 30 minutes must not be required to remain on a cot or a crib. After a child has rested for at least 30 minutes, they may engage in a quiet activity until rest time is over.

Naps and rest will be provided in a quiet area that is physically separated from children who are engaged in an activity that will disrupt a napping or resting child. Cots and cribs will be placed so there are clear aisles and unimpeded access for both adults and children on at least one side of each cot. Cots and cribs must be placed directly on the floor and must not be stacked when in use.

All bedding will be provided by each family and will be sent home to be washed when soiled or wet and on a weekly basis.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Daily outdoor play is scheduled for all children. We do not go outside when winter wind chill temperatures of -10 degrees Fahrenheit or when the air temperature is 0 degrees Fahrenheit.

Be sure your child has clothing suited to the weather. It is our policy that if children are healthy enough to attend childcare, they are healthy enough to go outdoors. Children who do not have the appropriate outdoor clothing will stay inside.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

MALTREATMENT OF MINORS AND MANDATED REPORTING

As a licensed childcare center, our staff is required by law to immediately report to Social Services or Law Enforcement, any knowledge or reason to believe a child is being neglected, physically or sexually abused.

If you have any concerns about your child's care at our facility, you should call the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division at 651-431-6500.

If you suspect abuse or neglect of your child at our facility, you should call the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division's Maltreatment Intake Line at 651-431-6600.

If you suspect abuse or neglect of children occurring within a family or in the community, you should call Social Services at 218-681-2880 or Law Enforcement at 218-681-6161.

FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Discovery Place Early Learning Center staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. Emergency first aid will be rendered immediately when needed by the teaching staff directly responsible for and/or in closest proximity to the injured child.

When an injury needs immediate medical treatment, we would contact emergency resources and the child would be taken to Sanford Hospital. Parents will be notified to go to the hospital and a staff person will accompany the child to the ER until parents arrive.

If it is a less serious injury, the staff would administer the necessary first aid and a parent will be contacted to take the child to the family physician for medical treatment. It is the parent's responsibility to keep the emergency references current.

Minor injuries will be treated with appropriate first aid and you will be informed about them through the center's app.

FIRE AND TORNADO PROCEDURES

The center practices monthly fire drills and follows routine evacuation procedures. We practice monthly tornado drills from April to September. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in all rooms.

WEATHER-RELATED OR EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

The center closes on rare circumstances. Cancellation and closure notifications will be sent through the center's electronic program/application to all staff and families by the director.