

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Discovery Developmental Center! Discovery provides full day, full year child care for children aged 15 months through 6 years of age. September through May child care includes morning pre-school programming from 9:00 – 12:00 for all children and includes a Playgroup for 2 - 3 year olds, a Pre-School for 3 - 4 year olds, and a Pre-K program for 4 – 5 year olds. In addition, afternoon programming options include a Pre-School program for 3 – 5 years olds and a Kindergarten Enrichment program for 5 - 6 year olds. Transportation is available for District #5 morning Kindergartners to Discovery for this program. Both of these programs run from 12:30 – 3:30. Summer programming runs June through August, and includes many field trips and outdoor water activities for all children.

History of Discovery

Discovery is a private, non-profit 501(c)3 organization, serving children of all abilities and their families in the Flathead Valley. Discovery was founded in September of 1992 by Mary Anne Gill, a Physical Therapist, and Katherine Heider, a Speech and Language Pathologist, to provide families and children access to developmentally appropriate early childhood programming, full day child care, and early interventions services in one setting. It was their belief that when children of all abilities came together to play and learn together, that a respect for differences in others would be achieved. That mission remains with us today.

Discovery Curriculum Philosophy

- As educators and caregivers of children, we believe that children learn best through **PLAY!** Children develop their self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning through a creative, non-stressful educational experience. Discovery uses a hands-on, social skills, and play-based approach to learning as the focus of our curriculum. Classrooms are arranged in centers to offer play and learning choices at developmentally appropriate levels for each age group and the individual children within that group. There is space for art, dramatic play, reading, science, blocks, manipulative table toys, language arts (stories and fingerplays), music and large motor activities (outdoor and in). Learning centers allow children the opportunity to explore and experiment with a variety of materials and sounds and to problem-solve, make decisions, and interact with their peers.
- We believe that in an integrated setting, children become more aware of the variety of gifts and abilities that they possess. Teacher-directed activities teach young children the social skills and language skills that are necessary to communicate in an appropriate manner. We strive to help them develop self-control and to practice thoughtful and courteous behavior towards each other. As their ability to be sensitive and supportive of one another grows, they develop a respect for each other's strengths and weaknesses. A healthy, positive self-image develops when a high degree of success is experienced in social situations.
- 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. The daily schedule is planned to provide a balance of activities including indoor / outdoor; quiet / active; individual / small group / large group; large muscle / small muscle; and child initiated / staff initiated. Routine tasks like hand washing, toileting, diapering, eating, dressing, and resting are incorporated into the program as a means of furthering children's developing self-help and social skills.
- We believe the most important teacher your child will ever have is **YOU!** Open lines of communication between the center staff and family members allow us to facilitate your child's growth and learning. Our Parent Bulletin Board provides daily and/or weekly classroom news about activities the children have participated in, as well as photos of them doing so. Field trip notices are found here, as well as any other events happening at Discovery. Your own personal space includes a mailbox that should be checked daily for newsletters, artwork, notes from staff, tuition bills, and the occasional lost sock. We promise to recognize, honor, protect, and nurture your child as long as they are in our care and to respect the integrity and diversity of all families enrolled at Discovery. When children feel safe in their environment, when they

have the freedom to explore and have fun, and when they can enjoy the unique differences in themselves and others, a confident caring individual will develop.

Discovery's Daily Activities Schedule

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| 7:45am - 8:15am | Arrival and greeting of children / Quiet Play - music, reading, manipulatives, etc. |
| 8:15am - 8:30am | Breakfast is served! |
| 8:30am - 9:00am | Child initiated and directed activities - children select activities in social play area or classroom, including blocks, books, and manipulative toys |
| 9:00am - 9:15am | Classroom Circle Time - A variety of activities will be presented, including music and movement, circle songs and fingerplays, social skills lessons, and cognitive games that encourage participation of all children, while modeling appropriate classroom behaviors. |
| 9:15am -10:00am | Small Group Time and Learning Centers - Activities change on a daily basis and from class to class, but will include art and science activities using a variety of textures and mediums, table toys and theme-related manipulatives, block play, dramatic play, and teacher-directed cooperative games and movement activities |
| 10:00 - 10:30am | Clean-up, Toileting, and Snack |
| 10:30 - 11:00am | Gross Motor / Free Play - Large muscle activity providing vestibular and kinesthetic stimulation as well as promotion of general fitness, balance, coordination, and rhythm. We will play outside each day except when raining or extremely cold. |
| 11:00 - 12:00pm | Small Group Time and Learning Centers - Activities change on a daily basis and from class to class, but will include art and science activities using a variety of textures and mediums, table toys and theme-related manipulatives, block play, dramatic play, and teacher-directed cooperative games and movement activities |
| 12:00 – 1:00pm | Lunch, Free Play, and Toileting |
| 12:30 - 3:30pm | Afternoon Pre-school and Kindergarten Enrichment programs in session – Schedule and activities are similar to morning programming. Activities includes art and science activities using a variety of materials, block play, music and movement, and many language development and problem-solving skills activities. Snack and outdoor play are also included in the curriculum. Field trips into the community will be incorporated as well. |
| 1:00pm - 2:30pm | Quiet time for children at center all day |
| 2:30pm - 3:00pm | Quiet Play activities - music, reading, coloring, fine motor manipulatives |
| 3:00pm - 3:30pm | Clean-up, Toileting, and Snack |
| 3:30pm - 4:30pm | Large Muscle Activity - Indoor or Outdoor play |
| 4:30pm - 5:30pm | Child Initiated / Adult Directed Activity - Child may choose between free play or an adult directed music / dance or art activity. |
| 5:30pm - 6:00pm | Quiet Play and Closing |

What to bring the first day of school:

- 4 - 6 oz. plastic cup labeled with name for water
- lunch in a container labeled with name, and a cold-pak if needed
- a change of clothes including underwear and socks
- nap blanket labeled with name
- diapers and wipes, if needed

Discovery Programming Options

Discovery's programming operates on a school-year calendar. Upon enrollment (in September, or any other time throughout the year) children **who attend all day** are placed in the morning Playgroup, Pre-school, and Pre-K program, in general, based on when they will be entering Kindergarten. Therefore, children who turn 3 after September 5th are placed in the Playgroup, children who turn 4 after September 5th are placed in the Pre-School class, and children who turn 5 after September 5th are placed in the Pre-K class. Children move from one class to the next in September of each year. These are only guidelines though. Some young 3 year olds may not be ready for pre-school, some young 5 year olds may not be ready for Kindergarten. And some young 5 year olds move from the Pre-school class into Kindergarten if they are ready. (By young, we mean those summer birthday children!) This is a decision you and your child's current "teacher" will make together. Our goal is to allow each child to develop at their own pace and have an opportunity to shine.

For families needing pre-school programming only, an afternoon program is available from 12:30 – 3:30 for 3 – 5 year olds. We also have an afternoon Kindergarten Enrichment class **for morning Kindergarteners** who need afternoon programming. We pick-up children in District 5 schools and transport them back to Discovery for an afternoon Art, Science, and Language program. Out of district Kindergartners are welcome also, and sometimes we can help facilitate transportation with other families at the same school. Please note that we do not have placement options for afternoon Kindergarten children at Discovery in the morning. We urge any families needing full day care for Kindergartners to arrive early for Kindergarten enrollment so that you get a morning class for your child!

Making sure the staff has opportunities to get to know all of the children is one of the ways we help ensure transitions to new classrooms will be smooth. Staff work-day shifts vary from day to day to give opportunities to play with the children during mixed-age group times at the beginning, middle, and end of the day. This allows both the staff and children to get familiar with each other. We also begin talking to the children in the spring, and then all summer long about their new classroom and teachers. Because we have had the same group "names" for years, (Squirrels, Mountain Lions, Eagles, and Bullfrogs) the children also have a pretty concrete way of thinking about the change and are usually excited about their new "status"!

Summer programming runs June through August, and includes lots of field trips, games, music and movement activities, sensory activities, water play, and creative art projects – outdoors whenever we can. Movies and popcorn round out those afternoons when the weather is too hot or the kids are too tired to play anymore. Depending on numbers of children under age 6, 2 or 3 additional small groups are also formed. Though summer programming is not as structured as the school year program, routines are established that give that level of comfort for both staff and children.

Discovery Staff

One of the biggest strengths of our program lies in the dedication and quality of our staff. We strive to support our staff with training, resources, and freedom to create a unique learning experience for children. Our teachers have backgrounds in Education, Child Development, Family Relations, and/or Special Education. Discovery is an integrated center. There are children with a variety of abilities in each class. We strive to provide a low student to staff ratio to ensure that everyone receives special attention and quality services. Individualized programming based on assessment and observation is available for every child in our program. Specialists in Speech and Language Pathology, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy are available for consult on-site both for staff members and for families and offer private therapeutic sessions to children needing early intervention services. Access for the staff to these specialists ensures that the developmental needs of each child in the areas of large and small muscle skills, verbal and social skills, cognitive skills and self-help skills can be addressed.

We are here to serve you and your child in their early childhood years.

Discovery's Community

When your child becomes enrolled at Discovery your family becomes an integral part of the Discovery community. Each year brings a series of social and fundraiser events which we sponsor to foster a sense of family that we believe is crucial in a child's early years. As with any community, it's strength is only as great as its members' commitment. By having children, their families, and staff share in social activities we hope to create this strong, committed community.

- **Birthday Celebrations** – Birthdays are celebrated at the center whenever possible. Treats are welcome either for all of the children at the center, or for your child's class only. Most children really enjoy being the center of attention for a few short moments! Ice cream, cookies, and muffins are all appropriate treats.
- **Holidays** – Several holiday celebrations have become part of Discovery's tradition. Halloween can bring a costume party, parade, and pizza potluck lunch. Christmas is celebrated with an evening program and a potluck dinner. A carnival, evening barbecue, and program ends the school year in May. Additionally, parties may be held in individual classrooms for whatever reason the class deems appropriate!
- **Fundraisers** – As part of its non-profit status, Discovery sponsors 3–5 fundraisers each year. They are a crucial source of revenue for the center. These events provide the bulk of our equipment budget, art supplies, learning materials, and continuing Education budget. Because fundraisers are central to our operation and our mission, the participation of all of Discovery's families is vital to their success. Selling tickets, volunteering time, soliciting from area businesses, and attending a function are all ways that you can participate. Some of the fundraisers are also family social events. They are a time to get together with your children's friends and their families and show your children that you value where they are spending their days. We encourage you to become involved in these events.
- **Classroom participation** – All parents are welcome in Discovery's classrooms as classroom aides, to help with prep work, and to join in on field trips as drivers and helpers with the children! There are often jobs needing to be done that require a person handy with a hammer and/or a sewing machine. A "wish" list may be displayed at times, when we need some interesting additions to our collage cabinet, or need a particular piece of furnishings that our budget has no room for. Your involvement with your child's early childhood program, large or small, will help him/her see that they are important to you.
- **Recycling efforts** – Discovery practices recycling whenever we can. We believe that it is good for the environment, and therefore good for the children. Teaching the skills of recycling, reusing, and reducing our trash is part of everyday learning, and we encourage all families to participate in it at home. We have an account set up at Valley Recycling on Hwy. 2 West that families may contribute to. Bring your recyclables in and tell them to put the proceeds on Discovery's account. While the primary motive behind recycling is not monetary gain, a little incentive never hurts. Currently, Valley Recycling is accepting #1 plastics, cardboard, white paper, magazines, newspapers, and aluminum. Any help getting our extensive recycling collection to Valley Recycling is also appreciated. Let us know if you can help.
- **Community Awareness events** – Discovery believes in the importance of young children's early years, and supports community efforts to raise the awareness of this issue. The Week of the Young Child, in April, is enthusiastically celebrated, as well as presentations about Discovery to the community. Your support of these events will help greatly in spreading the word to people who have a say in how our state spends its money on families and young children.

Arrival and Departure Times: Please accompany your child inside the building every morning. We would like all children to arrive between 8:45 and 9:00 in the morning so that there is ample time for the staff to greet them before beginning class. This allows for a much smoother transition both for your child and the rest of the children in the class. It also allows enough time to touch base with your child's teacher to pass on any relevant information about your child's health, mood, morning routine, or changes in the day's schedule. A phone call to the center is appreciated when anyone other than you will be picking up your child. Our staff is required to check your child's Emergency Contact form before releasing the children to someone unfamiliar to them.

Discovery will not release a child to an intoxicated driver without notifying the police.

Enrollment Requirements / Immunizations

An Emergency Contact Form (yellow) must be filled out and brought to the center on your child's first day of enrollment. This form gives us information on who your child may be released to, where you can be contacted during the day, and lists any allergies, disabilities, and/or special health concerns you may have. State regulations require that, prior to admission, **each child shall have appropriate immunizations.** It is the parent's responsibility to ensure timeliness of immunizations. Religious exemptions are no longer allowed in licensed child care facilities. Other forms required by Discovery are a Registration form, a signed Video Release, (you may indicate NO on this form), a signed Guidance and Discipline Policy, a signed Discovery Health Policy, Health Information Protection documents, a Field Trip Permission form, a CACFP form, a Family Share Preference form, and a signed Child Care and Tuition Agreement contract.

Meals: Breakfast, morning snacks and afternoon snacks are provided as well as all beverages. A weekly menu is posted on the parent bulletin board for your information. We break for lunch between 12 noon and 1:00, depending on classroom. **Please pack a nutritious lunch** in a labeled bag or lunch box for your child. Ideas for lunch include meat, cheese, and crackers, a small piece of fruit, veggie sticks, half sandwich, yogurt. A microwave is available for warming leftovers. If your child's lunch requires refrigeration, please pack a cold pack within the lunch container. Discovery serves milk at lunch, so the inclusion of juice boxes is not necessary and discouraged. Soda pop will not be served to the children. We encourage a limited amount of "treats" be placed in your child's lunch. Staff is available to guide the children in making choices of what will be eaten first. Sometimes we are not quick enough though! Discovery Developmental Center participates in the US Department of Agriculture Child Care Food Program. In accordance with Federal law and US Dept. of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. If you believe you have been discriminated against in receiving food services because of age, sex, color, race, national origin or disability write USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Rest Time: Children who attend all day will be brought together for a rest time beginning at 1:00pm. Books will be available for older children to look at quietly while younger children are helped to sleep. Non-sleeping children who have rested by lying quietly will be allowed to get up at 2:00 for quiet table activities. All children will be awakened at 3:00pm to allow ample time for snack and free play activities in the late afternoon.

Clothing: Your child will have access to many activities while at Discovery and may often go home a bit more colorful or dirty than when they arrived! Please dress your child for active play and exploration. Paint smocks are encouraged during art time but not required, and we engage in outdoor play daily. Clothes that are easily washed and manipulated by your child promote independence in self-care skills and are most appreciated. We also request that a change of clothes (appropriate for the season) be kept at the center. Please make sure all clothing is marked with your child's name.

Guidance and Discipline

Child management techniques focus on preparing the environment so as to prevent conflict as well as teach appropriate behaviors in a group setting. Rules are simple and consistent and handled with firmness and fairness. We use positive discipline techniques including redirection, positive reinforcement, and ample praise for a child's efforts to help them 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 and name their emotions and become more empathetic. Corporal punishment is in direct opposition to the philosophy of our program and is forbidden by policy.

Individual meetings can be requested by both the family and/or the teacher throughout the year – we strive not to let undesirable behavior go on too long before getting parents involved. These meetings may include the classroom teacher and/or the director, and often result in a behavior plan that is shared with all staff who interact with the child. Phone calls are also appropriate when conflicting schedules make it difficult for you to touch base with your child's teacher. Phone calls and meetings with the director are also encouraged in helping resolve any conflicts. We are happy to discuss any concerns or ideas you may have regarding your child's discipline. **Included in your Discovery family folder is a Guidance and Discipline Policy that should be read, then signed and returned.** A copy will be provided to you for your records also.

Conferences

Parent / teacher conferences give parents a chance to sit down with their child's teacher and talk about their child, the curriculum, and classroom goals and objectives. Conferences are held two times a year, but can be arranged at any time during the year. Discovery uses a "Focused Portfolio" approach in our observations and documentations of the children's progress throughout the school year. The portfolios are sent home at the end of the school year as a memory for your family of your children's days at Discovery. IFSP (Individual Family Service Plans) and IEP (Individual Educational Plans) can be arranged that include all professionals involved in your child's life. Open lines of communication between the various adults in your child's life will better ensure that his/her developmental needs are being met.

Health Policy

Children attending child care centers are exposed to more illnesses than children who are at home. In order to keep this to a minimum, we require that children who display any of the symptoms **listed in Discovery's Health Policy** be kept at home. Also, any child who displays these symptoms while at the center will be expected to be taken home within 1 HOUR after being contacted by our staff. Please have backup care in place for your child in case of illness for both the immediate care and the following day of care for your child. Some of the 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. Medication brought for a child must be in the original bottle, properly labeled with the child's name, name of medication, date issued, and instructions. Permission must be on file for staff to distribute prescription medicine. Nonprescription medications may be dispensed by staff only at the dose, duration, and method of administration specified on the manufacturer's label for the age and / or weight of the child, and only with written parental authorization on file. Outdoor play is an important part of a child's growth and development and it is a vital part of every day at Discovery. During outdoor play, staff on the playground are unable to supervise children left inside. A good rule to follow is if your child is too ill to be outdoors, they are too ill to be at the center. **Please read, sign, and return the Discovery Health Policy included in your Discovery family folder.** A copy will be provided to you for your records also.

Late Pick-up Policy: Your promptness in picking up your child is necessary due to staffing patterns and the variety of our programs. Please note that unless a phone call or prior arrangements have been made, there will be a \$2.00 per 5 minute late pick-up fee after 6:00 PM. This fee will increase to \$1.00 per minute for any time after 6:15. **After third late pick-up, fees will be increased to \$1.00 per minute after 6:00.** If no one has called or come for your child by 6:30, the Kalispell Police Department will be contacted for any news and/or advice on where your child should be taken. Please respect your child and the Discovery staff by being prompt so that we may all enjoy our families.

Absences: We appreciate notification when your child is kept home because of illness or other reasons. Please notify the Discovery Staff by 9:00 am if your child will not be attending that day. Because of our tuition policy and staffing regulations, absences are not credited nor is swapping of days allowed. **Please see Tuition Policy.**

Emergency Weather / Snow Closures: Discovery follows School District #5 lead in determining early dismissals and/or snow days due to severe weather. The school district closes the schools when road conditions, snow, visibility, and/or temperatures make it unsafe for driving. Discovery calls in to KOFI, B98, and ALS radio stations to announce the business closure. Should you not hear the news though, remember that if there is no school for District #5 schools, Discovery will be closed also. For District #5 early dismissals due to severe weather, Discovery will remain open until all the children are gone, but phone calls to families asking them to pick up their children will be made. Any power outages and/or problems with the water supply will be considered a health and safety issue, and may also be reason for children to be picked up early.

Holidays: Discovery will be closed on the following holidays or recognized holiday days: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday, Christmas Day and the day after, New Years Day, Memorial Day and July 4th. Discovery will close at 3:00pm on Good Friday, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. We reserve the right to close on any of these early closure days if there is not enough children scheduled to attend. In addition, one Thursday and Friday in October (usually School District 5 MEA days), Discovery will close to allow staff to attend the Statewide Early Childhood Conference. These days will be noted in school year calendars at beginning of school year. **Discovery will be closed 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 and therefore, **no tuition credit will be applied.**

Toilet Training: We believe that until age 2 1/2 most children are not ready for the often frustrating experience of toilet training. They have little control over their sphincter muscle that controls their bladder and little cognitive abilities to recognize when they need to void. Starting them too early can be discouraging for the child, the parents and the providers. If you feel that your child is ready before this age, we will be happy to discuss your concerns and ideas for implementing a toilet training schedule here at the center. However, we ask that your child be able to pull down and up his/her own pants so that we can gently remind them to go to the bathroom without assistance. If your child is unable to do this then he/she may not be developmentally ready to be toilet trained.

Diapering: Please send 1 large bag of disposable diapers and 1 box of wipes labeled with your child's name if your child has diapering needs. You will be notified when additional supplies are needed. We are happy to accommodate families choosing to use cloth diapers. A covered plastic container with liner must be provided and brought home daily. Because of health considerations, we do not rinse soiled diapers.

Toys: Parents are encouraged to have their child leave toys at home. We recognize that sometimes it's easier to get out of the house in the morning by not arguing over bringing a favorite toy to the center. However, please realize that we will not be responsible for keeping track of toys brought from home. Toy weapons of any kind are never acceptable at the center. Small cars tend to get incorporated into Discovery's collection.

Child Abuse Reporting Requirements: Child abuse is physical injury, sexual abuse, neglect, or maltreatment of a child. The law REQUIRES child care providers to report suspected child abuse to Child Protective Services.

Termination of Enrollment

A child's first month at Discovery is usually viewed as a trial time, where we give everyone involved in the child's life an opportunity to decide whether Discovery will be the best environment for them. Oftentimes, children start out really well, getting excited about all the new things that 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 anymore. Usually it is no more than the newness of Discovery being gone. Discovery has successfully become part of their daily routine and they are unhappy about it. We urge you to discuss any problems or concerns you may have at this time, but believe that most children will come through this period if you as parents remain calm and confident. Occasionally there will be a child or family who would be better served in a smaller environment. We ask that you give us the first month to see if the placement can be made to work. But after that first initial month, you may be released from your contract if you choose to do so. From time to time, a child may display behaviors that are more challenging than Discovery's program resources allow for. We reserve the right to disenroll a child in cases where we believe that a child's pattern of behavior can no longer be changed in our setting, the safety of other children are at risk, and the morale of the staff is endangered. (See Discovery's Guidance and Discipline Policy for information on the steps taken to alleviate some of these behaviors.)