



**Discoveries
Learning Center, Inc.**

Family Handbook 2021-2022

**Denver Early Childhood Center
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**Discoveries Learning Center
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WELCOME TO DISCOVERIES

We are pleased that your family has chosen Discoveries Learning Center. Brain research tells us that over 90% of a child's brain is developed before entering Kindergarten. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your child's important early years. We truly look forward to partnering with you during this stage of rapid growth and development.

We also welcome you to our elementary before and after school extended day programs. Comfortable classrooms and quality programming are available beginning at 6:30 AM until 6:00 PM.

Discoveries Learning Center is licensed by the Department of Human Services. A copy of these standards is available for you to review and a copy of the license is located on the parent board. It is the goal of Discoveries to offer you and your family a comprehensive, research-based, high-quality care experience.

MISSION, PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Mission:

Our mission is to provide meaningful experiences, which encourage caring, learning and personal well-being. This will be accomplished by recognizing the value of each individual child. We also work to promote academic and personal growth in a challenging, nurturing and safe environment.

Philosophy of Early Childhood Education:

Children learn best through meaningful play experiences. Discoveries Learning Center uses valid scientific research combined with parent support and participation to guide our practices. We also rely on widely accepted standards of high-quality care, such as those described by the Quality Preschool Performance Standards (QPPS) and Iowa Early Learning Standards. Our centers and extended care services are carefully planned to be developmentally appropriate. We recognize each child's stage of development and provide curriculum according to your child's individual needs.

It is our intent to provide a homelike atmosphere that welcomes children and adults alike. As parents, you are your child's first and primary teacher. Thus, our approach includes a commitment to work with you in the best interest of your child.

Goals for Children:

- ◇ Children will show continued growth in social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language development skills.
- ◇ Children will be enthusiastic and curious learners.
- ◇ Children will be safe and healthy.

Goals for Families:

- ◇ Families will feel comfortable dropping off children for care.
- ◇ Families will work with the school in a meaningful partnership to help children be better prepared for lifelong learning.

Enrollment

Early Childhood Eligibility/Orientation

Interested families should complete our online wait list form. This form is simply that, to express interest. Once you are admitted into the program you will be sent an enrollment packet. This will help us gather all the necessary information about your child, and which program you would like to enroll them in.

A registration open house occurs each year in February for the upcoming school year.

Necessary information needed to complete the enrollment process includes:

- Completed intake packet.
- Updated physical signed by a doctor- updated annually.
- Updated immunization record signed by a nurse- updated annually.
- Paid deposit.

Discoveries accepts Empowerment funding which is available through Bremer County for qualifying families. See Site Supervisor for more information. We will accept as many Empowerment grants as there are qualified families and funds are available.

Discoveries accepts DHS funding which is available for qualifying families by contacting the Department of Human Services. We accept DHS funding for four year old students and elementary students during the school year to assist with before and after school care. DHS funding is not accepted for our summer camp programs.

Extended Day Eligibility (school-aged before and after school care)

Registration for extended day programming must be completed every year and occurs during the month of May. Families must complete paperwork and pay the annual deposit to be enrolled.

Health Requirements

Prior to starting the program, a physical form and immunization record must be turned in on or before the first day of school. It must then be updated annually. A religious exemption may be granted if notarized.

Hours/Days of Operation

Discoveries Learning Center is open from 6:30am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday except for the holidays listed below.

New Year's Day	Labor Day	Christmas Eve/Christmas Day
Good Friday	Thanksgiving Day	New Year's Eve
Memorial Day	Friday following Thanksgiving	Fourth of July

Any child dropped off more than five minutes prior to the start of the preschool session, or not picked up by 5 minutes following the end of the session will be moved into Extended Day and charged accordingly.

A pick up fee past 6:00 PM of \$5 for the first 5 minutes and \$5 for each minute thereafter will be added to your bill.

Equal Educational Opportunity

It is the policy of Discoveries not to discriminate in its education programs or educational activities on the basis of sexual orientation, race, religion, color, national origin, marital status or disability.

Inclusion

The program makes every effort to serve all disabilities and unique learning needs. Modifications and interventions, within reason, will be made in the environment in order to include children with special needs. Staff are made aware of the identified needs and are trained to follow through on specific intervention plans. If Discoveries is unable to serve the specific needs of a child within our existing classroom ratios, we will work with the family to find alternative programming.

Fee and Vacation Policy & Procedures

Attendance: Early Childhood

Please call Discoveries with the reason for an absence no later than 8:30 A.M. For safety's sake, if a student is absent without notification, the teaching staff will attempt to contact the family to verify the child's absence from school.

Attendance: *Before School Extended Day*

If you have a schedule change in the morning, you DO NOT need to contact us with that change. We are staffed in the mornings and we know if your child does not show up in the morning, they have not been brought in and are with the family.

Attendance: *After School Extended Day*

At the beginning of the school year you will provide Discoveries with your child's typical attendance for the school year. If you deviate from this schedule, that is fine, but we need you to call the office to let us know that your child will not be getting off the bus at Discoveries on that day. DO NOT use email for changes in schedule. All schedule changes are collected from the land line phones.

Payment Schedule:

A current financial agreement/calendar will be provided to all parents at the time of admission to the program. Please refer to the Payment Schedule for all current payment information and scheduling. Early Childhood school year tuition is divided up into equal installments that will be billed every two weeks through the school year via email. Therefore, whether your child attends school or not, your tuition fee remains the same. However, you are not paying for Christmas break or Spring break when Denver schools are closed. If you need care during these two weeks, you may choose care based on the daily rate/unit of the classroom.

- Payments may be set up on auto pay from your banking institution for no fee. Payments can also be dropped in the mailbox across from both Discoveries offices.
- Following a late payment, a fee of \$10 will be assessed to all payments past Friday at 6PM. This will automatically be added to your next statement.
- A \$25 fee will be assessed for all returned checks or non-sufficient funds. After three returned checks/NSF, tuition will be payable in cash or money order only. Any payment more than two billing cycles past due can be grounds for discontinuing enrollment.
- Billing concerns can be sent to disc.extended.day@gmail.com

Tax Statements

A statement of childcare costs will be provided to families by January 31 each year for the previous calendar year. Discoveries Tax ID number is 20-1085066

Inclement Weather and Childcare

Both Discoveries sites will remain open for its regular schedule on late starts, with care available at 6:30 AM. Both Discoveries sites will close early when the district closes. All students will need to be picked up by 4:00 PM.

When the district closes school due to inclement weather, the Denver site will remain closed for the day. When the district closes school due to inclement weather the Waverly site will attempt to be open from 8:00 AM-4:00 PM, reserving the right to close. If a closure is to occur, families will be made aware through Brightwheel no later than 6:30 AM.

Discharge & Disclaimer Policy

Discoveries has the right to terminate child care services at any time. Termination may occur for any reason. Examples may include, but are not limited to: failure to comply with the payment schedule, unresolved behavior or conflict by a child, unresolved behavior or conflict by a parent, and unable to meet the needs for care of a child, or any type of hostile situation. Decisions and communication to terminate will be handled by the management team.

Discoveries has the right to make an exception to a term, policy or procedure, and has the right to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. We are not responsible for lost, broken, stolen or stained items brought from home. Families will be responsible for replacing equipment damaged by the child.

Children are expected to be respectful to teachers, peers and property. Serious behavior infractions will be documented and communicated to parents. If, after three infractions, behaviors continue to hinder the fun or safety of others, parents will be asked to remove their child from programming for a day. It will be the parent's responsibility to find alternative care. After five infractions, the child will be permanently removed from programming.

Drop Off/Pick Up & Parking Policy

Parents must accompany all children into the building upon arrival; children *may not come in the building alone*. All children must be picked up by an adult or responsible sibling or babysitter.

Anyone who is allowed to pick up the child must be listed on the PICK-UP PERMISSION FORM found in the registration packet. Anyone not recognized by sight will be asked for a picture ID. If any individual other than those listed on the pick-up permission form is needed to pick-up a child, the parent must notify the office prior to that time.

Waverly: When dropping off and picking up your child, you may park anywhere in the lot, leaving the spot next to the dumpster for the bus.

Denver: When dropping off and picking up your child, you may park on either side of the street in front of the building. Cars must face the direction of travel. When picking your child up at the end of the day, please be sure not to park between the cones. They are set up with the expectation a bus will be arriving soon.

Parent Communication & Parental Access Policy

The program will promote communication between families and staff primarily through email. Written notes as well as informal conversations will also be used. Families are encouraged to send emails with important information so all the staff who work with the child can share the parent's communication. Parents are encouraged to maintain regular, on-going, two-way communication with the teaching staff in a manner that best meets their needs - email, in person, notes or phone calls.

Waverly: This site uses Brightwheel for parent communication

Denver: Depending on the classroom, your child's teacher will either use email or SeaSaw for daily communication.

Parents shall be given unlimited access to their children during the center's hours of operation or whenever their children are in the care of the center, unless parental contact is prohibited by the court.

Home/School Partnerships

Open and honest communication between families and Discoveries Learning Center is an essential component of high quality programming. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we encourage you to address your concern to your child's teacher. If additional help is needed, either party may contact the program director.

As part of our program assessment, in the spring of each year, we also provide you with a family questionnaire to evaluate our program. This information helps us to assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses. Families are encouraged to share any concerns, preferences or questions with the teachers or administration at any time.

Although in-person daily contact cannot be replaced, the staff rely on notes home, emails, phone calls, newsletters, apps and bulletin boards as an alternative means to establish and maintain open, two-way communication.

Early Childhood Home Visits

Home visits are made prior to the start of the school year or within the first 30 days of starting the program. This is an opportunity for the teacher to get to know you, your child, and your family and for you to begin to create a partnership between home and school in order to best meet your child's needs. This is a great time for you to share what makes your family unique, how you prefer to communicate with the teacher, and share your knowledge about your child's interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. You can help the teacher understand what your goals are for your child and whether you have any concerns you'd like addressed. These are optional for the family, but strongly encouraged. Your classroom teacher will explain more about these prior to school beginning in the fall.

Early Childhood Family Teacher Conferences

The preschool program will have formal family teacher conferences in the fall and spring. During the conference the teacher will share results of classroom assessments and samples of your child's work. Together you can make a plan to continue to encourage your child's growth and development. Conferences are optional, but strongly encouraged.

Transitions

Home-school connections are crucial to the transition to kindergarten or any other program. The child's family provides the consistency and continuity necessary for a young child to be successful. Making a change from one program to another can sometimes be difficult for a young child whether the transition is within the same building or in another location. Teaching staff will partner with the family to make the transition as smooth as possible by connecting family members with the next program's staff. Preschool staff will provide information about enrollment policies and procedures, program options, and arrange for a classroom visit whenever possible.

Behavior Policy

Child Guidance and Discipline

Teaching staff will equitably use positive guidance, redirection and planning ahead to prevent problems. They will encourage appropriate behavior through the use of consistent, clear rules and involve children in problem solving to foster the child's own ability to become self-disciplined. Teaching staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property and learn to be responsible for their actions. Teaching staff will use discipline that is consistent, clear, and understandable to the child. They will help children learn to persist when frustrated, play cooperatively with other children, use language to communicate needs and learn turn taking.

Challenging Behavior

All classroom staff are expected to be responsive, respectful and purposeful. The teachers anticipate and take steps to prevent potential challenging behaviors. They evaluate and change their responses based on individual needs. When children have challenging behaviors teachers promote prosocial behavior by:

- Interacting in a respectful manner with all children.
- Modeling turn taking and sharing as well as caring behaviors.
- Helping children negotiate their interactions with one another and with shared materials.
- Engaging children in the care of their classroom and ensuring that each child has an opportunity to contribute to the group.
- Encouraging children to listen to one another and helping them to provide comfort when others are sad or distressed.

Aggressive physical behavior toward staff or children is unacceptable. Teaching staff will intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive to protect all of the children and encourage more acceptable behavior.

Permissible Methods of Discipline:

For acts of aggression and fighting (biting, scratching, hitting) staff will set appropriate expectations for children and guide them in solving problems. This positive guidance will be the usual technique for managing children with challenging behaviors rather than punishing them for having problems they have not yet learned to solve. In addition, staff may: (1) Separate the children involved; (2) Immediately comfort the individual who was injured; (3) Care for any injury suffered by the victim involved in the incident.; (4) Notify parents or legal guardians of children involved in the incident; (5) Review the adequacy of the teaching staff supervision, appropriateness of program activities and administrative corrective action if it is a subsequent recurrence.

Prohibited Practices

The program does not, and will not, employ any of the following disciplinary procedures:

1. Harsh or abusive tone of voice with the children nor make threats or derogatory remarks.
2. Physical punishment, including spanking, hitting, shaking, or grabbing.
3. Any punishment that would humiliate, frighten, or subject a child to neglect.
4. Withhold nor threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

Program & Activities

Who Works At Discoveries

Program Director: There is a designated program director that supervises the programs. She meets the qualifications described by Iowa DHS licensing standards.

On-Site Coordinator: There is a designed On-Site Coordinator that works closely with the Program Director. She meets the qualifications described by Iowa DHS licensing standards.

Lead Teacher: Full-time four-year-old teachers are licensed by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners and hold an early childhood endorsement. Two and three-year-olds teaching staff may or may not be fully endorsed teachers, although they have all the required qualifications as identified by Iowa DHS.

Teacher Associate: A full-time teacher associate in the classroom carries out activities under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher assistant will have specialized training in early childhood education.

Extended Day Staff : A part-time staff member carries out activities outside of preschool programming and/or after school care. Extended Day Staff have several training requirements under the Department of Human Services.

School Nurse: The preschool will have access to a registered nurse during the day. She is an employee of the county health department and is a certified RN. She is available for parent consultation when necessary. There isn't a nursing service on site.

Support Staff: AEA Central Rivers support staff provide resources and assistance to the teacher and classroom upon request to help all children be successful in the Early Childhood setting. Such staff may include: early childhood consultant, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist or others.

All staff working at Discoveries are required to complete a staff orientation and on-going training. Following orientation staff will be required to be trained in Bloodborne Pathogens, Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting, CPR/First Aid, and Essentials training for new caregivers. Following the first year of employment, staff will maintain updated mandatory classes as well as enroll in no less than six hours of additional state approved early childhood training.

Early Childhood Daily Activities

A consistent daily schedule is planned to offer a balance of learning activities. Learning is both formal and informal. Play is planned for every day. Listening is balanced with talking, group activities with solitary time, indoors with outdoors, quiet play with noisy play. Lesson plans for each week are posted in the classroom showing how these activities are incorporated into the daily schedule. Daily or weekly notes will be sent home to families electronically unless paper is requested. For full-day programming, the children will spend a portion of the afternoon resting or napping. For individuals who do not require more than a brief period of rest, the child will be given the opportunity to engage in quiet activities. Rest time will always be supervised.

Early Childhood Curriculum

Curriculum is a framework for learning opportunities and experiences. It is the vehicle we use to reach our goals. Discoveries Learning Center uses the *Creative Curriculum*, a research and evidence-based comprehensive curriculum designed for young children. It describes and demonstrates how to plan a developmentally appropriate program focusing on well-organized interest areas. Its underlying philosophy draws from Jean Piaget's work on cognitive development, Erik Erikson's stages of socio-emotional development, and accepted theories of how children learn best.

As stated in The Creative Curriculum, the teacher's goals and objectives when implementing curriculum include:

- Meet the basic needs of the children (physiological, safety, belonging, esteem).
- Create an atmosphere in which children are safe, feel emotionally secure, and have a sense of belonging
- Follow a consistent schedule.
- Set up an environment where children can find and return materials on their own.
- Provide appropriate play materials that support and challenge children's abilities.
- Help children express their feelings in constructive ways
- Offer children opportunities to make choices.
- Allow children freedom to explore the environment.

- Permit children to get messy during play.
- Encourage children to work independently.
- Value children's ideas.
- Promote problem solving and appropriate risk taking.
- A place where learning takes place through positive relationships between and among children and adults- a community.

Early Childhood Specific Interest Areas

Through our program, each child is given the tools needed to encourage the growth of all the skills necessary for kindergarten and beyond. The interest areas at Discoveries consist of:

Sand and Water

- to explore with a variety of textures
- concepts of size, shape and volume; empty and full
- concepts of warm and cool, wet and damp, heavy and light
- to observe changes, *a science skill*

Toys and Games

- hand-eye coordination
- concepts of color, shape and location
- number concepts such as more, less, longer and shorter
- to create and reproduce patterns
- taking turns

Cooking

- learn about nutrition, tastes and food groups
- how heat and cold changes things
- concepts of volume and measure

Blocks

- concepts of size, shape, length and location, *all reading and math skills*
- to create and repeat patterns, *math skill*
- Create hypothesis and test for results, *science skill*
- cooperate with others and solve problems

Art

- exercise imagination and creativity
- learn about how colors mix to create new colors, *science*
- learn about different textures
- Concepts of size, shape, length and height
- understand ideas and creations have meaning and value

Discovery

- new vocabulary
- concepts of how things grow
- concepts of texture, weight, size and volume
- to observe likenesses and differences
- to appreciate nature and develop and a sense of wonder

Music/Movement Activities

- balance and coordination
- to be conscious of the moods and rhythms of music
- to express oneself physically

Dramatic Play

- to be flexible in thinking and making decisions
- to try various adult roles
- to improvise and use things in a symbolic way to represent something else, *abstract thinking*
- to carry out ideas with the cooperation of others

Library

- that learning to read is important, relaxing and enjoyable
- that letters on a page have meaning
- to recognize certain words seen in print
- to interpret pictures to represent words and ideas
- to express thoughts, ideas and feelings more clearly

Outdoor Play

- exploring the natural world
- to further develop fine and gross motor skills
- increase cardiovascular endurance resulting in better health

Early Childhood programs also implement short Circle Time Activities in which children learn:

- to listen, sit for a short time and understand spoken words
- that ideas added to the discussion have value
- to wait while others are talking
- new vocabulary words
- to remember words to songs and poems
- to be cooperative and considerate of others

Early Childhood Field Trips

In Denver, field trips will be in the form of walking field trips. This might include the post office, fire station, nursing home, library, grocery store or other local sites. If a field trip does occur that requires bus transportation, parents will be notified and required to sign a separate permission form.

In Waverly, guest speakers will be brought in-lue of field trips. This is due to the location of the site.

Water activities

We have a water table in the classroom for children. During water play children are involved in active experiences with science and math concepts. Children with sores on their hands are not allowed to participate with others in the water table to ensure that no infectious diseases are spread. Children are not allowed to drink the water during water play activities. Staff supervise children by sight and sound around the water table. Elementary age students may participate in water activities, and families will be notified of such plans ahead of time.

Outside Play and Learning

We have daily opportunities for outdoor play as the weather permits and provided the weather does not pose a threat. This allows children the opportunity to develop their large muscle skills, get exercise and be active.

While at Discoveries, children's shoes need to allow safe participation in activities. During nice weather, tennis shoes with socks are the best choice for all children. Flat sandals with a secure heel strap are okay, but sandals with heels, thin straps or flip flops do not promote safe active play.

Snow boots are needed during winter months to allow for play in snow. In order to make sure that your child can play comfortably outside it is important to dress him/her according to the weather. When it is cold outside he/she needs a warm coat, mittens or gloves and a hat (labeled with your child's name). For the warmer days dressing your child in lightweight clothing is just as important.

We use the Weather Channel to determine if the Wind Chill Factor or Heat Index is safe for outdoor play.

When temperatures and wind chill are at 0 degrees or below, children remain inside for play. In cases when we cannot go outside, children have the opportunity for large motor movement indoors.

Preschool Child Assessment Opportunities

It is Discoveries belief that assessment of young children should be purposeful, developmentally appropriate, and take place in a natural setting by familiar adults. The results will be used for planning experiences for the children and to guide instruction. Assessment will never be used to label children or to include or exclude them from a program. All results will be kept confidential, placed in each child's file, and stored in a secure filing cabinet.

Children are assessed in the following ways:

- *Creative Curriculum Gold Assessment*
- Pre-Academic skills checklist
- Observation notes and anecdotal records
- Students will also be assessed in vision and hearing during the year.

The information from the above is used by teachers in the following ways:

- To provide information about children's needs, interests, and abilities in order to plan developmentally appropriate experiences for them;
- To provide information to parents about their children's developmental milestones in a development portfolio
- To indicate possible areas that require additional assessment.

Preschool GOLD Assessment Process- allowing for adaptations and modifications of curriculum

Creative Curriculum helps students use the classroom environment productively and see themselves as capable learners. A carefully organized and print-rich setting is the foundation of the curriculum. *Creative Curriculum* focuses on 36 objectives and dimensions, which define the learning objectives and growth goals for children. Teachers record written observations on children regularly and input observations into an assessment tool called *Creative Curriculum GOLD*. Checkpoints are finalized three times a year to monitor progress.

Assessment information will be shared formally with families during Parent Teacher Conferences in the fall and spring. The preschool teacher will communicate weekly regarding children's activities. Informal conferences are always welcome and can be requested at any time.

If, through observation or information on the *Gold Assessment*, the teacher feels that there is a possible issue related to a developmental delay or other special need, she will communicate this to the family, sharing documentation of the concern. With parent permission, suggestions for next steps may include a request made to AEA for additional support and ideas.

Discoveries Program Evaluation

Discoveries is evaluated through three processes:

1. Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (4 year old programming.) The evaluation process includes gathering evidence in all areas of program functioning, including policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress and learning, family involvement and satisfaction, and community awareness and satisfaction.
2. Iowa Department of Human Services (all programs): This evaluation process occurs annually and is a thorough review of the entire program.
3. QRS (Quality Rating System) (all programs): This is a voluntary Iowa initiative intended to raise the quality of care in Iowa and educate families on what quality care looks like.

Health & Safety Policy

Building doors at Discoveries are locked during the day. Access may be granted by using a key-card/ fob or by ringing the doorbell. Each family will be issued up to two key-cards/fobs for access to the Discoveries building during normal operating hours. These are costly and loss of one will result in a \$15 charge on your billing invoice. In the event of a lost or stolen card/fob, please notify Discoveries as soon as possible so that it may be deactivated.

Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

With written permission, parents may supply sunscreen or sunblock with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 30 or higher to be applied to your child's skin. You may also supply your child with an insect repellent containing DEET only, which will be given with your written permission, no more than once a day to protect your child from insect bites when the public health authorities recommend its use. Sunscreen and insect repellent forms are part of your intake packet. Sunscreen/insect repellent will only be applied if supplied by the family.

Health and Immunization Certificates

Prior to beginning the program, health records that document the dates of service shall be submitted that show the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended and published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

When a child is overdue for any routine health services, a parent or legal guardian, or both will provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for immunizations for which parents are using religious exemption.

Health and Safety Records

Health and safety information collected from families will be maintained on file for each child in a locked cabinet. Files are kept current and updated as needed. The content of the file is confidential, but available to administrators or teaching staff, the child's parent or legal guardian and regulatory authorities, upon request.

Child Health and Safety Records will include:

1. Current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency;
2. Results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results;
3. Current emergency contact information for each child, that is kept up-to-date by a specified method during the year;
4. Names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child;
5. Instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes);
6. Individual emergency care plans for children with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergy, asthma, seizures, orthopedic or sensory problems, and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support; and
7. Supporting evidence for cases in which a child is under-immunized because of a medical condition (documented by a licensed health professional) or the family's beliefs. Staff will implement a plan to exclude the child promptly if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the program.

Illness Policy and Exclusion of Sick Children

Children will be checked daily for health status. Signs of illness will constitute a formal evaluation by center staff and the director. Sick children are not to be brought to the center and shall not be allowed to remain at the center. Certain illnesses will necessitate the temporary removal of a child from the center.

Child Illness

1. Teachers will observe each child's physical condition for symptoms of illness as he/she arrives at the center and periodically throughout the day.
2. If the child exhibits any of the symptoms of illness in the exclusionary policy section listed below, he/she will not be allowed to attend the center. If the child develops these symptoms during the day the child will be removed from the classroom to lay down in the office or somewhere supervised in the classroom away from the other children and a parent will be contacted to pick up the child.
 - a. Elevated temperature
 - If a child has a temperature of 100.0, the parent will be notified. If there are no other signs of illness, the parent may choose whether or not to remove the child.
 - If a child has a temperature of 100.0 along with other symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, rash, sore throat, swollen glands, red and runny eyes, coughing, or sneezing, the parent will be asked to pick up the child.
 - If the child's temperature is 101.0, the child must be picked up from the center and not return until fever free for 24 hours without the use of Tylenol or other fever reducing medication.
 - b. Vomiting
 - If a child vomits while at Discoveries Learning Center, parents will be notified and asked to pick up the child. Children should remain free of vomiting for 24 hours before returning to school.
 - c. Diarrhea
 - If the child has one loose or bloody bowel movement, parents will be notified. If the child has diarrhea twice in the day with no other symptoms, parents will be contacted and may be asked to come and get the child.
 - If the child has one diarrhea with any other symptoms of illness, the parents will be asked to come and get the child.
 - d. Sore throat and swollen glands (signs of strep)
 - e. Abdominal pain for more than two hours or intermittent pain associated with fever or other symptoms.
 - f. Red eyes with thick yellow drainage (signs of conjunctivitis).
3. Children must be able to participate comfortably in all center activities. If a child requires greater care than the staff determines they can provide without compromising their ability to care for other children, the family will be asked to take the child home.

Contagious disease notification

1. Parents will be notified of their child's exposure to a contagious disease through written notices that will be emailed.
2. Notification will include information about the date of exposure and disease.
3. Parents should notify the Center if their child contracts a contagious disease.

Return Policy

1. Return policies for specific illnesses are listed below.
2. If a child is on antibiotics, the child must have been on this medication for at least 24 hours before returning to the center.
3. When a child is removed from Discoveries, the parent will be informed of the return policy based on the child's illness.
4. Any child who attends Discoveries must be well enough to participate in all program activities, both inside and outside.

Exclusionary policy

The following exclusionary policies will be enforced: (Please note: this is not a complete list. Illnesses not on this list will be handled on an individual basis)

- Chicken Pox and Shingles- Child must not attend Discoveries. All parents will be notified of the outbreak. Child may return one week from onset or when sores are dried and crusted.
- Conjunctivitis- If the child has thick yellow drainage from the eyes, the child may not attend the Discoveries. Child may return 24 hours after beginning treatment for bacterial conjunctivitis.
- COVID-19- Child may return 10 days from the onset of symptoms and fever and symptom free for 24 hours. If a member of the household is diagnosed, the child must remain home for the duration of their quarantine, unless the family member is isolated from the child attending Discoveries. This policy is subject to change based on current guidelines set by the Iowa Department of Public Health.
- Diarrhea- Child must not attend Discoveries if diarrhea cannot be contained in a toilet or if diarrhea has occurred twice while in care. Diarrhea medication will not be administered at the center. Child may return 24 hours after last occurrence of diarrhea or when diagnosed as non-contagious by a physician.
- Fever- Child must not attend the Center if fever is 101.0 F. A child must not attend center if fever is 100.0 F and has other symptoms. Child may return when he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Head Lice- Child will be referred for treatment. Child may return after beginning treatment.
- Hepatitis A- Child must not attend Discoveries. All parents will be notified of the outbreak. Child may return seven days after onset of illness or as directed by the health department.
- Hepatitis B- Child must be excluded from the Discoveries if: weeping sores are present that cannot be covered; biting or scratching behavior-or behavior changes with a fever; a bleeding problem; generalized dermatitis that may produce wounds or weepy tissue fluids.
- Herpes- Child with open sores that cannot be covered must not attend Discoveries. Child may return when sores are dried and crusted.
- Impetigo- Child must not attend Discoveries. Child may return 24 hours after beginning treatment and/or all lesions are crusted.
- Strep-Child may not attend Discoveries. Child may return 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment and no fever.
- Measles/Rubella- Child must not attend Discoveries. All parents will be notified of the outbreak. Child may return six days after the onset of the rash.
- Meningitis- Child must not attend Discoveries. Physician must confirm the type. Center must notify all parents. Child may return after disease prevention measures have been completed. Must have a written release from a physician.
- Mumps- Child must not attend Discoveries. All parents must be notified of an outbreak. Child may return five days after onset of swelling.

- Pertussis/Whooping Cough (All children attending the center must provide evidence of immunization against)-Child must not attend Discoveries. All parents must be notified by staff. Child may return five days after starting medication. Must have a written release from a physician.
- Pertussis Rash- Staff will notify parent if a rash is observed. If rash spreads or is accompanied by another symptom, the child will be sent home. Child may return with a written physician's note stating the rash has been diagnosed as non-contagious.
- Respiratory infection/Severe(uncontrolled cough, difficult breathing or wheezing)- Child must not attend Discoveries. Child may return with a written note from a physician.
- Respiratory infection/Unspecified (common cold with no fever)- A child without fever who has mild to moderate symptoms may attend the Center.
- Stomach ache- Child may not attend Discoveries if pain is severe or lasts more than two hours or is intermittent and child has other symptoms. Child may return when pain resolves.
- Vomiting- Child may not attend Discoveries if vomiting has occurred twice in 24 hours (with no other symptoms) or once in 24 hours when accompanied by fever or lethargy. Child may return 24 hours after the last occurrence of vomiting or when diagnosed as non-contagious by a physician.
- Influenza A (H1N1)- Symptoms of the flu typically include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit or above orally), cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea. Children and staff with a flu-like illness should stay home for 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (without having to use fever-reducing medicines).

Reporting Communicable Diseases

Staff and teachers provide information to families verbally and in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and what the families should implement at home. The program has documentation that it has cooperative arrangements with local health authorities to keep current on relevant health information and to arrange for obtaining advice when outbreaks of communicable disease occur.

Medication Policies and Procedures

Policy: Discoveries staff will administer medication to children with written approval of the parent and an order from a health provider for a specific child. Medication administration will be limited to situations where an agreement to give medicine outside preschool hours cannot be made. Whenever possible, the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

Procedure: Medication during school hours only if the parent or legal guardian has provided written consent and the medication is available in an original labeled prescription or manufacturer's container that is child-resistant. Those who will administer medications have specific training and a written performance evaluation, updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the five right practices of medication administration: (1) verifying that the right child receives the (2) right medication (3) in the right dose (4) at the right time (5) by the right method with documentation of each time the medication is given. Medication errors will be controlled by checking and recording these five right practices each time medication is given. Should a medication error occur, the Regional Poison Control Center and the child's parents will be contacted immediately. The incident will be documented in the child's record at the school.

Medications are labeled with the child's first and last names, the date the prescription was filled, the recommendations obtained from the child's health care provider, the name of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and the instructions on how to store it. It will remain locked.

A medication log will be maintained by the school staff to record the instructions for giving the medication, consent obtained from the parent or legal guardian, amount, the time of administration, and the person who administered each dose of medication.

All medications must be turned in to the office. Medication cannot be left in a child's backpack.

Cleaning and Sanitizing

The facility will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. When a spill occurs, the area will be made inaccessible to children and the area will be cleaned immediately.

- Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a bleach and water solution. To disinfect, the surfaces will be sprayed until glossy. The solution will be allowed to air dry.
- Discoveries eating and cooking non-disposable items follow the required soap-water, rinse, solution-water and air-dry method.
- Machine washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion must be laundered before another child's use.

Staff will be trained in cleaning techniques, proper use of protective barriers such as gloves, proper handling and disposal of contaminated materials, and information required by the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration about the use of any chemical agents.

First Aid Kit

A first aid kit is located in every classroom next to the door and readily available for adult use. It is fully equipped according to guidance from Healthy Child Care Iowa. Monthly, the contents are inspected and missing or used items replaced immediately. The first aid kit is taken to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

Fire Safety

A fire extinguisher is installed in the preschool classrooms with a tag indicating its annual service date. The fire alarm system is serviced annually. Carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly. A written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained. Fire drills are conducted monthly and recorded on a log.

Notification of Accidents or Incidents

In the event that your child receives a minor, non-life threatening injury during their time at the center, the teacher will assess the situation and apply first aid as needed. Minor cuts and scrapes will be treated with soap and water and bumps will be treated by applying ice to the injured area. Any incident or injuries will be documented on an incident/accident form. Parents will be notified the day of the incident and a signed form placed in the child's file.

Emergency Contacts

The telephone numbers of the Fire Department, Police Department and Poison Control are posted inside each door and on the parent board. Emergency contact information for each child will be kept readily available. The list of emergency telephone numbers, and copies of emergency contact information and authorization for emergency transport will be taken along anytime children leave the facility in the care of facility staff.

Substance Abuse

As mandatory reporters, Discoveries will need to report to Iowa DHS and local police anyone leaving the site with a child that appears to be impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Smoke Free Facility

In compliance with the Iowa Smoke free Air Act of 2008, all Discoveries sites and grounds are smoke free. A “No Smoking” sign meeting the law’s requirements is posted at all entrances. No smoking is allowed on the school grounds or within sight of any children.

Nutrition Policy

Meals and snack times are planned so that no child eats more than two hours after the center opens and that no child goes longer than three hours between meals. For this reason, do not send any outside food or drink with your child, other than water. This is especially true for first thing in the morning. If your child needs to eat before breakfast time, this needs to be done at home or on the way to the center.

Typical early childhood meal times at Discoveries are:

Breakfast: 8:15 AM

Lunch: 11:15 AM

Snack: 2:15 PM

Typical Extended Day snacks at Discoveries are:

Breakfast: 7:15-7:30

Snack: All PM snacks will be served before 4:00 PM

Breakfast and Snacks

These are provided by Discoveries on a two-week rotating menu. Menus are posted in the kitchen and meet the CACFP food guidelines. Students and staff are not allowed to bring in their own breakfast or snack items into the classrooms. This is consistent with recommended practices. Early Childhood eats breakfast at 8:15 and elementary has breakfast served for 15 minutes in the mornings, but may not be available past 7:30 so clean up can occur before the bus arrives.

Lunches

Lunch for the two and three-year-all day students is provided by Discoveries. Denver lunches are purchased from Denver Schools and Waverly is prepared on-site. Both are included in the price of tuition. Cold lunch for this age group is not allowed.

For the Denver four-year-old Voluntary Preschool Program full-day children, school lunches can be purchased through Denver Schools. A school menu can be found by clicking on school lunch at www.denver.cyclones.com. If you are interested in sending a sack lunch with your four year old, that is a choice you can make.

For the Waverly four-year-old Voluntary Preschool Program full-day children, lunch is made on-site for students.

Please note:

We are required by the state to ensure all children under 5 have healthy meals and their lunch includes healthy choices that follow CACFP guidelines. These guidelines are available on-line. Sack lunches need to be prepared and transported in a sanitary fashion. Food brought from home will be labeled with the child’s name and date. Children will not be allowed to share food provided by family unless the food is intended for sharing with all of the children. Leftover sack lunch items will be discarded unless it is a commercially wrapped product that was never opened by your child. NO foods shall be served or delivered that are over 110 degrees.

Celebrations

Birthdays are an important and significant event in the life of a child. They afford the opportunity for children to be given special recognition. Accordingly, students who wish to bring treats for the class on their birthday may do so. Food that comes from home for sharing among the class must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared or store bought, pre-packaged foods in sealed containers. Those who have summer birthdays are welcome to choose a school day to celebrate with their class. Invitations to parties outside of school that do not include either the whole class, or all the boys or all the girls of the class, cannot be distributed at school.

Allergy Information

If your child has a food allergy or a food they are unable to eat while in care, we are required that this be documented on the Food Action Plan provided by Discoveries. Per policy, the form needs to be signed by both the family and a doctor. Each allergy case will be dealt with on an individual basis as described on the action plan. If there are foods your child cannot eat, they must be individually listed. Families will be asked to provide alternative foods or beverages to accommodate needs.

Communication Plan for Staff and Parents:

Staff and volunteers will receive a written copy of this policy in their orientation packets before beginning work at the center. Office personnel will share the Food Allergy Action Plan with caregivers and provide training (if necessary) to staff directly in contact with the child. Food allergies are posted in the classroom and food preparation areas. Small, red stop signs will be used where the child sits as a last form of assurance.

Biting Policy

Biting is a common and a developmentally appropriate behavior in young children. Experts in the field of child development report that biting occurs chiefly as a result of a child's incapacity to communicate. Children may become upset by a new experience, and may bite as a response. While biting during the early childhood years is developmentally appropriate, it is upsetting to parents and caregivers when it occurs. The goal of our policy is to replace the child's undesirable behavior with more effective ways of communication and to ensure the health and safety of everyone in our program. The following is a plan of our preemptive strategies:

- When children bite out of frustration or anger, behavior will be redirected to some other activity and/or will be shown an alternate way to communicate what they want. We will encourage the use of language to express wants and needs.
- Parents will be notified if their child is bitten at school. However in order to protect the privacy of all our families, parents will not be informed of the biter.
- If a child bites frequently, staff will utilize a more intensive approach which involves carefully observing the child to determine precipitating events and maintaining a log to help track the behavior. Conferences with parents may also be utilized to discuss the child's actions at home, search for outside resources, etc.
- Biting incidents will be communicated to the parents of the biter to ensure staff and parents are working together to understand and prevent this behavior. Early Access or AEA may be called in for additional support and strategies if needed.

When biting occurs, first aid will be given including an ice pack and comfort to the child. In order to ensure the safety of all children, if all attempts to stop chronic biting fail we reserve the right to remove the biting child from the program.

Additional Information

Ethics and Confidentiality

Staff follow a code of ethics to guide their involvement with children and families. It is essential to protect the confidentiality of all information concerning children and families. No information about any particular child shall be shared with any other family. We continually strive to model such qualities as patience, tolerance, cooperation, acceptance, understanding of others, and enthusiasm for children as well as for other adults.

Children's Records

Student records containing personally identifiable information, except for directory information, are confidential. The files are kept updated by families. While the content of the file is confidential, it is immediately available to:

- Administrators or teaching staff who have legitimate need
- Parents and legal guardians
- Regulatory authorities

Volunteer Opportunities

Parents are encouraged to participate in the following ways:

- Complete the annual satisfaction survey
- Be a business partner
- Come in and read or present your occupation or special collection to the class
- Donate new or slightly used items for the classroom

Clothing- Early Childhood

Your child will be learning through active play that can sometimes be messy. Your child should wear comfortable, washable clothing. You will be asked to send an extra set of clothing appropriate for the season. Please clearly label this clothing with your child's name to reduce the possibility of mistakes. Please ensure your child has an extra set of clothes.

Toilet Learning

Toilet learning is an important time in a child's development. For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the following procedures are in place:

1. Diapering will only be done in the designated diaper area.
2. Disappearing procedures will follow the DHS guidelines.
3. Potty chairs will not be used due to the risk of spreading infectious diarrhea.
4. Families are asked to provide an extra set of clothing for their child in case of an "accident". Please clearly label the clothing with your child's name.

Objects From Home

Encourage your child not to bring special toys from home. Many classrooms pass around a Sharing Bag in which children will have the opportunity to share special toys with the class. Other activities, such as, student of the Week may also occur where students will have the opportunity to share special items from home. Elementary-aged families are asked to keep all personal items in their bag. Electronic gaming systems, phones and trading cards will not be allowed at Extended Day unless for a special occasion in which you will have prior notice.

Classroom Animals and Pets

If a classroom desires, they may have a classroom fish to be responsible for.

Access Policy

Discoveries staff is responsible for ensuring the safety of the children at the center and preventing harm by being proactive and diligent in supervising not only the children, but other people present at the facility.

1. Any person in the center who is not an owner, staff member, substitute, or subcontracted staff or volunteer who has had a record check and approval to be involved with child care shall not have unrestricted access to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian, or custodian, nor be counted in the staff to child ratio.
**It is imperative that centers not allow people who have not had a record check to assume child care responsibilities or be alone with children. This directly relates both to child safety and liability to the center.
2. Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under the direct supervision and monitoring of a paid staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any child care responsibilities.
3. Center staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the center without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If staff is unsure about the reason they will contact their site manager or other management staff to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation staff will follow the "intruder in the center" procedures. Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc. will be monitored by paid staff and will not be allowed to interact with the children on premise.
4. A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is the parent, guardian, or custodian) who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code 692A):
 - a. Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the child care center.
 - b. Shall not be on the property of the child care center without the written permission of the center director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child to and from the center.
 - (a) The center director is not obligated to provide written permission and must consult with their DHS licensing consultant first.
 - (b) If written permission is granted it shall include the conditions under which the sex offender may be present, including:
 - (i) The precise location in the center where the sex offender may be present.
 - (ii) The reason for the sex offender's presence at the facility.
 - (iii) The duration of the sex offender's presence.
 - (iv) Description of how the center staff will supervise the sex offender to ensure that the sex offender is not left alone with a child.
 - (v) The written permission shall be signed and dated by the director and sex offender and kept on file for review by the center licensing consultant.

Emergency Procedures: Medical Emergencies

Discoveries has in place a “Safety Procedures Booklet” that describes the following situations and procedures to follow. In cases of evacuation, the staff will walk the students to the following locations:

Denver: The Denver Elementary School gym.

Waverly: Goodwill Industries.

- Emergency phone numbers – these are in each classroom and are taken with them wherever they go.
- Evacuations – if the students are evacuated, they will walk to the following sites per location:
Denver: Denver Elementary Gym. Waverly: Goodwill Industries
- Fire & bomb threat procedures: We will activate the fire alarm, which will sound throughout the building and create flashing lights. Children will be evacuated according to the diagram posted in their room or as directed by the police. A head-count will be taken before and after the evacuation to ensure accountability. In case of inclement weather, the children will be transported to the evacuation site by school bus. First aid kits and emergency information will be taken with the staff and children.
- Utility Failures (electric power failure, water line break, gas line break): In case of a power outage, we will remain in the building as long as the conditions allow/or the power returns. If evacuation due to a utility failure is deemed necessary, the children will evacuate to their site’s designated Evacuation Site. If the call is made to close Discoveries, parents should come as soon as possible. A head count will be taken before and after the evacuation to ensure accountability.
- Severe weather/Tornado procedures: We will activate the tornado siren, which will sound throughout the building. The children will be escorted to the tornado safe area according to the diagram posted in their room. A head-count will be taken before and after the evacuation to ensure accountability. In case of structural damage to the building, the children will be transported to the evacuation site by school bus.
- Physical Threats/Armed Intruder: In the case of an intruder entering the building and creating a hostile situation, a designated code will be put out to alert other team members of the situation and to alert them to phone the police. If possible, children will be taken to a designated safe area in the building. The center will then proceed as directed by the police.
- Intoxicated Parent or Visitor: If an intoxicated parent attempts to pick up his/her child, the on-site supervisor will contact an emergency contact and request that they pick up the child. The on-site supervisor will then inform the intoxicated parent of the pick-up plan. If we are unable to reach an emergency contact, the child must be allowed to leave with the parent. The on-site supervisor will then inform the parent that the police will be immediately contacted concerning the incident. An intoxicated visitor will be asked to leave the center immediately, and the parent of whom the visitor was there to see will be contacted.

This handbook is available online @ www.DiscoveriesLearningCenter.com, or parents can request to see a copy by stopping into the office.

Closing Remarks

We truly hope your family has a wonderful experience while at Discoveries.

It is our hope that we can exchange ideas to combine our efforts in providing a stimulating and discovery-filled learning experience for children and ourselves. Please feel free to call the center director with any questions about the content of this handbook.

Revised 1/2021

*Sincerely,
Discoveries Staff*