

PARENT HANDBOOK

Statements and Policies

For

DISCOVERY LEARNING CENTER

Growing ...

Confident

Competent

Caring

Children



PURPOSE

“Children experience joy, laughter, and a sense of wonder and adventure, everyday.”

The purpose of Discovery Learning Center (DLC) is to provide high quality early childhood care and education in a supportive environment; that support extends to the children, their families and their community. The goal of everyone working with the children is to help each child have more positive feelings about him/herself, including confidence in the ability to learn, increasing self-control, positive social relationships and exploring new experiences, with the result of **growing confident, competent, caring children.**

SPONSORSHIP/OWNERSHIP

This organization is a private, not-for-profit corporation, governed by a board of directors comprised of community leaders and experts and clients. All funds earned by DLC are used for operating costs, to make improvements in the program, or to purchase equipment. Discovery Learning Center is a program of the Family Development Center of Steamboat Springs.

ACCREDITATION

DLC is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. DLC has undergone a comprehensive process of internal self-study, external professional review to verify compliance with over 400 criteria for high-quality early childhood programs, and has been found to be in compliance with the criteria.

LICENSING INFORMATION

DLC is licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services, and is rated a Level 4 in the Colorado Shines system. If you have a question or concern regarding licensing, please speak with the Director. Complaints about licensed centers should be filed with:

Department of Human Services
1575 Sherman St.
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-5958

OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICY

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. In accordance with *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, it is the policy of DLC to admit and treat all children, parents and staff without regard to race, color, disabling condition, religion or national origin. There is no distinction in eligibility for, or in the manner of providing to any child, the services provided by or through the auspices of this center, other than families with previously enrolled children in DLC are given first priority in admission to the school. All persons and organizations having occasion to refer children or to recommend DLC are advised to do so without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or disabling condition.

CHILDREN with SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with special needs are included in the program if the staff feels capable, with reasonable accommodations, of meeting the particular needs of individual children.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

A registration form must be completed each school year and returned with a non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 to the Director.

Children, ages **three (3) years old through six (6) years old**, must be completely toilet-trained and fully immunized to enroll in our program. Enrollment forms, including Emergency Authorizations, Health Appraisal and Immunization Forms, Permission Forms, Intake Record, Parent Participation Form, and Safe Departure Policy must be completed and returned prior to the opening day of the school year or summer program. For health reasons, all children must be immunized or in the process of completing immunizations to enroll at Discovery. **Only medical exemptions** to the immunization requirement will be allowed with the signature of a certified medical physician.

ORIENTATION

We highly recommend attending one of the group orientations or scheduling a meeting with our Director, Tami Havener (970-879-5973, X 11), prior to enrolling at DLC. This is an opportunity to discuss philosophy, curriculum goals, child assessment programs, tuition policies, faculty qualifications, parent involvement opportunities, health policies, and communication avenues.

There are several ways to help your child become familiar with DLC. You can arrange for a tour of the program, or an extended visit, prior to his/her first day. We also recommend scheduling a home visit with your child's teacher. This provides an opportunity for your child to meet her/his new teacher before beginning school in a familiar environment. This also provides you a chance to ask more questions regarding your child's classroom program.

We will offer a home visit again when your child changes classrooms, i.e., moves from Preschool to PreKindergarten.

EMERGENCIES

In case of emergency, the custodial parent or mother will be contacted first. If she cannot be reached, the father will be called. If neither parent can be reached, persons indicated on the Emergency Form will be contacted.

If the emergency warrants an evacuation, a notice will be posted at the school, and the police department will have our relocation site. If possible we will send a message via email.

To ensure the safety of the children within our program we respond to all emergency situations, to include, but not limited to: lost children, shelter-in-place, and fires. If your child becomes lost while in our care we will alert the proper authorities, as well as all staff within our building, and we will immediately call the parent or legal guardian. On a regular basis, we conduct practice fire drills and other times a year, we conduct shelter-in-place or lockdown drills to ensure that all staff and children are familiar with the drill procedures in case of a real emergency. Please refer to our disaster preparedness plan for more detailed information regarding other emergency situations.

HOURS AND TUITION

Full days are provided from 7:30 am until 5:30 pm. Tuition is \$67.00 per day. Part days are available from 7:30 am until 1:00 pm for preschoolers. Tuition is \$51.00 per part day. There is a minimum enrollment of three days a week.

Monthly tuition is calculated with a daily rate, based on the days you selected at registration for your child to attend. Billing occurs at the beginning of the month. **Tuition is due on or before the eighth of each month.** If it is not received by the tenth, a late charge of 10% will be assessed, unless special arrangements with the Director have been made.

Discovery Learning Center is committed to providing students and their families a range of options for paying their educational expenses. However, the credit card payment method has become prohibitively expensive due to the fees charged by credit card companies. Therefore, Discovery Learning Center cannot fund the expense. A nonrefundable service fee of 2.75% of the payment amount will be assessed for all credit and debit card transactions. The service fee can be avoided by paying with cash, check or money order.

DLC offers full and partial scholarships to families in need. The need may be ongoing or for a short period of time. For confidential assistance, see Tami Havener, Director, 879-5973 x11. In addition DLC accepts CCCAP (Colorado Child Care Assistance Program) and CPP (Colorado Preschool Program) payments to assist families with tuition.

HOLIDAYS and CLOSURES

Discovery Learning Center is closed for major holidays, including Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day (and Friday following), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day and July 4. DLC is also closed three or four other days each year for long-term planning and professional development. Parents are not charged tuition for days when DLC is closed.

ABSENCES and EXTRA DAYS

We appreciate notification if your child is going to be absent. When your child is absent due to illness, vacation, etc., you are still responsible for the full month's tuition. If you need to change your scheduled days either temporarily or permanently, we will make every attempt to

accommodate your needs as space is available. Change of Schedule forms are available at the Front Desk. You may also add extra days, at the daily rate, if space is available.

WITHDRAWALS

We must have a **two-week written notice** if you withdraw your child before the end of the school year or summer program. Without this notice you may be billed for the difference.

However, we also recognize that not every situation is appropriate for every child. If, for any reason, this program is found to be unsatisfactory for any particular child, we will make every effort to discuss this with the parents in order to determine the cause. Most of the time, we can help the child make the adjustment. If this is not possible, the parent and/or program may choose to terminate the arrangement on a timeline that is in the child's best interest.

Other reasons that may result in the termination of care are as follows:

1. Non-payment for child care services and/or lack of adherence to our tuition payment policies.
2. Lack of cooperation from parents with the program's efforts to resolve differences and/or to meet the child's needs through parent/staff meetings or conferences.
3. Abusive behaviors and/or verbal threats by parents toward program staff or other parents (Immediate Termination).
4. Parents disciplining, in any way, children other than their own while at the program.
5. Child exhibits special needs or needs related to a serious illness that cannot be met at DLC. In this case, the staff will make every effort to involve the parents and other appropriate resource persons, in order to decide together on the best course of action for the particular child, prior to any termination.
6. Dangerous, destructive, or seriously disruptive behaviors. If a child exhibits destructive or seriously disruptive behaviors, the Director will attempt to discuss any problems with the parent or responsible party prior to termination of care. However, if the Director determines that a child poses a danger to himself/herself or others, the Director (or his/her designee) may suspend or terminate care without prior notice.
7. Other conduct detrimental to the operation of the facility and/or welfare of children at the facility, as determined by the Director.
8. Excessive late pick-ups, (more than 2 per year from Sept-Aug).

ARRIVALS/DEPARTURES

Parents must sign their child in and out on the sign-in sheet located in each classroom, including the time and signature. Children should be signed in by 8:45 am. We use the "sign-in" throughout the day and in emergencies, to determine which children are presently in our care. Teachers will verify attendance throughout the day, including a name to face count taken after each transition. The classroom teachers will ensure that each parent or legal guardian signs in their child upon arrival and signs out their child upon departure.

If you arrive after we have left on a field trip, please join us at the new location. A sign will be posted on our front door with details of where you can find us.

Our classrooms are "cell phone-free environments." Our policy maximizes opportunities for parent-child and staff-parent communication during arrival and departure times. You are welcome to use your phone in hallways, but please refrain from using them in children's classroom space. Your cooperation with our cell-phone free policy is greatly appreciated.

Children must be picked up by 1:00 pm (part-day kids) or 5:30 pm. A **late pick-up fee** will be charged for every 15 minutes, or portion thereof, after the scheduled pick-up time. The fee is \$20 for the first late pick-up, \$40 for the second late pick-up. If you find that you are going to be detained, please call to notify us immediately, so that we can reassure your child that he/she has not been forgotten. If your child has still not been picked up after a reasonable amount of time and DLC has not been notified of the reason for the delay, the Routt County Department of Human Services or law enforcement will be notified.

AUTHORIZATIONS TO PICK UP CHILD

DLC will not permit your child to leave with any person for whom we do not have your written permission (unless directed to do so by law enforcement). In the event of an unforeseen situation, a phone call to DLC (970-879-5973) is permissible. All children must be signed out by an authorized person who is at least 18 years of age. A photo ID may be required if staff does not recognize the authorized person.

Release Time Crisis Procedure: Should an unanticipated crisis occur at pick up time, we will ensure everyone's safety by:

- Not immediately releasing the child.
- Enlisting the help of the other parent or persons on the Authorized List.
- Offering alternatives, discussing concerns.
- Reminding person of signed "Policy on Safe Departure".
- Calling authorities as appropriate.
- Releasing the child with reservation.

SECURITY

All enrolled families will receive a secure access code at orientation. This consists of 4 digits and the * button. This code will allow parents to have immediate entry to the interior at the front door or one of the two playground doors. The code is only functional during operating hours, (typically 7:30-5:30 Monday through Friday).

VISITORS

DLC has an open-door policy, and parents are welcome to visit and/or participate at their convenience.

Other visitors must ring the doorbell for entry and sign in at the Front Desk. Volunteers and observing students occasionally are present at DLC also. They must abide by the volunteer/observer policies.

TRANSPORTATION and FIELD TRIPS

DLC assumes no responsibility for the transportation of the child to and from the center. The DLC bus, SST public bus system, or a taxi service may be used for field trips, as well as walking to a location. While transporting children on field trips, we ensure that Colorado State Laws are followed at all times. A qualified driver will be present in each center vehicle with each group of children. All center vehicles are equipped with first aid supplies and will have an individual currently certified in First Aid and CPR. Each driver will also be instructed in emergency roadside procedures. Children are required to remain seated in the integrated child restraint 5-point harness system in our DLC buses and children are never left unattended on a vehicle. (For a copy of our full {10 pages} Driver Training, please see Tami.)

Field trips are an educational and fun part of the curriculum. You will need to sign a permission form each time a field trip is scheduled, as you sign-in. Whenever the children leave the building, a notice will be posted at the school, so that you may always locate your child.

NUTRITION

Parents must provide a lunch, including beverage, labeled with your child's name, each day their child attends. Children also need to bring a morning and afternoon snack in their lunch container. Children may choose a snack from their lunch in the morning and they will save something from their lunch for their afternoon snack. You may label which items you want your child to have for snacks or the teachers will supervise for healthy choices.

We encourage low or no sugar, sodium, artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives in snacks and lunches. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Red Cross, lunch leftovers are discarded. The only exceptions are unopened prepackaged items.

Birthdays are celebrated during snack times. Parents are welcome to send a special "birthday treat" for their child's birthday. Due to health Department regulations, the treat must be commercially made and nutritionally labeled. You may also choose to send a special game instead.

VIDEO and TELEVISION VIEWING

Occasionally, children's or educational videos are shown. Children have the option of a different activity choice at those times. The videos are usually viewed in conjunction with a curriculum theme topic. Any "screen time" occurring will be for less than 30 minutes. Videos are previewed by staff, prior to the children's viewing. Any movies will have a "G" rating.

REST TIME

All children will have a rest/quiet time. The amount of time and the manner in which your child rests will depend upon individual needs. All children who are enrolled in the preschool classroom need to have a crib-size sheet and blanket for this time. After 5-7 days of attendance, please take the bedding home for laundering. Some kids also like to have a “soft and cuddly” during rest time.

HEALTH

Illness

It is important to attend school regularly because attitudes about school and a sense of responsibility are developed at an early age. **However, do keep your child home if he/she is ill:**

1. If the illness prevents your child from participating comfortably in center activities;
2. If the illness results in a greater care need than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children;
3. If your child has any of the following conditions:
 - Fever accompanied by other signs of illness (lethargy, sore throat, ear ache, etc.)
 - Lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or other signs of possible severe illness
 - Diarrhea that is not contained in underpants, or diarrhea with signs of illness (fever or vomiting) or stools that contain blood or mucus
 - Vomiting
 - E coli or shigella infection, until diarrhea resolves and 2 stool cultures are negative
 - Any infectious disease (e.g., chicken pox, strep throat, pink eye, etc.)

We will notify you immediately if your child develops or exhibits symptoms while in our care. Please be prompt in picking up your child, if we do call you. If we send your child home after 10:00 am, please keep him/her home for another full school day if your child is scheduled to attend the following day.

Notify us immediately if your child has a communicable disease.

Medications

If your child needs medications (over the counter or prescription) while at DLC, you and your health care provider must fully complete a Medication Form annually (available from a teacher or the front desk). Then give the medication and the form to an authorized staff member, who has received specialized mandated training. All medication will be administered by trained and delegated staff and in accordance with the prescribed directions and will be documented in our medication log book. All medication will be stored in areas inaccessible to children at all times. If a medication is expired or is left over, those medications will be given back to the parents, if the parents are not able to be reached, the left over medication will be properly disposed of.

Emergency medications will be stored in an area that is easily accessed by staff, but inaccessible to children.

Accidents and Injuries

We immediately notify parents or legal guardians when their child is involved in an accident or is injured and requires emergency medical care while at school. All non-emergency or minor accidents and injuries will be treated with first aid and TLC by a trained staff member. The accident or injury is documented and parents are notified upon picking up their child at the end of the day.

CLOTHING

Think of your child's comfort – and provide simple clothing that is free from complicated fasteners. Think of messy art activities – and provide clothing that is washable. Think of the changeable Colorado weather – and provide sweaters and jackets even on sunny fall and spring days. It is much easier to remove unwanted clothing items than to put on something you don't have!

Please put names on everything! We get quite a collection of unlabeled, unclaimed clothing every year. Check the Lost and Found from time to time, located at the Front Desk.

Send an extra set of clothes, including underwear, in a labeled plastic bag. These clothes will be kept at school to have on hand in case of accidents, ambitious art projects, or rambunctious water play.

TOYS and PERSONAL ITEMS from HOME

Sometimes children need a “transitional” item (an article of clothing, a blanket, a stuffed animal, etc.) to help them make the transition from home to school. If at all possible, please label this item with your child's name. Your child may keep this object with him/her throughout the day. It will need to be kept in his/her cubby during outdoor play, eating, and messy times.

Many days the children have an opportunity to participate in “Show and Tell” or “Show and Teach.” The purpose of this time is to encourage interests, build self-confidence, provide ritual and tradition, social skills, and knowledge. Children may bring one item to “show”, or they may choose to just “tell”, or they may “teach” about something. DLC is a “weapon-free zone”, so guns and war-related toys are not allowed, except for the occasional squirt-gun activity.

Because our storage space is limited, we encourage children to keep valuable personal items at home. Please do not send money to school. If there is money that is needed for a field trip or special activity, all funds will be collected by a staff member from the parent or legal guardian prior to the field trip and/or special activity.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

DLC promotes a positive approach to managing the behavior of all children. We use a variety of techniques, including: prevention through a well-designed and well-equipped classroom, positive redirection, modeling, limit-setting, problem-solving and conflict resolution. If and when a child has an emotional or physical outburst, we provide comfort and privacy.

Discipline is the external control to help children develop internal control. At times, it may become necessary for the child to play or work independently for a short time in order to regain self-control. Occasionally, a child needs more concrete guidance. At that time, we will contact parents and work on a behavior system to help the child break a negative behavior pattern.

Teachers at DLC have been trained on positive teaching practices that ensure that children's behavior is guided in a positive manner. We continuously incorporate our families through daily communications regarding their child(ren) and encourage family involvement to ensure that their child(ren) are being guided in a positive direction.

All of our teachers encourage positive interactions with each child through demonstration and teachings that allow children to learn and be capable of respecting others socially and emotionally.

Through training each teacher is able to effectively and positively reinforce children's positive behavior and re-direct any behavior that is harmful to a wanted behavior. Each teacher continuously demonstrates positive interactions with each child, which helps children learn how to treat others in a positive way and allows them be more socially and emotionally aware of the feelings of their peers.

DLC believes in working as a team to identify the specific social and emotional needs of each child. Our staff is trained in methods that enable them to understand children's behavior and develop positive behavior support plans for each child. This reduces challenging behaviors and may prevent suspensions and expulsions.

We continuously strive to strengthen our relationships with our children and their families. Through our continuous specialized trainings, our teachers are able to identify the individual needs of our children. While working with our families, we are able to provide each child with the specialized care that he/she may need within our classrooms. When a situation occurs that make a child's needs difficult for staff and parents to adequately address the family will be given information on how to access an Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist to support their child in all environments.

ARTWORK

Please take your child's artwork home every day. At this stage of development, the process is much more important than the product, and if not shared with you immediately, your child may forget what the creation was. So please take just five minutes at the end of your child's day to "ooh" and "aaah" over this work of art.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoor play is part of our everyday routine. Please do not ask us to keep your child indoors all day. If your child is too ill to play outside, your child is too ill to attend DLC. We will not play outside if it is too cold, too hot, or too windy. Whenever the children will be outside for any length of time, we will administer sunscreen, (SPF of 30 or higher). Occasionally, insects may be an issue. If they are we will use repellent containing DEET, and it will only be applied once a day.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Conferences are scheduled for fall and spring. These regularly scheduled conferences are a time to share information between teacher and parent, concerning the child's developmental progress. If and when we have any special concerns, we will ask you to meet with us. If at any time you would like additional conferences with professional staff, we will be happy to make arrangements for one or two or three or...

The basis for the conferences is derived from assessment of your child. Assessment is the ongoing process of observing, recording and otherwise documenting the work children do and how they do it, to provide a basis for a variety of educational decisions that affect the child.

Assessment is integral to curriculum and instruction. In early childhood programs, assessment provides a basis for: 1) planning instruction and communicating with parents; 2) identifying children with special needs; and 3) evaluating programs and demonstrating accountability.

Assessment involves the multiple steps of collecting data on a child's development and learning, determining its significance in light of the program goals and objectives, incorporating the information into planning for individuals and programs, and communicating the findings to families and other involved people. (For a copy of our full {3 pages} Assessment Plan, please see Tami.)

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Our program reflects as much as possible the wishes and needs of the parents involved. By expressing needs, desires, and concerns for the school and our children, we can make the program more responsive, while remaining true to the philosophy of Discovery Learning Center, and complying with state regulations and national guidelines.

Parent involvement is a major factor in the success of DLC and in your child's school experience. **All families are expected to participate at the Center at least ten hours a year. Every family is expected to participate in the annual Casino Night benefit, and either the fall or spring work day.** There will be a variety of other involvement opportunities throughout the year including, but not limited to, the items listed on your Parent Participation Form.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

As specified in the Colorado Revised Statutes and the Colorado Children's Code, **all employees of DLC are mandated reporters of child abuse.** If an employee has "reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or... has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect," he/she must immediately report the situation to the Routt County Child Abuse Hotline. All staff members have been trained in reporting child abuse and neglect.

Staff Background Checks

All employees of DLC have had background checks completed. The investigation includes a check by the Central Registry for Child Protection, a fingerprint check by the Colorado and/or Federal Bureau of Investigation, and three or more reference checks.

Employee Code of Conduct

No staff person will use any form of corporal punishment when disciplining a child. Nor will staff ever use any form of public or private humiliation, emotional abuse, withdrawal or the threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities.

Parents as Reporters of Abuse/Neglect

If a parent has concerns regarding the safety of a child, he/she may speak with the Director or other staff members. Parents may also call the Routt County Child Abuse Hotline (970-367-4056) for information related to child abuse or to report suspicions regarding their own child or children they know.

NOTE to PARENTS

We want you to know, to understand, to discuss with us our classroom practice and school goals.

We want you to look often into our joyful, laughter-filled center, full of wonder and adventure and see your child playing and learning.

Parents and teachers together can help each child grow to be confident, competent, and caring.

HAVE A HAPPY YEAR!