



# The Discovery Tree

An Early Childhood Education Center

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

*Revised September 2016*

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## WELCOME

Hello Parents! Thank you for choosing *The Discovery Tree*.  
We are looking forward to getting to know you and your family.

Please take the time to read the following policies.  
This booklet is meant to create a mutual understanding  
of the way our center operates.

Feel free to contact the Site Director with any questions or comments.

### **The Discovery Tree I Drexelbrook Location**

4814 Drexelbrook Drive  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026  
(484) 461-6566 (phone)  
(484) 461-7819 (fax)

### **The Discovery Tree II State Road Location**

4400 State Road  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026  
(484) 461-3765 (phone)  
(484) 461-8354 (fax)

### **The Discovery Tree III Ridley Township Location**

1324 MacDade Blvd  
Woodlyn, PA 19094  
*See website for phone & fax.*  
*www.thediscoverytree.net*

If you have feedback that you would like to offer directly to the Owners, Tom and Carrie Zwiercan,  
call or text (484) 832-0371; email: [director@thediscoverytree.net](mailto:director@thediscoverytree.net).

## OUR MISSION

To provide peace of mind for working parents with a convenient, efficient,  
educational child care program.

## OUR CORE VALUES

“We inspire children to make safe and healthy choices, love learning, and respect and serve others.”

“When we perform our job responsibilities, we are accountable, reflective, and proactive.”

“When we interact with others, we are responsive, team-focused, and kind.”

## LICENSING INFORMATION

The following is the contact information for our licensing office:

Office of Child Development and Early Learning  
Southeast Region  
Bureau of Certification  
801 Market Street, Suite 5132  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(800) 346-2929

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Admissions, the provision of services, and referrals of clients shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aides, and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any individual who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with any of the following:

Carrie Zwiercan, Owner  
The Discovery Tree  
4814 Drexelbrook Drive  
Drexel Hill, PA 19026  
(484) 832-0371 cell

Department of Public Welfare  
Bureau of Equal Opportunity  
Room 223, Health and Welfare Building  
PO Box 2675  
Harrisburg, PA 17105

PA Human Relations Commission  
Philadelphia Regional Office  
110 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 501  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

US Dept. of Health and Human Services  
Office for Civil Rights  
Suite 372, Public Ledger Building  
South 150 South Independence Mall West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111

DHS Bureau of Equal Opportunity  
Southeastern Regional Office  
801 Market Street, Suite 5034  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

## ABOUT OUR STAFF

Owner/Executive Director Carrie Zwiercan holds a Bachelors Degree in Business Management and a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education. Carrie has 15 years of experience in child care and youth program administration, and is a mother of two.

All prospective employees are screened on a broad range of background information. The personnel selection process includes a thorough reference check, federal and state criminal history checks, and PA child abuse history clearance. Ongoing training in Early Childhood Education is required. Group Supervisors must have a college degree, teaching experience, and an outstanding work record.

The Discovery Tree is proud to participate in the Keystone STARS Quality Initiative. Therefore, we require our staff to show a commitment to ongoing professional development. Each program staff member is required to maintain an accurate professional development record and complete annual training requirements over and above those required by licensing.

## ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

### 1. LEARN ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

Complete the contact page of our website at [www.thediscoverytree.net](http://www.thediscoverytree.net). The Director will contact you to let you know if there is space available on your preferred start date and will invite you to schedule a tour. Read this handbook and write down your questions and/or comments.

### 2. RESERVE YOUR START DATE

After you and the Director agree on a start date and schedule, you will be required to pay a one-time registration fee of \$50, plus a two-week security deposit in order to reserve enrollment space for your child. All terms of payment are available in this Parent Handbook, which is available for your convenience on the Services page of our website at [www.thediscoverytree.net](http://www.thediscoverytree.net).

Payment instructions:

- To find out how much to pay, please see the Tuition Page of our website and double the amount of the weekly tuition for your preferred schedule.
- Make your check or money order payable to: *The Discovery Tree* (no cash is accepted).
- Complete a *Receipt of Security Deposit* form, which is given out during the tour, and is also available on our website on the Family Resources page, under the tab entitled, *Forms*.
- Submit the completed form along with your check to the location that you toured; regular business hours are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

### 3. REGISTER ONLINE

After your check is received, you will receive an email with the link to our online registration, a Questionnaire to help us get to know your child, and a blank Health Record Form.

A CURRENT HEALTH RECORD IS REQUIRED WITHIN THE FIRST 30 DAYS OF ENROLLMENT. PLEASE MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. The Health Record form is also available on our website on the Family

Resources page, under the tab entitled, *Forms*. More details about this requirement can be found on page 6.

Your child's start date is a "Free Trial Day"; you will not be charged for this day. If your child attends on this day and you decide *not to continue* with our program for any reason, your registration fee and security deposit will be refunded in full.

After your child attends the free trial day, if you would like to continue enrollment in our program, you log into your online account and make your first weekly or monthly payment, (please see the Payment Policy on page 5 of this handbook for more details). Your two-week security deposit will be held throughout your child's enrollment with us. See Withdrawal Procedure on page 6 of this handbook for details on how your security deposit is applied.

Continued enrollment is contingent upon the parents', emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition. Parents are required by PA Licensing Regulations to update all contact information a minimum of every six months or whenever any changes occur.

Parents are required to notify *The Discovery Tree* in writing immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. *The Discovery Tee* reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees who have a "need to know" in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as *The Discovery Tree* strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and health related information.

Outside of *The Discovery Tree*, confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents, and/or children will not be shared without written consent.

## **HEALTH RECORD REQUIREMENTS**

In accordance with requirements set forth by the Department of Human Services, a health record must be written and signed by a physician, physician's assistant or a CRNP. The signature must include the individual's professional title.

The blank form is available on the Family Resources page of our website, under the tab entitled "Forms". We will accept a different form as long as all of the same information is provided.

The initial health record is due within the first 30 days of enrollment, and must be dated as follows:

- for an infant, no more than three months prior to the first day of attendance.
- for ages 12 to 23 months, no more than six months prior to the first day of attendance.
- for ages 24 months and up, no more than one year prior to the first day of attendance.

Con'td..

Parents must provide an updated health record including all new immunizations in accordance with the following schedules:

- for ages 3 months to 23 months, at least every 6 months.
- for ages 24 months and up, at least every 12 months.

Exemption from immunization is legally permitted for religious belief, strong personal objection equated to a religious belief, or for reasons of medical need. For documentation requirements for exemption, please ask the Director.

## **PAYMENT POLICY**

Tuition payments may be made in the following ways: online by bank draft (using your Parent Portal), or by dropping a check or money order into one of our payment boxes. No cash will be accepted on the premises. Some families prefer to grant our company written permission to automatically withdraw tuition payments from their bank account. For an auto-debit permission form, send an email to the Director or go to the Family Resources page of our website under the tab entitled "Forms".

A \$50 registration fee and two-week security deposit is required to secure enrollment space. Both are fully refundable in the following circumstances: if the family informs us of a change in plans, in writing, at least ten business days in advance of the agreed upon start date, OR if the child attends on the agreed-upon start date and the family decides not to continue enrollment for any reason.

If, after your child's free trial day, you plan to continue with our program, you will be expected to make your first weekly or monthly payment before the start of your child's second day of attendance. See the "Tuition" page of our website for weekly and monthly payments.

All payments are due in advance of provided service. Families are not permitted to carry balances on tuition accounts. Monthly payments are due on or before the first day of that month. Weekly payments are due on or before Monday of that week.

Tuition is charged based on enrollment, not based on attendance. No refunds will be issued for absenteeism, holiday closings, staff in-service training day closings, or for closings due to inclement weather. For families with part-time schedules, make-up days will be granted based on the availability of space.

To request a make-up day, please complete the "Temporary Schedule Change Request" form located on our website (see the Family Resource page and choose the Forms tab). The completed form will be emailed to the Director who will complete the response section and it will be returned to you by email.

If a family has more than one child enrolled in our program at the same time, a 10% Sibling Discount is applied to the second and third child's tuition charges, and is applied to the oldest child enrolled.

Late payments will result in an additional fee of \$15 per week. Bounced checks will result in an additional fee of \$25. Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment. However, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please email our Accounts Manager, Bernadette Mendoza, at [bernadette@thediscoverytree.net](mailto:bernadette@thediscoverytree.net).

Cont'd.

*The Discovery Tree* does accept child care subsidies. However, even after receiving parent copayments, our company is not reimbursed for the entire tuition cost. Therefore, subsidized families are required to pay the remainder of tuition in addition to the copayment determined by the Office of Child Care Information Services (CCIS).

Parents of a subsidized child must complete all required paperwork on time to continue enrollment. We are required to report all absences and unpaid copayments to CCIS. Parents of subsidized children are personally responsible for the payment of tuition in the event they become ineligible to receive child care subsidies.

Our Tax ID number is 90-0781590. Payment records can be printed from the Parent Portal given to you at the time of registration. If you require the Director's signature on payment records or employer reimbursement requests, please do one of the following:

- See the Director in person when you drop off your child. Whenever possible, a completed form will be signed immediately.
- Scan/email or fax the completed form to the Director. It will be signed and placed in your child's mailbox.
- Place the form in an envelope with the Director's name on it and drop it off in the office or outside mailbox. It will be signed and placed in your child's mailbox.

For families whose needs change over the summer, we offer the option to suspend enrollment (or change schedule) from your chosen end date and return in the beginning of September. If you choose to request this option, please email your Director with the requested end date, your child's summer schedule, if any, and the requested return date. You will receive an email from us as confirmation that your request was approved.

### **WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE**

Two weeks written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the withdrawal (the two-week security deposit will be applied as a credit when calculating the amount due for the final tuition payment). If the required notice is not given, applicable tuition charges will be deducted from the two-week security deposit. Your child's records are available to be transferred to your child's new educational setting, upon your written request.

To give written notice of termination of enrollment, please complete the "Enrollment Change" form located on our website (see the Family Resource page and choose the Forms tab). The completed form will be emailed to the Director who will complete the response section and it will be returned to you by email.

## PROGRAM HOURS

*The Discovery Tree* is open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except on the following days:

- November 24, 2016 Thanksgiving Day
- November 25, 2016 Black Friday (Day After Thanksgiving)
- December 26, 2016 Monday after Christmas
- January 2, 2017 Monday after New Year's Day
- January 16, 2017 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- February 20, 2017 Presidents Day (In-Service Training for Staff)
- April 14, 2017 Friday before Easter
- May 26, 2017 Friday before Memorial Day (In-Service Training for Staff)
- May 29, 2017 Memorial Day
- July 4, 2017 Independence Day
- August 25, 2017 In-Service Training for Staff
- September 4, 2017 Labor Day

## CURRICULUM

We provide a developmentally appropriate educational environment in accordance with the Pennsylvania Learning Standards. We intentionally plan our classroom arrangement, daily routine, and activities in a manner that meets the physical and emotional needs of the whole group and each individual child.

Teachers receive a curriculum packet and ongoing training to assist them with planning. Thirty minutes per week of paid planning time away from supervision of children is provided for each team member. A floating staff member is scheduled to cover the classroom accordingly.

Monthly themes and weekly topics are math and science-based, and are broad enough to allow for choosing activities targeting children's developmental needs and interests. Weekly lesson plans are distributed to parents and posted for reference.

Staff observe and record children's experiences in order to decide which learning activities to initiate and facilitate. Observations are continued year-round and are summarized in the form of a child development record, which is a report distributed to parents every six months. Parents are also offered the opportunity to request a conference to discuss the child development record or any other area of the program.

*The Discovery Tree* follows the quality standards set forth in the ERS Environmental Rating Scales. Teaching teams self-assess all areas of the program in an effort to reach the highest possible score. Low scores are immediately targeted for improvement with an action plan. Team meetings with the Director facilitate progress in continual quality improvement.

Family feedback and participation in activities and events is welcomed, but not required. New Family Orientation, Open School Night, and Holiday Parties are some opportunities to encourage family involvement. Parent surveys are completed at least once per year. Survey results are considered, applied to program decision-making, and communicated to staff through Lead Teacher meetings, team meetings, and in-service trainings.

## **SAMPLE DAILY ROUTINE**

A high-quality early childhood education program includes plenty of guided free play where staff observe and interact with children. Free play means that all learning centers are open. Our classroom arrangements and daily routines follow the standards set forth in the ECERS (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales).

Planned small group activities are facilitated during free play times and children are not forced to participate (for details on lesson planning, see Curriculum on page 7).

There are potty reminders/diaper checks before each transition. Diapers are changed as needed or at least every two hours. Hands are washed after toileting, before and after meals, and before and after messy activities. Outdoor play occurs daily if weather permits. On inclement weather days, large motor activities are offered inside the classroom.

These are sample routines and are subject to change based upon the age and needs of each group.

### **TODDLERS**

7:00-9:25	Free Play, Breakfast, Diaper Changing
9:25-9:35	Greeting Time/Transition to Outdoors
9:35-10:10	Outdoor Activity
10:10-11:30	Snack Time/Free Play/Small Group Activity/Diaper Changing/Story Time
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:30	Nap/Quiet Time
2:30-3:40	Snack Time/Diaper Changing Free Play
3:40-4:20	Outdoor Activity
4:20-6:00	Diaper Changing/Free Play

### **AGES THREE AND OLDER**

7:00-9:55	Free Play with Breakfast, Bathroom as Needed
9:55-10:10	Greeting Time (may include attendance, counting, alphabet, calendar, music, weather)
10:10-10:40	Outdoor Activity
10:40-11:30	Free Play, Bathroom as Needed
11:30-12:00	Lunch Time
12:00-12:30	Story Time, Reading Books on Cots
12:30-2:30	Nap/Quiet Time
2:30-4:20	Snack Time, Free Play, Bathroom as Needed, Small Group Activity
4:20-5:00	Outdoor Activity
5:00-6:00	Free Play, Bathroom as Needed

## **WALKING EXCURSIONS**

We have found that the children enjoy going on walks outside the facility – it’s nice to get some fresh air and explore nature. We stay on private property immediately surrounding our facilities and maintain the same outdoor supervision guidelines which apply to our walks to and from the playground. Parents are asked to note whether they grant permission for walking excursions by marking yes or no in the appropriate field on the registration form. Changes to this decision must be made in writing.

## **FOOD SERVICE**

For infants, ages 3 to 12 months, parents are required to bring baby food and formula or breast milk from home (please see details in our *WHAT TO BRING* section page 10). At time of enrollment, each family completes our “Getting to Know You” Questionnaire. This form will ask for your baby’s daily feeding schedule.

For ages 13 months and older, we provide breakfast, snacks, and beverages planned in accordance with guidelines set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Ingredients and nutritional information are available on our website. Scroll down to the bottom of any page and click on “Current Menu”. Parents are required to pack lunch from home.

**IMPORTANT:** Please see lunch guidelines in our *WHAT TO BRING* section page 10.

If you would like your child to be served food sent from home during breakfast or snack time, please send it labeled with your child’s name, date, and the preferred mealtime. Peanuts and tree nuts are prohibited.

## **CHILDREN WITH SEVERE ALLERGIES**

Parents are required to provide a signed copy of the “Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies” form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child’s physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every six months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician’s orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child’s allergy.

Parents must also execute a “Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies” form.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

If your child currently has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), it would be beneficial to share a copy of this plan with us so we can work together to ensure that the guidelines are put into practice. This will help us to provide the best possible learning experience for your child. You do not have to provide this information if you do not wish to do so.

## WHAT TO BRING

### For Infants, Ages 3 to 12 Months....

Please bring in baby food and pre-mixed bottles of formula or breastmilk. For those who use breastmilk we recommend sending more bottles per day with smaller amounts of breastmilk in each bottle (this will help us to avoid waste if your baby is not particularly hungry during feeding time).

Please label each bottle and food container with your child's full name, the date, contents, and preferred temperature during feeding. When you arrive for the day, please place bottles in the classroom refrigerator. Teachers will warm each bottle as per your instructions in a crock pot immediately before feeding time. After each one is used, it will be returned to your child's bag to be washed at home.

Please bring two seasonably and size-appropriate complete changes of clothing. A complete change of clothing includes: shirt/onesie, pants, underwear, and socks. All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. *The Discovery Tree* is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

Infants will also need to have at least one wearable blanket, since we do not use blankets in infant cribs due to SIDS prevention.

### For Children Ages 13 Months and Up...

All children will need one seasonably and size-appropriate complete change of clothing at the center at all times. A complete change of clothing includes: shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. *The Discovery Tree* is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

For children who are not potty-trained, please bring at least five clean diapers or pull-ups, and wipes.

For nap time, cots and sheets are provided by *The Discovery Tree*. Sheets are washed each week. Children should bring a blanket that can be folded neatly and one soft, non-musical toy for snuggling. This toy is to be placed with the bedding supplies and use of it will only be allowed at nap/rest time.

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum.

Parents are required to pack lunch each day. We ask that you please choose nutritious items and please avoid candy, soda and other high sugar content food and drinks.

Store your child's lunch in a lunchbox. Our staff will place perishable foods in the refrigerator. Meals sent from home cannot be heated up, so if you would like your child's food to be served warm, we ask that you please pack a thermos to maintain the desired temperature.

Peanuts and tree nuts are prohibited.

## **DRESS CODE**

Children are engaged in various activities during the course of the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable clothing.

Please do not dress children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present particular challenges for children in relation to toileting.

Coats, hats, gloves, scarves and winter boots must be provided in the winter months. It is not necessary for the children to wear their winter boots to school. Teachers will change the children into their winter boots when they go outdoors.

Children are not permitted to wear open toed, and/or open backed shoes, or shoes with heels. The most appropriate type of shoes for participation in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes.

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. In addition, *The Discovery Tree* will not be responsible for lost or stolen valuables. It is the parents' responsibility to enforce this policy with their children.

## **NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE OR LATENESS**

Parents who know in advance that a child will be late or absent are required to call and leave a message by 8:00 am so as to maintain the appropriate number of employees are present when the child arrives to school. Phone numbers for each facility are on the welcome page of this handbook and the contact page of our website.

## **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES**

If you would like your child to eat breakfast at school, please arrive by 8:30 am. We strongly encourage parents to arrive by 9:00 am at the latest, so that children are included in greeting activities and have time to calmly set their minds for the day ahead. Drop-off after 10:00 am is not permitted unless parent notifies the Director in advance (*please see notification requirements above*).

Upon arrival at *The Discovery Tree*, the parents or the adult dropping the child off must sign the child into care on the sign-in sheet located on the clipboard and help children put away their outerwear and get settled for the day. If siblings are with you, please keep them near you and under your supervision at all times.

*The Discovery Tree* discourages parents from sneaking out of the classroom without saying goodbye. Some children have separation anxiety when it is time for their parent to leave. We suggest that parents tell the anxious child upon arrival that after all of the child's things are put away, the parent will kiss, hug and say goodbye to the child. This will prepare the child for their departure. Staff will comfort and assist the child through the anxious time. Parents are asked to leave after saying goodbye. The longer the parent of an anxious child stays, the more anxiety the child is likely to feel. Speak with the Director to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

Cont'd.

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher or the Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. Please present the special instructions in the form of a letter and verbally discuss them with either the classroom teacher or Director. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick-Up, Alternative Pick-Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the child care providers should be aware to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

### **PICK-UP PROCEDURE**

Entrance doors to our facilities remain locked to the outside. Our staff members follow procedures to check identification of those who are not recognized. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping our facility secure. Please do not allow "piggy backing". If there is someone behind you when you enter the door, please inform the person that you are not permitted to let anyone in unless they are authorized by a staff member. Politely request that the person ring the doorbell for a staff member.

Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out sheet located on the clipboard. No cell phone usage is permitted at this time. If siblings are with you, please keep them near you and under your supervision.

Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on agency premises. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child, and should directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

Parents who drive must park in an available parking space and may not leave a vehicle idling in the middle of the parking lot. The reserved and handicapped parking spaces outside the front door are strictly prohibited.

### **PLEASE BE AWARE THAT IT IS AGAINST THE LAW TO LEAVE AN INFANT OR A CHILD IN A CAR UNATTENDED.**

Parents will receive written daily reports at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or other authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom.

### **EMERGENCY/ALTERNATE PICK-UP ARRANGEMENTS**

At enrollment, parents will complete Emergency/Alternate Pick-Up information. Parents are encouraged to include any and all persons who, in the course of events, may at one time be asked to pick-up their child from *The Discovery Tree*. In an emergency situation the child's parents will be contacted first. If they cannot be reached staff will contact the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list.

The persons listed as Emergency/Alternate pick-up contacts will be required to provide photo identification. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

Cont'd.

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-Up form must be made in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

### **LATE PICK-UP**

Our program ends at 6:00 pm. Parents who pick-up children after that time will be charged \$1.00 per minute, to be paid in cash at the time of pick-up (total late fee will be calculated based on the clock on the wall in the classroom). If payment in cash is not possible, it is to be paid at drop-off the following program day. If balance is not paid, the child's enrollment may be terminated without refund. All late pick-up fees go directly to the staff members who stay past their regularly scheduled shift. Therefore, payment cannot be combined with tuition payment.

### **STAFF-CHILD INTERACTION, GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

Staff members support social and emotional learning by talking and listening to each child. They also support the children by playing with them and responding to each child's needs. We use positive guidance and redirection, plan ahead to prevent problems, encourage appropriate behavior using consistent rules, and whenever possible, involve the child in problemsolving to foster the child's own ability to become self-regulated. Staff members encourage children to respect other people, be fair, respect property, and learn to be responsible for their actions.

We train our staff to:

- Encourage desired behavior. Provide engaging materials based on children's interest to ensure that the learning environment promotes active participation of each child.
- Teach social competence. Help children learn what to expect in the classroom and promote positive interactions and engagement with others.
- Provide a predictable routine. Plan and implement a daily schedule with routines, activities, transitions, and reminders to foster the desired behaviors.
- Match expectations of behavior to the child's development. Understand what abilities the child has acquired and know what is expected as the next step in development.  
Example... Toddlers want to demonstrate independence and often say "no" to a yes-or-no choice, but they will be more likely to happily choose between two equally acceptable alternatives.
- Establish simple rules. Teach and support learning of simple rules expressed as what to do rather than what not to do.
- Offer specific praise. Positively describe the desired behavior. Example: "You did a nice job putting your toy away," rather than saying "good girl" or "nice job.")
- Model desired behavior. Demonstrate behavior to help children understand positive alternatives  
Example: lower your voice when the child is yelling, instead of saying "Let's use our inside voice."
- Implement planned ignoring and redirecting. Suggest another activity unless the behavior is too disruptive and unsafe to be ignored.
- Individualize discipline. Adjust the approach to the temperament and needs of the child, anticipating and preventing situations that are likely to evoke undesirable behavior.

*Model Child Care Health Policies 5th Edition. Editor: Susan S. Aronson, MD, FAAP.  
American Academy of Pediatrics.*

*The Discovery Tree* recognizes that young children go through various stages of development. Certain behaviors are indicative of age. However, no child will remain enrolled if he or she:

- causes continual, deliberate physical or emotional harm to other children.
- requires more care than the staff can adequately provide without compromise to the other children.
- continually disrupts the class to the extent that activities cannot be completed.

If a staff member is concerned that a child responds to our learning environment or to others in a manner that is not typical of children in the same age group, the following steps are followed:

- Observe the child throughout the daily routine and complete an observation chart.
- Review the child's completed Ages and Stages Questionnaire.
- Meet with team members and the Director in an effort to better understand how staff can support the child. Make adjustments as needed to the daily schedule, room arrangement, primary caregiving roles, and curriculum plans.
- Meet with the child's parent(s). Inquire about the child's temperament, interests, and cultural influences, and discuss how they may affect the child's response to a group learning environment. Share observations and action plan in a manner that is positive, factual, and productive. Plan for follow-up communication with the parent.
- Follow the instructions on the Ages and Stages score sheet. If needed, refer the family to professional resources to gather more information about their child's needs.  
*See the Family Resources page of our website for contact information.*
- Continue to observe the child and make adjustments to the action plan as needed.
- If the staff and parents need technical assistance designed for challenging situations, consider requesting help from ECMH, an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant.

Our employees are qualified to provide educational care to children in a group learning environment. We are not qualified to evaluate children. If a child has an IEP (Individual Education Plan), or an IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan), we request a copy of the plan and permission to speak with the professionals assigned to work with the child. Such communication is highly recommended and encouraged by our company, since it is our hope to provide an inclusive environment where all children have the opportunity to thrive.

## **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES/COMMUNICATION**

Within the first 45-day period of your child's enrollment, the Lead Teacher will initiate a short "Family Partnership Meeting", which can be in the form of an informal discussion. The teacher will discuss your child's transition to the new learning environment and will also share the results of a developmental screening tool called the "Ages and Stages Questionnaire".

Thereafter, parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice per year, and include an overview of the observations of the child while at the program. Topics will include the child's strengths, achievement of developmental milestones, and social-emotional growth in a classroom environment. Parents are welcome to schedule a conference at any time, and are encouraged to communicate freely with staff and the Director.

During program time, staff members are usually not available to have long conversations. Parents are welcome to write notes, call or send e-mails to the Director. If you leave a message on the answering machine, the Director will return your call as soon as possible.

### **PARENT'S RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS**

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at *The Discovery Tree*, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), *The Discovery Tree* must be provided with a certified copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. *The Discovery Tree* cannot, without a court order, limit the access of a one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, it is suggested that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the Director, and are allowed in the child care facility only at her discretion. An employee will accompany visitors at all times throughout the center.

### **AGENCY'S RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION**

*The Discovery Tree* reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause. Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. The need to maintain compliance with licensing regulations.
2. Staff deems the child too ill to attend.
3. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children if the child were to be present at the center.
4. Parents' failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
5. Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

### **STAFF EMPLOYMENT BY CLIENTS**

The staff of *The Discovery Tree* is prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Such relationships include but are not limited to, baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether or not those services are voluntary or paid.

## **MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of *The Discovery Tree* are considered mandated reporters, under this law, and are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect.

We at *The Discovery Tree* take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. As mandated reporters, staff cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Leaving an child in a vehicle unattended
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

Please do not send your child to school if the following symptoms are present:

- Fever of 100 degrees or above (within the past 24 hours).
- Needs fever-reducing medication to maintain a normal body temperature.
- Vomiting for any reason.
- Diarrhea.
- Persistent cough.
- Excessive mucus coming from nasal passages or eyes.
- Needs cold medicine to suppress sneezing, coughing, or runny nose.
- Has an unexplained rash which has not been treated by a doctor.
- Any other symptoms of communicable disease.

When a child is prescribed antibiotics by a doctor, parents must wait 24 hours after the first dose of medication before sending the child to school.

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Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached, but cannot pick their child up within 45 minutes, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. *The Discovery Tree* reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if staff believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the center director. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center director, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. We will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child's absence from school.

### **DISPENSING MEDICATION**

*The Discovery Tree* will only dispense over-the-counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. Parents are required to submit a completed Medication Form each day that medication is to be dispensed. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given.

Please do not bring in lotion, lip balm, or other over-the-counter products to the teacher unless accompanied by a medication log. The Medication Log form is available on the Family Resources page of our website, under the tab entitled "Forms".

### **SUNSCREEN**

On sunny days in the late Spring and Summer, please apply sunscreen to your child each morning. With your permission, later in the day, staff will apply an additional application of sunscreen to your child's face and other exposed areas as needed. There is no additional charge for sunscreen. Parents are asked to note whether they grant permission for sunscreen by marking yes or no in the appropriate field on the registration form. Changes to this decision must be made in writing.

### **INCIDENT REPORTS**

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the course of the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident Report. The Incident Report will be placed in a sealed envelope and put in the child's mailbox. Parents are required to sign the report at pick-up time and return it to staff. Should a person other than the parent pick-up the child, a parent or must sign the report and return it to the Director within 24 hours.

## FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

Fire drills are conducted monthly. Parents, staff and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe-zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the Director will inform staff that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents will be notified of the situation by text.

**To sign up to receive text notifications, log into your parent portal, choose the "Contacts" tab, and check the box next to your cell phone number that says, "Receive text message notifications". If you cannot receive text notifications at work, we recommend that you add one or more family members with a smartphone as a contact person and activate their text notification permission.**

As with the sick child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of notification.

## ALTERNATE SAFE LOCATIONS

Should the Director or any emergency services personnel determine that the facility is too dangerous to be occupied, the staff will relocate the children to the alternate safe location. Parents will be notified by text.

To sign up to receive text notifications, log into your parent portal and see the message on the front page.

**If your child attends The Discovery Tree I, Drexelbrook Location**, the Alternate Safe Location is: Drexelbrook Banquet Facility, 4700 Drexelbrook Drive, Drexel Hill 19026

**If your child attends The Discovery Tree II, State Road Location**, the Alternate Safe Location is: The Discovery Tree I, 4814 Drexelbrook Drive, Drexel Hill 19026.

In the event that either site needs a different safe location, Upper Darby School District has agreed to make space available for us at *The Kindergarten Center*, at 3200 State Road, Drexel Hill 19026.

## EMERGENCY CLOSING AND INCLEMENT WEATHER

If *Upper Darby School District* is closed or declares a delayed opening due to inclement weather, *The Discovery Tree* will also be closed. The emergency school code for the district is 452. Closing information is available on the School District Cable Channels (Comcast: Channel 11. RCN: Channel 51).

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If *The Discovery Tree* must close during the day, parents will be notified by text first, then phone call when the needs of the program allow. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick up arrangements can be made. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the call, of the pick-up location should the children need to be evacuated from the child care center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

**To sign up to receive text notifications, log into your parent portal, choose the “Contacts” tab, and check the box next to your cell phone number that says, “Receive text message notifications”. If you cannot receive text notifications at work, we recommend that you add one or more family members with a smartphone as a contact person and activate their text notification permission.**

If the facility closes due to an emergency, tuition will not be refunded.