



## **Welcome to Develop and Discover**

We are honored that you are considering our program for your child. Our goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children feel supported, confident, and excited to learn each day.

Through guided play, structured activities, and daily routines, children are encouraged to explore, build relationships, and develop important early skills. As a small Group Family Daycare, we are able to provide individualized attention while creating a warm environment where children feel at home.

This handbook outlines our policies and procedures. Please review it carefully and keep it for reference throughout your child's time with us.

We look forward to welcoming your family to Develop and Discover.



## **Our Program and Philosophy**

Develop and Discover is licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and operates in accordance with New York State childcare regulations.

We believe young children learn best through play, exploration, and meaningful daily experiences. Our program combines guided activities with play based learning to support development in communication, social skills, problem solving, creativity, and independence.

Each day follows a consistent routine that includes meals, circle time, small group learning activities, free play, outdoor time, and rest. Activities are intentionally planned to help children build confidence and reach important developmental milestones.

As a small group program, we are able to provide individualized attention while creating a warm and consistent environment where children feel safe to explore and learn at their own pace.

Our goal is to provide a nurturing space where children can develop new skills, build relationships, and discover the world around them.

## **Special Activities and Visitors**

From time to time, Develop and Discover may host special educational activities or visitors to enhance the children's learning experiences. These may include visits from community helpers such as firefighters, police officers, or other professionals, as well as special programs or enrichment activities conducted on site.

Parents will be notified in advance when special activities or visitors are scheduled. These experiences are intended to introduce children to their community and provide engaging learning opportunities in a safe and supervised environment. All visitors are supervised while in the program.



## Hours of Operation

Develop and Discover operates Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

The program is closed on federal holidays. In addition, the daycare closes for two separate weeks each year, which are scheduled in advance and listed on the yearly program calendar provided to families.

Families will receive the yearly calendar prior to the start of the program year so they can plan accordingly. Parents will also be notified in advance of any additional closures due to emergencies or severe weather.



## **Tuition and Payment**

Tuition at Develop and Discover is based on a weekly rate, but payments are billed monthly.

Tuition is based on enrollment, not attendance. Payment reserves your child's space in the program and is required regardless of absences due to illness, vacation, holidays, or other personal reasons.

To provide consistent monthly billing, tuition is calculated based on the 52 weeks in a calendar year and divided into 12 equal monthly payments. This means each month's tuition payment will be the same.

Payments are due in advance at the beginning of each month and are processed through our childcare management system.

Families receiving childcare assistance through the Department of Social Services (DSS) should be aware that DSS limits the number of allowable absences. DSS typically covers up to 30 absence days per year. Absences beyond this limit may not be reimbursed by DSS, and families may be responsible for paying tuition for those days directly.

The program is closed on federal holidays and for two scheduled weeks each year as listed on the annual calendar. These closures are included in the yearly tuition calculation.

Failure to submit payment on time may result in late fees or suspension of care until payment is received.



## **Staffing and Supervision**

Develop and Discover is led by Kaitlyn, the program's licensed Group Family Daycare provider and primary caregiver. Kaitlyn oversees the daily operation of the program and is responsible for maintaining a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment for all children.

To ensure children receive attentive care and supervision, the program operates with trained assistants and maintains all New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) required child-to-adult ratios at all times. Children are supervised at all times while in care.

We also maintain a network of qualified substitute caregivers who are familiar with the program's routines and policies. These substitutes allow the program to continue operating if the provider or assistant is unexpectedly unavailable.

Our goal is to maintain consistent care for families whenever possible. However, in rare circumstances where required staffing cannot be secured, families will be notified and the program may close for the day.



## **Arrival and Pickup Procedures**

To ensure the safety and supervision of all children, families are asked to follow the procedures below during arrival and pickup times.

Children must be signed in and signed out each day by a parent or authorized adult using the program's childcare management system.

At arrival, children must be brought directly inside and transferred to the caregiver. Children must never be dropped off outside or allowed to enter the program unattended.

Children will only be released to parents or individuals authorized by the parent on the child's enrollment form. If someone unfamiliar arrives to pick up a child, identification may be requested before the child is released.

If a parent would like another adult to pick up their child who is not listed on the authorization form, the program must be notified in advance and the individual must present valid identification at pickup.

In cases where custody or visitation restrictions apply, the program must have official court documentation on file in order to enforce those restrictions.

Parents are asked to notify the program if their child will be absent or arriving late so that staff can plan accordingly.

For the safety of all children, parents should ensure that doors and entryways are securely closed when entering or leaving the program.

### **Late Pickup**

Children must be picked up by their designated pick up time.

A late pickup fee of \$1 per minute will be charged after a child's designated pick up time. Late fees will be billed through the program's billing system.

Repeated late pickups may result in termination of care.



## **Transportation**

Develop and Discover does not provide transportation for children. Parents and guardians are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the program each day.



## Health and Illness

The health and safety of all children in our care is a top priority. Parents are asked to keep children home if they are showing signs of illness that could spread to others or prevent them from comfortably participating in daily activities.

Children should remain at home if they have symptoms such as:

- Fever (100°F or higher)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Persistent cough
- Unexplained rash
- Pink eye or eye discharge
- Any contagious illness

Children must be well enough to participate in the normal daily routine, including outdoor play.

If a child becomes ill while at the program, they will be separated from other children and supervised until a parent or authorized emergency contact arrives.

Parents or guardians will be contacted and prompt pickup is required if a child becomes ill during the day. Timely pickup helps protect the health of other children and allows the program to maintain proper supervision and care for all children.

Children may return to the program once they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication, symptoms have improved, and they are able to comfortably participate in normal daily activities.

If a child is diagnosed with a communicable illness, parents should notify the program so that other families can be informed as required by New York State childcare regulations.



## **Medication Administration**

Medication will only be administered in accordance with New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations.

Medication may be administered to a child only when the program has received written parental permission and, when required, written instructions from the child's health care provider.

All medications must be provided in their original labeled container with the child's name, medication name, dosage instructions, and prescribing physician (when applicable).

Over-the-counter medications may only be administered with appropriate written authorization and must also be provided in the original container.

Medication will only be administered by caregivers who have completed Medication Administration Training (MAT) as required by New York State.

All medications will be stored safely, securely, and out of the reach of children. Medications requiring refrigeration will be stored in a designated area that is inaccessible to children.

A written medication consent form must be completed before any medication can be administered.

Non-medicated topical products such as sunscreen or diaper cream may be applied with written parental permission.



## Nutrition and Meals

At this time, families are responsible for providing all meals and snacks for their child each day. This includes:

- Breakfast
- Morning snack
- Lunch
- Afternoon snack
- Formula/Milk if applicable

All food should be sent in clearly labeled containers and be ready to serve (no preparation required beyond basic heating if needed).

We encourage families to provide balanced, age-appropriate meals that meet their child's nutritional needs. This approach allows parents to maintain control over their child's diet, preferences, and any specific dietary requirements.

Peanut based products are strictly prohibited.

Additional guidance on food, allergies, and storage may be provided as needed to ensure a safe and consistent environment for all children.



## **Nap and Safe Sleep**

Children in our program participate in a daily rest or nap period following lunch. This quiet time allows children to rest and recharge for the remainder of the day.

### **Toddlers and Preschool Children**

Toddlers and preschool-aged children will rest on individual cots provided by the program.

Parents are responsible for providing their child's bedding, such as a sheet and small blanket. Bedding must be taken home and washed at least once per week to help maintain a clean and healthy environment.

Children who do not fall asleep will still participate in quiet rest time so that other children may sleep undisturbed.

### **Infants**

Infants will nap according to their individual sleep schedules.

The program follows all New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) safe sleep regulations. Infants are always placed on their backs to sleep in a safety-approved pack and play.

Pack and plays will remain free of pillows, loose blankets, toys, bumpers, and other soft items in accordance with safe sleep guidelines.

Infants are visually checked regularly while sleeping to ensure their safety and comfort.

If an infant requires a sleep position other than on their back, written medical documentation from a health care provider must be provided.



# Guidance and Discipline Policy

At Develop and Discover, we use positive guidance to help children learn appropriate behavior, build self-control, and develop social-emotional skills. Expectations are age-appropriate, and children are supported with patience, consistency, and respect.

## Our Approach

We use strategies such as:

- Redirection to an appropriate activity
- Modeling and teaching appropriate behavior
- Helping children use words to express feelings and needs
- Setting clear, consistent limits
- Offering choices when appropriate
- Encouraging problem-solving and making amends
- Using calm, supervised separation from the group when necessary for safety, for short periods, and appropriate to the child's age and needs

## Prohibited Discipline

In accordance with New York State OCFS regulations, the following are never used:

- Corporal punishment of any kind (including hitting, spanking, shaking, or roughly handling a child)
- Verbal abuse, humiliation, or threats



- Withholding or forcing food, drink, sleep, or toileting
- Punishment related to toilet learning accidents
- Isolation in a locked room or any space where a child cannot be properly supervised
- Any discipline that is frightening, physically painful, or emotionally damaging

If a child's behavior presents an ongoing safety concern, we will partner with the family to develop consistent strategies and, when appropriate, may request additional support or documentation to help meet the child's needs safely in a group setting.



## Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of a child's physical health, development, and overall well-being. When weather permits, children at Develop and Discover will have opportunities for daily outdoor play.

Outdoor time allows children to engage in active play, explore their environment, and develop coordination, balance, and social skills.

Children will be supervised at all times while outdoors. The outdoor play area and equipment are designed and maintained in accordance with applicable safety regulations and childcare standards to help provide a safe environment for children.

Because outdoor play is a regular part of the daily routine, parents must ensure that children arrive with appropriate clothing for the weather. This may include jackets, hats, gloves, boots, or other seasonal items.

Outdoor play may be limited or canceled during extreme weather conditions, including severe cold, extreme heat, heavy rain, or other unsafe conditions.



## **Emergency Procedures**

The safety of children in our care is a top priority. Develop and Discover maintains emergency preparedness procedures in accordance with New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations.

Staff regularly review emergency procedures and conduct required emergency drills, including fire drills and other safety drills, to help ensure children and caregivers are prepared to respond in an emergency.

Emergency drills, including fire drills and other safety drills, are conducted regularly in accordance with New York State regulations.

### **Fire Emergency**

In the event of a fire or fire alarm, children will be safely evacuated from the building and moved to a designated safe area outside. Caregivers will ensure all children are accounted for and supervised at all times.

### **Emergency Evacuation**

If the daycare location must be evacuated due to an emergency such as fire, structural damage, or other unsafe conditions, children will be relocated to a designated emergency relocation site. Parents will be notified as soon as possible with instructions for pickup.

### **Shelter-in-Place**

In situations where it is safest to remain inside the building, such as severe weather or environmental hazards, the program may implement a shelter-in-place procedure. Children will remain indoors until it is safe to resume normal activities.



## **Lockdown**

If a security threat exists in the surrounding area, the program may implement a lockdown procedure. During a lockdown, doors will be secured and children will remain safely inside under staff supervision until authorities indicate it is safe to resume normal operations.

Parents will be notified as soon as possible in the event of any emergency that affects the program or requires early pickup.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that emergency contact information on file remains current at all times. Emergency contacts must be individuals who are available and able to pick up the child if a parent or guardian cannot be reached.



# Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse and Maltreatment

All childcare providers and staff at Develop and Discover are mandated reporters under New York State law.

This means that if a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or maltreated, they are legally required to report those concerns to the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR).

Mandated reporters are required to make a report immediately when there is reasonable suspicion. The program does not investigate allegations of abuse or maltreatment; concerns are reported directly to the appropriate authorities as required by law.

All reports made in good faith are protected under New York State law.

If parents have concerns about the safety or care of a child in a childcare program, they may contact the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

OCFS Child Care Complaint Line: **1-800-732-5207**



## **Termination of Care**

While we strive to build long-term relationships with families, there may be situations where care must end.

The first two weeks of enrollment may be considered a trial period to ensure the program is a good fit for the child and the group.

### **Parent-Initiated Withdrawal**

Families may withdraw their child from the program at any time. We ask that parents provide at least two weeks written notice so that we can plan accordingly.

Tuition remains due during the notice period.

### **Program-Initiated Termination**

Develop and Discover reserves the right to terminate care in certain circumstances, including but not limited to:

- Failure to pay tuition or repeated late payments
- Failure to follow program policies outlined in this handbook
- Repeated late pickups
- Failure to provide required paperwork or updated emergency information
- A child's needs exceeding what can be safely accommodated in a group childcare setting
- Behavior that poses a safety risk to the child, other children, or staff

Whenever possible, families will be provided with reasonable notice prior to termination of care. However, the program reserves the right to terminate care immediately if a situation poses a safety concern for children or staff.



## Parent Communication

Strong communication between families and caregivers is an important part of supporting each child's development and well-being.

Develop and Discover uses a childcare management system to help keep families informed and connected throughout the day. Parents may receive updates regarding their child's activities, meals, naps, and other important information through the system.

The platform may also be used for:

- daily communication
- important program announcements
- billing and payment reminders
- sharing photos and updates from the day

Brightwheel is the preferred method of communication for most messages and updates related to the program.

Parents are encouraged to use the system to communicate important information about their child, such as absences, late arrivals, or changes in pickup arrangements.

Families may also contact the program directly by phone at (631) 317-2783

In addition to digital communication, we value open and respectful conversations with families. If parents have questions or concerns about their child's care, we encourage them to speak with us so we can work together to support the child's needs.



## Parent Responsibilities

To help ensure a safe, healthy, and positive environment for all children, families enrolled at Develop and Discover are expected to follow the policies outlined in this handbook.

Parents and guardians are responsible for:

- Ensuring their child arrives healthy and able to participate in daily activities
- Providing their child's meals. Breakfast, lunch, 2x snack, and/or formula/milk if applicable
- Providing their child's diapers, wipes, and diaper cream
- Providing their child's bedding for rest time and taking that bedding home for washing at least once per week
- Keeping emergency contact information current and accurate
- Informing the program of absences, late arrivals, changes in pickup arrangements, and ensuring only authorized individuals pick up their child
- Providing weather-appropriate clothing for outdoor play
- Following program policies regarding tuition payments and pickup times

We value strong partnerships with families and appreciate your cooperation in helping us maintain a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all children in our care.



## **Pets in the Home**

Develop and Discover has two small dogs on the premises. The daycare operates in a separate, dedicated space, and children will not have any access to or interaction with the dogs at any time.

The outdoor play area is also fully separate and fenced, ensuring that children remain in a controlled environment during outdoor play.

While our dogs are the two friendliest boys ever, we maintain this separation to ensure comfort, safety, and consistency for all families.

Our dogs are up to date on vaccinations and are cared for in accordance with health and safety standards.



## Parent Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Develop and Discover Parent Handbook.

I understand that the handbook contains important information regarding the policies and procedures of the program. I agree to review and follow the policies outlined in the handbook.

I understand that these policies are intended to help ensure a safe, healthy, and positive environment for all children enrolled in the program.

I understand that the program may update policies as necessary and that I will be informed of any changes.

I understand that failure to follow the policies outlined in this handbook may result in termination of childcare services.

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**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_