

Children's Discovery Center For Early Learning

Preparing children for a positive school experience through a high quality pre-kindergarten program, where children can learn, grow, explore and discover.



Community Care Network
Rutland Community Programs

Site Locations

Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning
15 Juneberry Lane
Rutland, VT 05701
802-747-7547

Teacher: Cindi Theodorson
Teacher Assistant: Meghan Susslin
Family Support Specialist: Carlie Walton

Administrative Office:
Rutland County Head Start
78 Meadow St.
Rutland, VT 05701

Mailing Address:
PO Box 222
Rutland VT 05702
802-775-8225
Fax 802-747-3583
www.rchscn.org

Administrative Staff:
Marie Gilmond, Director
Kelley Todriff, Assistant Director/Manager of Family Services
Angela Goepel, Health Services Manager
Heather Bathalon, Disabilities Manager
Cindy Fortier, Education Manager
Karen Potter, Administrative Manager
Judie Donahue, Family Services Coordinator
Amanda Crowningshield, Behavior Support Specialist
Seth Gogo, Practice-Base Coach

Welcome to The Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning!

Parents are the primary teachers of their children. Therefore, your role is very important in establishing a high quality family-centered program.

This handbook is a resource to help you to better understand our program policies and procedures. We ask that you review this handbook and please feel free to ask your child's Teacher or Family Support Specialist any questions you may have regarding your participation in the program.



The Teachers and the Family Support Specialist work together as a team to support your child and family. You can expect your child's teachers to discuss the educational and social goals that you have for your child, your child's progress toward achieving those goals, and daily classroom happenings. The Teacher will complete two home visits and two Parent Teacher Conferences throughout the year.

Your Family Support Specialist will work in partnership with you to complete a Family Partnership Agreement, help you with strategies for achieving personal and family goals, and assist you with any referrals that may be needed to access resources in the community. Your Family Support Specialist will complete three home visits a year.

A Strengthening Families Program



We are a designated a Strengthening Families Program by the Vermont Child Development Division. Strengthening Families programs are high-quality early education and care programs that focus on your child's development and strengthen your family's ability to support his or her child/children's early learning experiences. As a Strengthening Families Program, we embrace a framework of five protective factors, to promote optimal development and STRONG families.

The Protective Factors



1. Parental Resilience – Managing stress and functioning well when we are faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
2. Social Connections- Having a sense of connectedness with constructive, supportive people and institutions. People need people.
3. Concrete Support in Time of Need – Identifying, accessing and receiving needed adult, child, and family services.
4. Knowledge of Child Development- Understanding parenting best practices as well as developmentally appropriate child skills and behaviors.
5. Social and Emotional Competence of Children – Forming secure adult and peer relationships as well as experiencing, regulating, and expressing emotions.

Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood program, school and community. It is a shared responsibility with all those who support the child’s learning. Staff and parents will build responsive and respectful relationships that support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and ongoing learning and development for parents and children.

Parent Committee Meetings, Activities and Workshops

Parent Committee meetings and Parent Engagement activities are scheduled throughout the program year. Families will complete a survey to help determine the best days and times for the meetings. All current parents are Committee members and are encouraged to participate. Parent Committees provide every parent of an enrolled child with the opportunity to assist in the development of parent activities, field trips, classroom activities, and menu planning. Attending your Parent Committee meetings gives you a voice in the program. If you are not able to attend the Parent Committee meetings but have ideas to share, let your Family Support Specialist know. Parent workshops and trainings will also be scheduled for each site throughout the program year. A schedule of the trainings and Parent Committee Meetings will be sent home with your child.

Parent Volunteers

Parent participation is the foundation for children’s success in school. We encourage parents/caregivers to be actively involved in their child’s preschool experience. Parents can volunteer in the classroom, help with school projects at home, and attend Parent Committee Meetings, and much more.

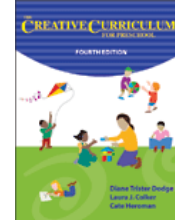


Family Services

We offer parents many opportunities and support for growth so they can identify their own solutions, strengths, interests, and needs. The building of respectful and trusting relationships allows parents and staff to share and learn from each other. Your Family Support Specialist will work in partnership with you to complete a *Family Partnership Agreement*; which will support the goals that you have identified for yourself, your child, and your family. The Family Support Specialist and your child’s Teacher will work as a team to assist you throughout the year through home visits, parent teacher conferences, and day-to-day contact.

Child Development Services-Philosophy & Curriculum

Children learn best by doing. Through active involvement within their environment, children learn to make sense of their world. They do this through interacting with materials and other people. For young children the environment is particularly important. Thoughtful arrangement for the indoor and outdoor environments will support the goals we set for children.



Our classrooms have clearly defined; well-equipped interest centers that are arranged to promote independence, foster decision-making, and encourage involvement. The program utilizes The Creative Curriculum for Preschool as our curriculum, and Teaching Strategies GOLD as the Child Outcomes Assessment System.

We strive to prepare all children to be ready for school and experience success as lifelong learners. School Readiness goals are developed annually by review of child outcomes and parent and staff input.



Holidays at Discovery Center

The program believes that decisions about what holidays to celebrate are best made together by teachers, parents, and children. Families and staff are more comfortable when both have expressed their views and understand how a decision has been reached. Activities must be meaningful to children, it must meet the needs and interests, and it must be goal-oriented.

Teachers will survey families at the beginning of the year to determine what holidays to celebrate. They may even ask the children to create their own holiday to help them learn the concepts that underlie such valued traditions.

Field Trips

Field trips are a great way to explore and learn more about the world around us, especially in our own community. Classrooms can plan walking field trips as it coincides with their classroom planning. Parents will be asked for classroom field trip ideas. All ideas will be considered as to appropriateness, distance, cost, classroom composition, and cultural heritage.

Home Visits

The home is the most important place in a child's life; this is where he/she feels the most comfortable. Home visits support this belief. During the program year your child's Teacher will complete two home visits and the Family Support Specialist will complete three home visits. If you need to change or cancel a home visit, please contact the Teacher or Family Support Specialist at least 24 hours in advance. If you do not feel comfortable having a staff member in your home, arrangements can be made to complete it at another location.

Promoting the Social and Emotional Development of Children

Children form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways. They explore the environment and learn at home, school, and in the community. We promote healthy development by working to support the social emotional wellness of children and make every effort to prevent the occurrence or escalation of social emotional problems.

Our goal is to build positive relationships among children and staff in supportive environments. Our focus is placed on identifying feelings in self and others, controlling anger and impulse and developing problem solving skills through intentional teaching.

Mental Health Well Being in Early Childhood

Mental health means that young children are growing in their ability to:

- Understand and share feelings
- Have close and positive relationships
- Explore and learn

Having positive mental health is important! It makes it easier for children to:

- Have close relationships with family and friends
- Do well in school
- Learn new things
- Solve tough problems
- Develop patience (or not give up)
- Focus on a task
- Ask for help

When young children are worried, sad or angry, it can be hard to:

- Make friends
- Follow directions
- Express feelings or wishes
- Follow simple directions
- Pay attention in class
- Solve problems in positive ways
- Do well in school

Social and emotional wellbeing is foundation for children to be ready for school and beyond. Our primary focus is building social and emotional skills in each child. At times children may need additional support in this area of development to help them build positive mental health. Through collaboration with Rutland Mental Health Services, families have option to work with members of the RMHS, Early Childhood Services Team.



Emotional and Behavioral Services and Case Management

Through collaboration between Rutland County Head Start and Rutland Mental Health children and families have additional emotional and behavioral supports at Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning (CDCEL). These services allow for more attention to your child's social, emotional and behavioral needs at your request.

Case Managers, Therapeutic Support Specialists (TSS), and Clinicians are available to work with your child. TSS provides intensive help in the classroom for children that are open to Early Childhood Mental Health Services. The Case Manager is available to provide assistance, consultation, and referrals for mental health services. Clinicians can provide children with individual play base therapy. No services will be provided without the permission of parents, signed release forms, and completion of Rutland Mental Health Services paperwork.

This program is a Medicaid funded program and requires full parent/caregiver participation to develop goals and targets for progress. Home visits are part of the program.

If you would like more information on the role of the Case Manager and how one can work with your child and family, talk to your child's Family Support Specialist.

Behavior

Children learn self-control when adults treat them with respect and dignity. Our staff uses positive methods of guidance including the "**FLIP IT**" approach, which encourages self-esteem and cooperation. Children are taught to identify and communicate their feelings so that they may problem-solve a situation on their own.

We strive to provide children with a safe environment, which will maximize each child's social development. When a child's behavior is unsafe Rutland County Head Start has the following Behavior Policy in place:

Unsafe behavior at Rutland County Head Start is defined as: Behaviors, which are continuous, excessive and dangerous to the child, other children and/or staff, and which may indicate a need for program modification or exclusion:

Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:

****Excessive Biting***

****Excessive Kicking***

****Excessive Hitting***

****Excessive Spitting***

****Throwing Objects***

****Self-injurious behavior/Non-compliance specifically in time of urgency (e.g. refusing fire drills, avoiding adult supervision, darting from the classroom or park).***

Teachers will utilize positive reinforcement to encourage safe behavior by means of de-escalation, clear choices and redirection as well as other intervention strategies. The "**Flip It**" technique is our primary mode of re-direction/support and/or discipline.

Teaching staff, with guidance from a member of the Management Team, have the ability to determine when a child's ongoing unsafe behavior warrants exclusion from a Head Start classroom. In this case, the child's parent/guardian will be contacted and the child may be sent home. Teaching staff will review this policy in depth with parents at the 1st home visit.

Safe and Positive Approaches For Preventing and Responding to Crisis

There are times when a child's behavior becomes aggressive, self-injurious or destructive to the point where physical intervention is necessary to prevent serious injury. On these occasions, when less restrictive non-physical interventions (e.g. Staff Effectiveness strategies/FLIP-IT) have been unsuccessful. It may become necessary to implement a Personal Emergency Intervention (restraint) to maintain the safety and well-being of the child and those around him or her. The interventions used are designed to minimize the risk of injury to the child and staff person, and not to cause pain or injury. Our staff are trained in the Devereux model of *Safe and Positive Approaches for Preventing and Responding to Crisis*. The Safe and Positive Approaches model is based on national standards and best practices that promote the safety, dignity and well-being of each child and staff member. Parents/Guardians will be notified when a Personal Emergency Intervention (restraint) is used.

Screenings for Child Development & Health Issues

We conduct screenings on all children enrolled in the program according to best practice for supporting children's health and well-being.

A screening is a brief procedure to identify children who may be at risk and may require further evaluation. **A screening does not determine a diagnosis**; but it may suggest the need for further evaluation. Children who require further evaluation will be referred to the proper agency. The family's permission will be given and a release form signed before any referrals are made. Rutland County Head Start staff will assist families through the referral process. Rutland County Head Start will conduct the following screenings on your child.

Developmental Screening:

We use the ESI-R (Early Screening Inventory-Revised) screening tool to evaluate a child's developmental level. This tool evaluates children in the following areas: Visual Motor/Adaptive, Language and Cognition, and Gross Motor. Families will first be asked to complete a questionnaire about their children. The results of the screening will be shared with parents/guardians by the teacher. Parents/guardians will also receive a form that states whether the child ***passed, failed*** or needs a ***re-screen***. Re-screens will occur within two weeks (in most cases) from the date of the first screening. The results of the re-screen will be shared with families.

Social/Emotional Screening:

We implement the DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment) program to screen/evaluate a child's social emotional development. This tool screens/evaluates children in the following areas: ***Initiative, Self-Regulation, Attachment/Relationships, and Behavioral Concerns***. All children will be screened within 45 days of entry into the program and again in late winter. Results will be charted and shared with families. Families will work as partners with staff throughout the process.

Vision Screening:

Children will receive a vision screening during the first 45 days of enrollment using a Welch Allyn Sure Sight Vision Screener. The Sure Sight tests for the primary vision disorder in children- refractive error- with a child-friendly unit that engages the child, puts them at ease, and requires minimal cooperation. Results will be shared with families by staff; they will also receive a form stating whether the child ***passed, failed*** or requires a ***re-screen***. In the event a child requires a re-screen it will occur within two weeks after the initial screening. If referral is noted, families will be referred to their child's physician.

Hearing Screening:

Children will receive a hearing screening during the first 45 days of enrollment. Results will be shared with families by staff as well as receiving a form stating whether the child ***passed, failed*** or requires a ***re-screen***. In the event a child requires a re-screen it will occur within two weeks after the initial screening. If referral is noted, families will be referred to their child's physician.

Medication Administration

Children who receive medications/treatments at school must have an Individual Health Plan containing a Medication Administration Release form completed by their physician and signed by a parent or guardian prior to administration of any medicines. All medication transported to and from school must be transported by the parent or guardian of the child. Medications must be in an original container labeled by the pharmacy, which includes all instructions and/or precautions. Medication should be given to your Family Support Specialist to ensure that all necessary steps for receiving medication are adhered to. In classrooms within school systems, please refer to the school nurse for assistance.

Children with asthma and/or allergies cannot attend school until medication and an Asthma Action Plan or Individual Health Plan is present at the site. OTC (Over the Counter Medication) cannot be administered at school unless prescribed by a physician.

Health Policies

Upon entering the center, all children must wash their hands prior to entering the classroom.



Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning follows Vermont State Child Care Licensing Regulations. Per Caring for Our Children the following things will be taken into consideration when determining temporary exclusion:

- The condition prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
- The condition results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- The condition poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.

If any of the above criteria are met, the child will be excluded, regardless of the type of illness. Vermont Child Care Licensing will be consulted in the exclusion of children due to suspected or confirmed illness.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES: Whenever a child is found to have communicable disease, parents will be notified, and the child will be sent home. All families in the classroom will receive a notice if their child has been exposed to a communicable disease. No exceptions are made.

Parents will be notified immediately of any accidents or illnesses of their child while at school. If your child is sick, or even if you think he/she may be coming down with an illness, we ask that you keep your child home.

Child Immunization Requirements

Your child's immunization status will be reviewed during recruitment to ensure that your child's vaccinations are in compliance with Vermont State Laws. If your child is not up-to-date with their immunizations they can be admitted on a provisional basis for up to six months, if you are in the process of meeting the immunization requirements, **WITH A SIGNED FORM FROM YOUR CHILD'S DOCTOR**. If your child has not received the vaccination at the end of the six months, your child will no longer be eligible to participate in the program.

Well-Child Requirements

Your child is required to have an up-to-date well-child exam. If, within the first 45 days of your child's enrollment it is determined that your child is not in compliance of Vermont State requirements, you will be asked to schedule an appointment for your child to bring them into compliance. Failure to do so will result in your being no longer able to participate in the program.



Weather Policies

Winter:

Although we attempt to participate in outside play daily, in the event that the temperature falls below 15 degrees, gross motor activity will occur inside within the classroom setting. Please refer to the section under student dress for the winter months. Classrooms within the school system follow the public school district policies on outside temperature.

Additionally, we endeavor to open each day for children and families regardless of local school closings. The following are ways that you can tune in for weather-related center closings and/or delays:

Radio: Catamount Radio Stations Television: PEG TV
AM 1380 FM 97.1
FM 98.1 FM 94.5

Classrooms within the school system follow the school district policies on delays and closings.

Summer:

CDCEL will supply sunscreen and bug spray for all children during the summer months. A release signed by a parent/guardian must be obtained yearly in order for staff to apply sunscreen and/or bug spray. Parents are also encouraged to send hats with their children for sunny days.

Nutrition Services

We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program administered through the United States Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in the CACFP on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex and disability. Classroom meals are served family-style. This encourages children to acquire new skills, take responsibility for their own spills, and make decisions about serving and choosing foods. Families can participate in menu planning during parent meetings, home visits or conferences. This allows our cooking staff to prepare enough food for everyone. We invite you to visit your child's classroom at any

time, however, due to budget restraints we cannot provide meals for extra adults and children not enrolled in the Head Start classroom on a regular basis. If you wish to bring in food items you must get prior approval from the classroom teacher.

Identification

Authorization and Consent Forms must be completed by each parent/guardian. **Staff will only release your child to the names listed on this form.** Staff will ask for identification from each person until they have become familiar with them. It is required by the Vermont Early Childhood Regulations that you supply two working emergency phone numbers and two emergency contacts with current phone numbers. **The Authorization and Consent Forms need to be completed in person, no exceptions will be made.**

Daily Sign In and Sign Out

All children must be signed in and signed out on the attendance sheet by the person bringing them and picking them up each day. The person's initials and the time of drop off and pick up needs to be recorded on the attendance sheet. The attendance sheet is also used to record the number of meals and snacks served, and for tracking child care attendance.

Attendance

Early school success goes hand in hand with good attendance. Showing up on time every day is important to your child's success and leaning from preschool forward. We want all children to start their day positively. When children come in late they are missing out on the beginning of their day, which can be difficult if they have not participated in the morning routine. We ask that you follow the Attendance Policy below.

1. Class begins at 9:00 am. All children should be in their classroom by this time.
2. When your child is absent, it is your responsibility to call the site to let the staff know why your child is absent and how long he/she is expected to be out.
3. If we do not receive a call from you about your child's absence staff will call or make a home visit to follow-up.
4. You will receive notification if your child's attendance is inconsistent. At that time your Family Support Specialist will work with you to develop *My Child's Attendance Success Plan*.
5. We reserve the right to place a child on the Wait List if inconsistent attendance persists.

Personal Items

Preschool children come to school with a lot of stuff, especially when the weather turns cold! Please remember, however, that Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning is not responsible for any lost or stolen personal items, including clothing and toys from home.

Student Dress

Please dress your child appropriately for all weather conditions. Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning follows the Vermont Early Childhood Program Regulations. The regulations **require each child to have an extra change of clothes at school**. Clothes should be sent to school, clearly labeled with your child's name on the bag. During late fall, winter, and early spring, please send your child to school with a coat, snow pants, boots, mittens, and a hat. If you dress your daughter in a dress you must put shorts on under the dress. Children at this age are very active and have a hard time being discreet with a dress on. All children need to bring a pair of **shoes or slippers** to be worn during the school day. **If you do not have these items, please notify your Family Support Specialist**. Please send your child to school in clothes that can get dirty as a result of painting, sand play, etc. We go outside every day, weather permitting.

Family Conferencing

Family Conferencing gives your child's Teacher and Family Support Specialist the opportunity to discuss family strengths, family goals, community connections, referrals, and or concerns. Family conferencing will take place a minimum of one time per month. All information is confidential and parent/legal guardian has the right to review their child's file at any time.

Confidentiality

Families and children enrolled in Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning have the right to the protection of personal information. Parents should be the primary source of information about themselves and information sought from them should be limited to that which is essential for service.

To be in compliance with Federal Regulations, and to respect the privacy of each family, confidentiality of information is of primary importance. No volunteer or staff member of the program may use information obtained for his or her own use. Videotaping of any functions by individual families is not allowed at any event unless you have written permission of all families involved.

Exceptions to the above confidentiality statement are child abuse, threats to harm self or others, or abuse of disabled individuals.

Resource Directory

Families will receive the Vermont Parents Home Companion Guide. This book contains listings for local and statewide agencies and organizations that can help with many family issues. Numerous brochures and agency flyers are also available at the site for additional resources. Please contact your Family Support Specialist if you have any questions about community resources.

Security System- Children's Discovery Center

The safety of the children, their families and our staff is very important. A security system is installed at Hickory Street center which require the use of a magnetic card to gain entry. The system will allow only authorized individuals who have been issued a magnetic card to enter the first or second floor. Changes to authorized persons can be made immediately on the system to ensure the safety of the children and our staff.

Each primary caregiver will initially be issued two magnetic security cards. There is a replacement fee of \$5 for new and \$2 for used (if available) per card in the event a card is lost or stolen. A separate Security Door Card User Agreement outlines the rules governing the use of security door cards.

Social Networking: Parents and Staff

Many people use social networks for personal communication. It is not unusual to have Facebook, Twitter or other online accounts. Our program policies, however, discourages our employees from having parents/guardians of enrolled Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning children as online "friends" because of the many boundary issues it presents. We ask that you respect our policy and not solicit our staff to become online "friends."

Parent and Adult Personal Behavior

Rutland Community Programs, Inc. requires that parents/guardians/caregivers of enrolled children at all times behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect while they are on CDCEL premises. One of our goals is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters a Rutland County Head Start site. While at the program, parents/guardians/caregivers are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. This code of conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Swearing or other offensive language
- Threats to employees, children, other parents or adults
- Physical altercations with children or adults
- Smoking, including outside the building up to the public sidewalk

Any violations of this code may result in limited or restricted access to Children’s Discovery Center for Early Learning.

Alcohol & Drugs

We expect that parents or caregivers will not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they drop off or pick up their child, or when a staff member is on a home visit. **All of Rutland Community Programs sites are smoke free environments. We ask that parents do not smoke when a staff member is on a home visit.**

Child Abuse & Neglect- Mandatory Reporter

In accordance with Vermont regulations regarding child abuse and neglect, The Children’s Discovery Center for Early Learning is a Mandatory Reporter and must report cases of suspected physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect to the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF). This may include releasing child/family information to parties involved in the investigation.

Childcare Services

Rutland County Head Start offers full-year childcare services in Rutland at 78 Meadow Street and is looking at providing child care at Hickory Street Center at 15 Juneberry Lane in Rutland City.

LATE PICK UP POLICY: In the event that you do not arrive in the designated timeframe to pick up your child, staff will attempt to contact individuals listed on the Authorization and Consent Form for up to 45 minutes. After 45 minutes, staff will contact the police and Department of Child and Families, Child Welfare and Youth Justice (DCF)

ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING:

Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations

Contact:

Department for Children and Families

Agency of Human Services

1-800-649-2642

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/>

CHILD CARE CONSUMER CONCERN LINE SPECIALIST

1-800-649-2642

Notes:

**Children's Discovery Center for Early Learning
Parent Handbook Parent Acknowledgement Form**

I have received and reviewed the 2017-2018 Parent Handbook.

Parent Signature

Date

Revised 08/17