MILESTONES

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Welcome to Milestones

Quality child care is every parent's wish and, too often, lack of it is many parent's constant worry. Milestones Programs for Children was established in 1979 to provide working parents and their young children with high quality child care and educational programming. The center staff are committed to meeting the needs of children, parents, and teachers in a safe and loving setting.

As a parent looking for child care it can be a daunting task touring centers, asking questions, and trying to find a child care setting that works best for your family. Here at Milestones, we want to make sure you know your options and are equipped with all the answers you need to make a decision you are happy with. Please take time to read through the following questions and answers. These are questions we feel every parent should ask of a child care center or provider before a final decision is made.

What age children does the Early Childhood Program serve?

Milestones provides care for children from the age of three months to six years at three locations:

Plymouth Church on Milwaukee's East side
Lydell Community Center in Whitefish Bay
Indian Hill School in River Hills

Children are grouped by age into four different classrooms. At our Indian Hill School location we also provide before and after school programs for children enrolled in kindergarten through 2nd grades.

Milestones also provides extended day care (before and after school) at each of the public and parochial schools in Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, and Glendale and at Maple Dale School.

When you are ready to begin planning for programming for your school age child, further information can be provided.

What is your staff-child ratio?

Milestones follows the National Association for the Education of Young Children's guidelines for staff:child ratios, which exceed the State of Wisconsin minimums. For our infant and toddler rooms, this means we maintain a 1:3 ratio (with no more than eight children in the room). In our two and three year old rooms we maintain a 1:6 ratio (with no more than 14 children) and in our four and five year old rooms we maintain a 1:7 ratio (with no more than 16 children). Each classroom is staffed by two Head Teachers and one or two Assistant Teachers depending on the age and size of the group. By having an appropriate staff:child ratio, we are able to provide the individual attention that we feel young children need.

What type of training and education do the caregivers have?

All members of the teaching staff meet or exceed the minimum State of Wisconsin requirements for child care staff. Head Teachers have four-year degrees in Early Childhood Education or a related field, Associate Degrees, or have received their Child Development Associate Credential from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Assistants, at minimum, have taken vocational training in child growth and development. Teachers and Assistants are provided with ongoing in-service training and opportunities to take part in continuing education.

How do you handle staff turn-over?

Milestones Programs for Children is committed to the early childhood field and we do everything we can to reduce staff turn-over. Our Board of Directors works very hard to improve teachers' salaries and benefits on a yearly basis. We offer competitive salaries and benefits to all our full time staff members. We have very high hiring standards and as a result, the early childhood field is typically the professional, career choice our teachers make, lowering our turn-over rate. We also employ a support structure that helps classroom teams set goals and meet them. This support provides all staff with a positive working environment.

What are your primary goals for the children?

In this fast-paced world where our children must grow up all too quickly, we feel it important that we give children the opportunity to be kids and to enjoy all the wonders of their early childhood years to the fullest. Our teachers and administrators are warm, nurturing, and knowledgeable of child development, trained, and committed to the education of young

children. We want your child's experience at Milestones to be filled with wonderful and positive memories.

Tell me about Milestones curriculum?

Our programs are child-centered which means that we are here to meet the real needs of children, allow them the freedom to be children, and put their physical and emotional well-being first. We believe that children learn best through play and social interactions. Our main goals are to nurture children and help them to feel good about themselves and their world and to communicate and get along with their peers.

The Milestones curriculum reflects the philosophy that children learn best by having the freedom to move around their classroom and interact with their world. The teachers encourage this by creating a rich learning environment in the classroom with many and varied opportunities for hands-on activity. Children work individually and in groups as they make choices in the classroom. Developmentally appropriate activities are planned for the following interest areas: dramatic play, music and movement, art, books and language, table games and puzzles, science, and block building. There is also time for cooking and baking, field trips, gym and outdoor play.

Activities are designed to meet the individual developmental needs of our children as well as the emerging interests of the group.

How do you handle discipline at Milestones?

The discipline policy at Milestones provides for positive guidance, problem solving, redirection, and the setting of clear limits. It is designed to help children develop self-control, self-esteem, and respect for the rights of others. We encourage generosity and sharing and help children to discover the pleasures of friendship and community. Children are helped to develop empathy through example and explanation and to understand that everyone has rights and should be respected by all. Our approach to discipline is always developmentally and individually appropriate.

By teaching problem solving techniques, we guide children in forming positive relationships, resolving conflicts, and learning self-discipline and respect for others. We see inappropriate or destructive behavior as a problem to be solved, primarily by the children involved and with the help of a teacher-facilitator. Some of the terminology used in this problem solving approach:

> Active Listening interprets and reflects a child's feelings. It lets children express and think through their problems and find their own solutions.

Negotiation teaches children to talk to each other about their problems, look for solutions, and resolve conflicts nonviolently.

Setting Limits teaches children to stay within safe boundaries and learn self-control. Limits are based on safety, responsibility, and respect.

We feel our most effective way to deal with inappropriate behavior is to prevent it. We can prevent most problems by providing a challenging, developmentally appropriate program for the children that takes into account each child's individual needs as well as those of the group. We also try to stay as consistent as possible so children know what to expect from us every day.

It is our feeling that children benefit from being involved in problem solving and communication when difficulties occur rather than being sent away or isolated from the group. Therefore, time-outs are not used as a routine form of discipline.

What makes your program for infants different?

In our infant rooms our main objective is to build a strong and nurturing relationship with your baby. We do this by creating a safe and loving environment where we work to meet a child's emotional and physical needs. The care provided is tailored to the individual child. Every baby has a unique way of letting us know what he/she needs and our teachers learn to read those cues and respond appropriately.

When you look at our environment you may notice that we do not use baby swings or "exercise saucers." While these things may have their place when used in moderation, we feel that they can be overused in group settings. These pieces of equipment tend to encourage passivity rather than active movement and exploration.

Instead, the infant room environment is set up to encourage each child's physical, social, and emotional development. Our teachers spend the majority of their time interacting with the infants on the floor. They sing to, talk with, read to, and engage them with toys and other children. Teachers vary the activities and toys in the room as children develop and grow, making sure to include sensory and art experiences as it is appropriate.

How can parents get involved at Milestones?

Despite our size, the teaching staff prides itself on maintaining a small, close-knit "family" atmosphere. Time and attention is devoted to encouraging parent involvement in all aspects of the program. Parents can get involved formally by being part of the Milestones Board of Directors. This board is made up of parent representatives, the community, and teaching staff.

Involvement is also possible through planning and implementing social activities as well as fundraising projects. Parents are encouraged to get involved in the daily activities of their child's classroom by coming in to read, sharing a special skill or talent, or joining the group for lunch or snack. Please let us know how you might like to be involved.

What should my next step be?

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Call our Main Office and ask to speak with Jackie Larus Conway, our Early Childhood Director.

Jackie can determine the availability of space in our program. She can give you current information about our waiting list and the steps you will need to take in order to be added to that list.

You will also want to arrange for a tour of the program and our Director can do this as well. Because all staff members on site are busy with children, we ask that you arrange for a tour in advance by contacting our Main Office. This way, we can be sure that someone is available to show you around and answer all of your questions.

You can contact Jackie at the Main Office. Call 414-964-5545 or you can reach her by e-mail at jconway@milestonesprograms.org.

Thank You for your interest in Milestones Programs for Children!