

Basic Practices in the Care of Young Children

- LifeWays practices are based upon the fundamental need for relationship-based care (bonding and continuity), neurological research, and recognition of *living arts* (domestic, nurturing, creative and social arts) as central to the advancement of children's social, emotional and intellectual skills. These practices can be applied in parenting, in family child care homes, child care centers, pre-schools and extended care programs. The physical setting is home-like rather than institutional or school-like.
- In child care, "suites" consist of small groups of mixed-age children who stay together with the same caregivers over a several-year period, creating a more homelike atmosphere and better teacher-child ratios.
- Adult and child activities include practical life skills such as building, gardening, cleaning, cooking, washing, repairing and sewing, among others.
- Movement/play curriculum emphasizes child-initiated activities that promote healthy musculoskeletal development, providing opportunities for unstructured, spontaneous movement in a safe environment. Traditional games and finger-plays provide opportunities for the children to imitate healthy movement, develop proprioception and increase both small and large motor skills.
- The children go outside in all but the most inclement weather. This helps them become more robust and strengthens their bond with the environment in which they live. A protected area is provided for crawlers and infants.
- Child guidance is based on the LOVE approach to discipline: listening, laughter, order, objectivity, versatility, vulnerability, energy and enthusiasm.
- Natural organic foods are provided (whenever this is possible), and the children can participate in the food preparation.
- Foundation for lifelong literacy is fostered through storytelling and puppetry, through individual lap time with a book, through poetry, verse, and music on a daily basis, through drama, and through the daily interactions of play and movement in a healthy, secure environment.
- Emphasis is on loving human interaction with warm speech, live singing, verses, and stories rather than technology. LifeWays centers and child care homes are television- and video-free environments except for use in administration and adult education.
- Festivals and celebrations honoring traditional seasonal festivals, cultural backgrounds of the families, and children's birthdays are offered.
- When possible, ongoing relationships are established with senior adults and youth who visit on a regular basis.
- Community friends who speak a native language other than English may be invited to play simple games or sing simple songs with the children on a routine basis.
- Preschool/kindergarten programs provide a developmentally appropriate, play-based approach found in Waldorf preschools and kindergartens throughout the world.
- Extended-day programs recognize the need for children to experience the nurture of a home-like setting with opportunities for relaxation, rest and robust play.

Specific to the Infants (in addition to the applicable points above)

- Infants are provided safe environments in which to explore and move freely – no walkers, bouncers, infant gyms, or other mechanical devices are necessary.
- The infants are carefully wrapped for sleeping to provide a healthy sense of security and warmth, and caps are encouraged to protect their sensitive heads and ears.
- Infants receive daily outside time, carefully clothed according to the elements. Fresh air also supports deep, restful sleep.
- Rocking and cuddling are encouraged to develop a healthy sense of touch and movement and to promote security, bonding and comfort.
- Physical care (diapering, clothing, feeding) provides focused time for connecting with the caregiver and may include a special song for the baby or a simple nursery rhyme and a gentle touching game. The baby will be encouraged to participate in clothing herself or himself; for example, pulling on its own socks when capable.
- Clear, articulate, melodic speech is expected of the caregivers who are encouraged to communicate with the infants regularly throughout the day.