



# Dawson-Boyd Blackjack Babies & Little Jacks Child Care

*Dawson, MN*

In August 2020, Dawson-Boyd Blackjack Babies moved locations from Johnson Memorial Health Services to the Dawson-Boyd School within Steven’s Elementary. In September 2021, Little Jacks was added to provide care for up to 20 preschool-aged children.



848 Chesnut Street  
Dawson, MN



<https://sites.google.com/dwby.k12.mn.us/isd378/community-ed/blackjack-babies>



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## Established

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

## Background

Looking for ways to combat the child care shortage in Dawson, Johnson Memorial Health Services (JMHS) started working with First Children’s Finance through the “Rural Child Care Innovation Program” grant that they received in May 2017. Through this work, JMHS gathered area information on child care needs. A core team was formed which included JMHS staff, Dawson-Boyd School District staff, and city and county officials.

The core team held a Dawson-Boyd Rural Child Care Innovation Program Town Hall meeting which various community members, existing child care providers, faith-based leaders, and business owners were invited to.

After working with First Children’s Finance, they identified an option to work with the existing Dawson-Boyd Community education program under the Dawson-Boyd School umbrella. Blackjack Babies is operated under the Dawson-Boyd School District’s umbrella and the center was originally located within the JMHS Care Center.



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*What has Changed*

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the child care center made the move to the Dawson-Boyd School. Because of the new COVID-19 restriction for nursing homes and hospitals, JMHS thought it would be best that the child care center relocate.

The school created space to house the child care temporarily, until the elementary school remodel was complete and they were able to move into permanent rooms in the elementary building.



Little Jacks Child Care was certified by the MN Department of Human Services for the 2021-22 school year and beyond. Dawson-Boyd teaches preschool by licensed teachers two, three, or four days per week, and the Little Jacks was created to provide care on their off days. Dawson-Boyd now has the capability to provide child care for infants through school-aged children right in the school.

*Building*

The child care is located in the Dawson-Boyd school within Steven’s Elementary. They have separate rooms for infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-aged children. The Dawson-Boyd School District covers all space-related costs.

*Schedule*

Blackjack Child Care is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with the exception of major holidays.

*Food*

Children enrolled are served breakfast, lunch, and snacks that are paid for and prepared by the Dawson-Boyd School District. Meals are prepared at the school’s kitchen and served in the child care rooms.

**Enrollment & Fees**

*Enrollment*

They are licensed through the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Age Range	Number of Children License/Certification Allows	Number of Children Enrolled
<b>Infant</b> 6 weeks – 15 months	12	12
<b>Toddler</b> 16 months – 33 months	21	14
<b>Preschool</b> 33 months – Kindergarten	20	Varies by day
<b>School-Aged</b> Kindergarten +	45	Varies by day
Total	98	Varies by day

## Fees

Age	Per Week	Per Day	Drop-in
Infants 6 weeks-15 months	\$175	\$35	\$45
Toddlers 16-33 months	\$165	\$33	\$45
Preschool 33 months – Kindergarten	\$130	\$30	\$40
School-Aged Kindergarten + (non-school days)	\$140	\$28	\$40

School-aged children on school days are charged \$4 before school / \$8 after school.

## Staff

The Dawson-Boyd School District employs all child care staff members. Full-time employees receive vacation, personal, and sick days, paid holidays, PERA (pension), a medical insurance stipend, access to vision and dental care as well as annual pay raises. The Dawson-Boyd School District will also reimburse staff members for completing the Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credentialing Program. Obtaining a CDA allows child care staff members to get certified as Assistant Teachers and/or Teachers. A new benefit for the 2022-2023 school year includes receiving significant reduction in child care fees charged for up to three children.

Currently Employed	Position	Starting Hourly Pay
1	Director/Coordinator	\$14.50
3	Lead Teacher	\$13.82
3	Teacher	\$13.55
3	Assistant Teacher	\$13.28
9	Aides	\$12.77

## Financing

### Current Operating Budget – 2021/2022 Fiscal Year

Revenue	Amount
Grants (Child Care Stabilization Grant)	\$64,315
Child Care Fees	\$281,801
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$346,116</b>
Expenses	Amount
Wages (includes % of Community Ed Director & Admin Assistant)	\$315,664
Supplies	\$15,378
Food	\$3,405
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$334,447</b>
Profit	\$11,669



### *Loans & Grants*

In the current operating budget listed above, a majority of the grant funding came from the Child Care Stabilization Grant. The American Rescue Plan Act was signed into law in March 2021, and it provided Minnesota with additional funds designed to help stabilize the child care industry as the state continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Minnesota legislature created Minnesota's Child Care Stabilization Grant Program, which began in June 2021 and will last until June 2023.

This grant has several restrictions on how it can be used making it difficult to use the money where it is most needed. Even with these restrictions, the Child Care Stabilization Grant has helped balance the child care budget over this past year. The Stabilization grant is set to expire in June 2023 so other sources of income will need to be arranged. Continued funding through grants or other sources is crucial to keeping fees at a level most families can afford.

While there are concerns about funding for the child care after the Child Care Stabilization Grant ends, Aafedt believes the center would continue to be profitable if additional space and staffing were available to meet the growing demand for child care in the community. The center will continue to look at ways to make this possible, such as adding a reduction in child care fees for daycare workers as a way to attract new employees.

## Challenges and Successes

### *Challenges*

The biggest challenge facing Blackjack Babies is a shortage of workers. As stated previously, there is a huge need for additional child care capacity in this community. Keeping the child care open is a must, not only for the families who use it but for many of the area businesses that depend on people being available for work. The child care is a vital asset for continued economic growth in the community.

### *Successes*

The main success that came with the move to the Dawson-Boyd School was the ability to increase capacity due to the larger space. In doing so, they were able to create more spots for children in the community.