



Prairie Playhouse Childcare Center

Appleton, MN

Established

April 1997

Background & Basic Info

The Appleton Prison Corporation played a big part in starting up Prairie Playhouse Childcare Center, as there was a great need for childcare for the employees of the Prairie Correctional Facility, which is now closed. The inmates did a lot of the construction and renovation work to prepare the building to be a childcare center. When Prairie Playhouse was established in 1997, it was a 24-hour daycare to accommodate for night shift workers at the prison.

Building

After renovations and updates, a portion of the old Appleton High School became the home of the much-needed community childcare center, Prairie Playhouse. The school sold the building to the City of Appleton and Prairie Playhouse rents space from them. The school district also has a combined preschool/Head Start located in this building.

Prairie Playhouse rents the space from the City of Appleton for \$300 per month. This includes 4,158 square feet of indoor space and 3,000 square feet of outdoor space, including access to a gymnasium that is located in the building.

Schedule

Prairie Playhouse is open Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with the exception of major holidays.



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Appleton, MN



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<https://www.facebook.com/PrairiePlayhouseChildcareCenter/>



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Food

Prairie Playhouse offers children breakfast, lunch, and snacks. They utilize the Child and Adult Care Funding Program to help pay for the food.



Enrollment & Fees

Enrollment

Prairie Playhouse recruits new families mostly by word of mouth. Through advertising in newspapers, it spreads awareness of the childcare center. They also utilize their Facebook page and signage outside of their building.

Age Range	Number of Children License Allows	Number of Children Enrolled
Infant 6 weeks – 16 months	12	9
Toddler 16 months – 33 months	14	7
Preschool 33 months – 5/6 years	24	11
School Age 5/6 years – 12 years	20	15
Total	70	42

There are four occasional drop-ins at this time.

Prairie Playhouse has a waiting list for seven infants between December 2019 and April 2020. As they move infants up to the toddler room when they are at 16 months, they will have capacity to add additional infants from the waiting list. To have the capacity for 12 infants, Prairie Playhouse is currently in the process of training a new infant teacher.

Fees

Age	Full-time 25+ hours/week	Part-time Up to 25 hours/week	Drop-in
Infant	\$136/week	\$86/week	\$35/day
Toddler & Preschool	\$113/week	\$74/week	\$33/day



Age	Full-time 25+ hours/week (summer)	Part-time Up to 25 hours/week (summer)	Drop-In (summer)	11-20 hours/week	Up to 10 hours/week	No School Daily Rate
School Age	\$100/week	\$70/week	\$30/day	\$45/week	\$29/week	\$21/day

Staff

Prairie Playhouse is a stand-alone business that currently employs three full-time staff and 11 part-time staff. Staff turnover and a child waitlist creates a need for new/additional staff, especially teachers. In efforts to fill positions, Prairie Playhouse advertises in local and area newspapers, posts ads on Facebook, and advertises job openings at area community colleges with early childhood education programs.

Currently Employed	Position	Starting Hourly Pay
3	Full-time Teachers	\$11.25
2	Part-time Teachers	\$11.25
9	Part-time Aids (hours range from 5 to 30 hours/week)	\$9.00

There is one Director employed at Prairie Playhouse and one substitute Aid.

Financing

Start Up Costs

When Prairie Playhouse was established in 1997, the startup costs of \$26,000 were covered by the Appleton Prison Corporation as there was a great need for childcare for the employees of the Prairie Correctional Facility in Appleton.

One major source of revenue includes donations from charitable gambling. The Minnesota Gambling Control Board (<https://mn.gov/gcb/>) regulates the “lawful (charitable) gambling industry to ensure the integrity of operations and provide for the lawful use of net profits. Charitable gambling is conducted only by registered nonprofit organizations.” Prairie Playhouse leases sites for lawful gambling operations at Shooters Bar and Grill and the Paddle Bar in Appleton.

Current Operating Budget

Annual Operating Revenue	Amount
Grants	\$18,000
Fundraisers	\$500
Fees	\$165,766
Food program reimbursement/county payments	\$20,984
Charitable Gambling Funds	\$35,000
Total	\$240,250
Annual Operating Expenses	Amount
Operational Expenses	\$65,000
Payroll	\$175,000
Rent	\$3,600
Total	\$243,600
Loss	\$3,350



Loans & Grants

Prairie Playhouse applies for various grants annually. Some of the major ones include the Swift County Daycare Grant, Child Care Aware grant for \$2,500, and the Appleton Community Foundation grant for up to \$3,000.

Other Sources

Prairie Playhouse conducts multiple fundraisers every year—Papa Murphy’s pizza sales, t-shirt sales, family photo sessions, and pastry sales. They market these fundraisers by posting on their Facebook page and by word of mouth through the families they serve.

Challenges and Successes

Challenges

Filling staff positions has been a challenge for Prairie Playhouse. In January 2019, they obtained licensure for more children, creating a need for more staff, which is a challenge in a small town.

Another challenge they have dealt with is achieving and maintaining the licensing requirements as they change often. It takes a lot of time to make changes to policies and procedures and make sure the changes get implemented in the classrooms.

Successes

Prairie Playhouse has had success in increasing the number of children attending Prairie Playhouse, which has been great for the community, as many rural areas face childcare shortages. The community and grants have been an asset to the childcare center to continue to improve the quality care they offer.