

Employer-Sponsored Child Care: A Case Study

Retaining Employees by Providing Quality Child Care

South Dakota Child Care Workforce Study

Developing Practical Strategies to Strengthen the Workforce and Support Economic Growth

Initiative Highlights

- High-quality, on-site child care for employees
- Family-oriented workplace culture
- Strong supports for child care workforce

Contact Information

First Bank & Trust
Brookings, South Dakota

Tom.Fishback@bankeasy.com
605.696.2479 (x2479)



Kid's World

"I can remember, as a kid, rollerblading around the empty building," said Tom Fishback, current Market President of First Bank & Trust. He was a pre-teen when his uncle Bob decided to add an on-site early learning child center for employees' children during a remodel of the Brookings First Bank & Trust location. "He believed that if his employees could bring their children to work with them, they would be better employees because they had that peace of mind."

During the remodel, the bank hired an early childhood learning expert to help design and start building their center, Kid's World. Today, Kid's World is licensed to care for up to 72 children from birth until they enter kindergarten. Bank employees pay market rates for care as determined by the Kid's World board of directors' annual market rate analysis of local child center rates, and the center does not charge extra fees for program-related activities such as transportation to swim lessons. Employees can also communicate with Kid's World staff and even drop into their children's classrooms at any time during the work day. As of 2019, employees' grandchildren were also eligible for care at Kid's World.

In addition to peace of mind and convenience for employees, Kid's World aims to provide high-quality care for children. "Our goal is to make it a center where they're safe, where they can learn, where they have opportunities to explore," said Nan Poppen, Chief Human Resources Officer at First Bank & Trust. This includes staff with degrees in early childhood or a similar field and a nutrition coordinator, among other resources. "There's lots of pieces that go into that center in hopes of really setting those little ones up for success as they leave our center."

Benefits for Employees

Bank employees have strong, positive relationships with Kid's World staff. Throughout the work day, employees can communicate with Kid's World staff through an app and are welcomed into Kid's World for any reason, whether to comfort their child, feed a baby in a nursing room, or just to say hello. "I feel like our center has much more of a family feel," said Robin Rice, Director of





Kid's World. "And so there's a great deal of mutual respect between our parents and our teachers."

In addition to the convenience of being on site, employees' child care fees are automatically deducted from their accounts through an automated clearinghouse and processed by First Bank & Trust. Kid's World also promptly places employees' children in care. The center typically has either a minimal or no waiting list and can hold a spot for an employee who is pregnant so the employee has child care available as soon as they return to work.

All employees – whether their children are at Kid's World or not – enjoy Kid's World staff escorting young children throughout bank hallways on rainy days or while on a spy expedition. The bank also incorporates Kid's World into events, including its annual ice cream day on July 3 when children sing for employees. "It's a morale booster to say the least," said the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Benefits for Child Care Staff

First Bank & Trust affords their child care workforce many advantages that have led to employee retention at Kid's World. Child care providers are considered bank employees and included in training and staff meetings. Once hired, they attend the same onboarding activities alongside other bank employees and attend regular bank employee meetings. Child care providers also receive

the same benefits as bank employees, including sick leave and paid vacation time; health, vision, and dental insurance; a 7% match on a 401K; a reimbursement for wellness activities; and tuition reimbursement and student loan repayment.

With the bank's support, Kid's World operates with a teacher-to-child ratio that's lower than South Dakota state regulations. The bank covers the costs of all classroom materials and supplies, and providers are allotted time during the week for lesson planning and for breaks outside of their classrooms.

Community Partnerships

Through Kid's World's partnerships with organizations such as South Dakota State University and the local school district, students from the university, trade schools, and local high school can shadow child care providers to complete their student teaching requirements or observations, which is beneficial for the university, the students, and Kid's World. Some of these students are later hired to work at Kid's World, and then they also benefit from the bank's tuition reimbursement program.

Kid's World staff receive training from South Dakota State University's Child and Family Resource Network and work with the local school district to provide speech or physical therapy for children with special needs.



Business-Sponsored Strategies, Supports, and Resources

- **Buy-in from business leaders** – The bank’s owners, executive management team, and board of directors, more than half of whom have had their own children in care at Kid’s World, are very supportive of continuing the vision of Kid’s World and review its finances regularly.
- **Funding** – The bank had the funding needed to start the center and has ongoing funding to continue supporting Kid’s World.
- **Community resources** – Kid’s World staff utilize community connections for activities such as having ambulances, fire trucks, and police cars visit the center and taking advantage of activities offered through the local parks and recreation program.

Implementation Facilitators

Strong leadership at the bank and at Kid’s World have supported its success. The center’s Director has contributed to retention of child care providers and staff.

The bank also provided the funding needed to start the program and has ongoing funding to continue supporting the program. Said the Market President, “It’s a big investment for us to make just thinking about things from a dollars and cents standpoint, but it’s really important for us.”

First Bank & Trust has always held a strong belief in valuing employees’ families. “I think our investment in

Kid’s World distinguishes us. We really back up what we mean by putting the family before anything else, and it’s a good testament to that,” said the Market President. Bank employees and Kid’s World staff have also developed strong relationships. The Kid’s World Director noted, “Every parent knows that everything that we do is to benefit their child, and we know they’re following up if there is an issue at home. So it’s having each other’s backs.”



Market President Tom Fishback’s daughter Mae (right) and a friend on Mae’s second day at Kids’ World.

Indicators of Program Success

- **Employee retention** – Employees have stayed in their positions long term so that their children and grandchildren could attend Kid's World.
- **Employee recruitment** – Some adults who attended Kid's World as children have become First Bank & Trust employees.
- **A model program** – Stakeholders from the early childhood profession and the business community have referred individuals inquiring about starting a child care program to consult Kid's World staff.
- **Support for child development** – Children who attend Kid's World perform reportedly well on age-specific developmental screenings.

Considerations for Replication

- **Committing to short- and long-term success** – “You know, where there's a will, there's a way,” said the Market President. “I think anywhere could do it.” Once a center is up and running, there's a lot that goes into keeping it running, as the Chief Human Resources Officer added: “It is constantly raising the bar and keeping it up there, and I think that also has paid dividends to the success of our center.”
- **Committing financially** – Starting a child care facility is a financial investment, but the benefits could be worth the cost. Said the Director of Kid's World, “It's a wonderful opportunity for businesses. Some businesses can't get people hired because employees don't have any place to take their kids.”
- **Conducting thoughtful research to determine the best approach** – First Bank & Trust hired an early childhood learning expert to help design and start building Kid's World.

