

# Stepping Stones Early Learning Center, LLC

## Parent Handbook



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Center Number – 570-291-8087

50 STURGES ROAD, SUITES 5 & 6

PECKVILLE, PA 18452

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**WELCOME** to a safe place where children will be shown love and care in a warm and nurturing environment. We are a quality Star 2 Center which has been in operation since 2014 and licensed through the Department of Public Welfare.

**MISSIONS STATEMENT:** Our mission is to provide a safe environment that promotes learning and child development. The curriculum focuses on the development of the **WHOLE** child that helps them grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically.

**PHILOSOPHY:** As a facility that provides full time education and child care, we recognize the importance of providing quality child care at affordable prices. Each classroom is complete with science, math, literacy, dramatic play, fine motor and sensory development. We strive to use the centers to enhance and encourage the child's learning experience through peer and teacher interaction. Our goals not only focus on academic achievements for our students, but also encourage the acceptance of diversity of others, enable families to participate in the education and development of their children and contribute to the vitality of our community. We believe parents are an important part of every child's experience in our program – that they are their child's "first teacher". We will work with parents regularly to ensure that their child is having the most positive experience possible at Stepping Stones. As educators we believe that all children are intrinsically motivated to learn and have an innate curiosity about the world around them. We provide opportunities to think, imagine, build and grow as children develop at their own individual paces. We strongly believe that a child's work is his or her play and that he or she learns most effectively through a play-oriented approach of which concrete, hand-on activities are the focus of our daily curriculum.

**OUR CURRICULUM:** is a hands-on approach that fosters a caring and learning environment for each child by providing opportunities for socialization, positive emotional growth, the development of fine and gross motor skills, language development, reading and math readiness. Our curriculum is based on the Pennsylvania Learning Standards to align to each of the Key Learning Areas.

## *Communication*

Good communication is of the utmost importance. When a new family is accepted into our center, we like to be sure that we can share openly about any concerns or questions that may arise. It is important that there is a similar child care philosophy between the center and the parents. We welcome questions, feedback, or discussions of any kind that are oriented towards a positive outcome for the child(ren). Sensitive issues will be discussed in private at a mutually beneficial time.

Please check the message board as well as white board by our entrance door for daily/weekly/monthly lesson plans, events and your child's bin for any communication and your child's papers. If you have questions, please call the day care director who will contact your child's teacher. All classes send out a monthly letter/calendar. Also, we have a daily report for all age groups which gives a short summary of how your child did in the eating area, napping area on Brightwheel and any other area could be addressed if it is an area of concern and you want to know. This can also be beneficial if there is some particular stress going on in the home and you are concerned and need some help with this. Please inform us of any changes in the home or marital status, as this will affect the behavior of the child. This is kept confidential. Conferences: Conferences are always available upon request. Entrance assessments and Family Meetings are given within 45 days of child's start date. A parent conference will be held every 6 months to review your child's developmental goals, achievements, etc.

## *Safety*

A safe and healthy environment for children, families, and staff is assured through careful selection, use and maintenance of materials, furnishings and equipment; training (e.g. first aid and CPR). When an injury occurs, the closest available parent is called. Either the parent comes for the child or we take the child to the hospital and the parent meets us there. Stepping Stones takes the child's emergency release paper in the file with them. In case of a minor injury, the child is immediately treated and an injury report goes home with the parent the day of the injury and also gets filed in the child's file. When a child is taken to the hospital, an accident report must be filed with the state.

## ***Enrollment Policy***



There are several forms that make up the Stepping Stones enrollment packet. This enrollment packet must be completed and in our possession before we can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. This is to ensure that your child will get the very best care possible and satisfies the record keeping requirement of state licensing guidelines. All forms will be reviewed annually. If there are changes to any of the forms in the enrollment packet, please notify your director to update your records. If you have any questions regarding the completion of these forms, please feel free to ask your director. Stepping Stones Early Learning Center, LLC admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally afforded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school administered programs.

**\*\* Full time enrollments (Mon-Frid) are given first priority of spots at the center. Part time enrollments are subject to availability and a child may be terminated with 2 weeks notice if not able to fill in another part time spot due to staff/child ratios and building code occupancy maximums.**

### ***Food – Related Practices and Attitudes***

Breakfast is a meal that our staff will serve if the parent will bring in the milk and cereal. This is put in the refrigerator and cupboard and served before 8:00 a.m. The children bring their lunches in a marked lunch box, which contains a cold pack. We have a microwave to heat small items. An afternoon snack is provided by Stepping Stones. We try to serve a minimum of “empty calorie” foods. We try to work with parents whose children have special diets but on occasions we may ask the parent to provide the food needed, especially if there are allergies involved. Parents may bring in a special treat for the day or to celebrate birthdays; check with teacher to see quantity.

### ***Bounced Checks***

If a check is returned for non-sufficient funds, there will be a \$30 fee incurred as a result of the returned check. Childcare services may be halted until full payment of tuition and NSF charges has been made, in CASH. In addition, upon the second returned check within 6 months, only cash will be accepted for 3 months.

### ***Late Fees***



A \$15.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$1.00 per minute after the first 5 as a late pickup fee will be assessed for all children picked up after closing at 5:30pm. This must be paid in cash at the time of pickup, or before the child’s next regularly scheduled day.

This will be strictly enforced, and habitual tardiness may result in termination of services.

## *Hours of Operation*



We offer both full and part time care. Full time is considered 4 hours or more per day. Part time is considered less than 4 hours per day. Add-ons or schedule changes may be accepted to our daily schedule only if there is a position open for that day, and they will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. Please remember that schedule changes of this nature create some disruption to our normal schedule. We would appreciate as much notice as possible, so that we can plan for meals, sleeping arrangements, and any changes in activities that may occur.

## *Arrival and Departures*



Children are to arrive clean and fed (unless arriving just before a meal time). We will try our best to send your child home with a clean diaper, and would appreciate the same consideration when you drop off. It is normal for some children to have difficulty separating from parents, or cry when dropping off. Please make your drop off brief, the longer you prolong the departure, the harder it gets. A smile, cheerful good-bye kiss, and a reassuring word that you will be back is all that is needed.

In my experience, children are nearly always quick to get involved in play or activities as soon as parents are gone.

Please be brief at pick-up times, as well. This is a time of testing, when two different authority figures are present (the parent and the provider). All children will test to see if the rules still apply. During arrival and departure, we expect parents to back up our rules. Please be in control of your child during pick up times. Our normal procedure is to release the child only to his/her parents, or someone else the parents designate on the Authorized Pick up and Emergency Contact Form. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, please notify us ahead of time. A verbal notice is fine on that day, if this person is on the list of people who are authorized to pick up your child. If the person is NOT on that list, we **MUST** have written permission to release your child. Please inform emergency contacts, or people designated to pick up your child, that if we do not know them then we will need to ask for identification. This is not meant to offend them. This is simply a measure taken for the child's protection.

Drop off and pick up are not good times to discuss serious problems. Little ears and minds hear and understand everything.

Your director can set up a time where the issues can be discussed in private.

## *Sign In / Out*



It is required by state law that all parents sign their child in and out each day. For your convenience, a sign in/out sheet, pen, and a clock are located by the door, this gives us a written record of the child's attendance, hours, and the person who brought/picked up the child each day.

## *Absences*



Childcare fees are based on enrollment (a reserved space), not on attendance. To maintain a reserved space, fees must be paid during the absence of a child due to illness, holidays, vacation, or for any other reason. Vacations are 5 paid days/per year for **full time enrollments only (5 days/week, full days)** after 90 days. Please tell teacher your vacation schedule.

## *Snow Closing/Delays*

Stepping Stones Early Learning Center, LLC follows Valley View School District's delays and closings typically. Exceptions will be made and parents notified by the following: A message in Brightwheel. When possible, a staff member will contact parents. A 2 hour delay with Valley View will result in us opening the center at 8:30am but we will notify you via brightwheel.

## *School Closings 2018/2019 School Year*

- Wednesday, July 4, 2018
- Monday, September 3, 2018
- Monday, September 10, 2018
- Wednesday, September 19, 2018
- Monday, September 24, 2018
- Monday, October 1, 2018
- Thursday & Friday, November 22 & 23, 2018
- Tuesday, December 25, 2018
- Tuesday, January 1, 2019
- Friday, April 26, 2019
- Monday, May 27, 2019
- Thursday, July 4, 2019

Tuition is based on a yearly enrollment spot for your child divided into weekly payments so tuition is due even when the center is closed, child is sick, vacation, etc.

## *Clothing / Attire*



Children should arrive dressed for play. We like to have fun! Having fun involves outdoor play and lots of messy activities, so make sure that your child is dressed appropriately. You will be expected to supply an art smock to protect clothes from paint or other art materials, and bibs to keep food stains to a minimum. Please don't dress your child in nice clothing and expect them to be spotless when you arrive to pick them up. Clothing should be comfortable and seasonally appropriate for outdoor play. Make sure to include hats, mittens, boots and coats for cold weather.

## *Personal Belongings*



We prefer that children do not bring toys from home unless it is something that can be shared with the entire group (i.e. books, videos, etc.). Little ones have a difficult time sharing with others, and it is even harder with their own special toys. If toys are brought, please note that they may be put away, if they are the cause of disagreements among the children. Exceptions to this policy will be that a child may bring a favorite sleepy toy for naptime only, and toys may be brought for show and tell activities.

We are not responsible for any loss or breakage of personal items. All personal items must be clearly marked with the child's name.

## *Supplies*



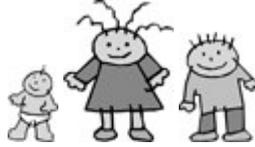
Parents must supply the following items to be kept in their cubby:

Diapers, wipes, pull-ups, powders/ointments, binkie (preferably on a binkie string), bottles, bibs, blanket or sleep sack for infants under 6 months for rest time, and a complete change of clothes (replace when soiled) and sunscreen.

All personal belongings should be marked with your child's name. Any items that are brought, must be marked with your child's name, to avoid mix-ups with other children. Donations help us keep costs down, so if you have any of the following items on hand and are willing to donate them, it would be greatly appreciated. This is not mandatory.

- Dress up clothing, costumes, jewelry, hats, etc.
- Paper of any kind, brown, white, colored, waxed, foil, etc.
- Crayons, water color paints, or any misc. art supplies, such as fabric scraps, glitter, pipe cleaners, paper plates, etc.
  - IDEAS! We welcome any ideas that you may have for fun activities or crafts!!!

## *Infants/Young Toddlers*



Infants and Young Toddlers (6 weeks-2yrs) will not necessarily follow the same schedule as the preschoolers. They are not capable of sitting still for circle time, may need a morning nap, etc. Infants are always fed on demand. Breast feeding infants need to have an adequate supply stocked and properly labeled. Toddlers usually eat meals and snacks on a set meal schedule. A report will be prepared through our app brightwheel for each infant/toddler each day. It will include things such as, time of feedings, what was eaten, amount eaten, time of diaper checks and results, times of naps, etc.

### *Infant Care*

All infants between the ages 6 weeks to 1 year old must have a written feeding plan prior to starting with Stepping Stones. Any time anything new is introduced to a child's diet, it must be in writing with specific instructions and signed with a date. It is vital to the success of your child's development that we communicate effectively regarding any changes to an infant's daily routine or diet.

No medications whether over the counter or prescription can be given without parent's written consent, a completed medication log form and written instructions provided by a physician with your child's name only. This includes Pedialyte and anything outside of the provided written feeding plan.

Parents must supply more than enough formula and/or breast milk as well as cereal, food, etc. Parents are also responsible for supplying diapers, wipes, diaper cream, 3-4 changes of clothes every day, pack n play fitted sheet and for infants under 6 months a sleep sack. No blankets are used for any infants under the age of 6 months.

Infants must be able to take a bottle for our staff if not on solid foods yet. An infant solely on formula or breast milk has to be able to eat for us and take a bottle. If we are not able to get your child to eat or take a bottle and that is their sole source of food intake, we will not be able to continue service.

Infants are always fed on demand unless a written feeding plan is provided by a physician stating otherwise. Breast feeding infants need to have an adequate supply stocked and properly labeled.

Infants do go through teething however, we still follow the illness plan outlined by the state of a fever of 101 or higher and the child must go home regardless of the reason for the fever. If the child is inconsolable and acting out of character, the child must go home. Any child in our care must be able to get through the normal day's routine and schedule or they have to go home. We make every effort to meet your child's needs however, we do not provide one on one care in child care. So, if a child becomes too much for the staff to care for due to excessive crying, not feeling well, not eating, etc they will need to go home.

Any child that leaves with a fever, throwing up, diarrhea or any other symptoms of illness may not return for 24 hours after all symptoms have stopped with no medications (Tylenol, motrin, etc) . If it is a concern to staff, you may be asked to provide a doctor's note for your child to return to care. Please refer to the illness section above.

Parents must supply the following items to be kept in their cubby and labeled:

Diapers, wipes, pull-ups, powders/ointments, binkie (preferably on a binkie string), bottles, bibs, blanket/sleep sack for rest time, and a several changes of clothes (replace when soiled) and sunscreen with an expiration date printed on the tube from April to October. All diaper creams must have child's name written on it and an expiration date on the tube itself.

## *Older Toddler/Preschool Schedule*



Older Toddlers (2-3yrs) and Preschoolers (3-5yrs) enjoy a structured schedule that allows for flexibility. A schedule helps the day to flow more smoothly and allows the children to anticipate upcoming events. We will adhere to our written schedule to the best of our ability. There will be times when we have to make adjustments to the schedule. We appreciate families considering our schedule when picking up or dropping off children. It is better if arrivals and departures do not occur during quiet time, but when they do, please take note of the fact that children may be sleeping. Come and go as quietly and quickly as possible. Children who arrive during quiet time will be expected to rest or play quietly until the rest period is over. We thank you for the information you filled out for us regarding your preschooler's individual needs and schedule. It will help us get to know your child better.

### Our daily schedule, while very flexible, is as follows:

- 6:30 a.m. - Center opens - free play
- 8:00 a.m. - Breakfast
- 9:15 a.m. - Circle time
- 9:30 a.m. - Structured activities (preschool program)
- 10:30 a.m. - Gross motor play (outside weather permitting)
- 11:30 a.m. - wash-up for lunch
- 12:00 p.m. - Naptime
- 2:30 – Afternoon Snack
- 3:00 p.m. - Gross motor play (outside weather permitting)/Center Time
- 5:00 p.m. - Free Play
- 5:30 p.m. - Center Closes

## *Transitions*

Moving from one new situation to another is always stressful. We'd like to help all people be better prepared for the changes. We would like parents to fill out the "Getting to Know Me" sheet (see child's teacher) to help us with the preferences that would ease the beginning stress of any process. **Individual meetings** or **conferences** are always available. At the end of each school year, we have initiated a new program called "Let's Visit Our New Teacher". They will get to meet the new teacher and the new teacher can interact with the new class while the other teacher is still with them. These are normally scheduled in April, May and June (see school calendar). We also would encourage the former teacher to take their children to the new teacher, especially any child who is having a hard time separating from her former teacher. This integration has helped in the past.

### **Some activities used in classroom transitions:**

- New child is **introduced** to new teacher and classmates
- New child is shown a place for his **belongings** and his **seat**
- New child sees where he is to place his **lunch** and eat lunch
- New child is introduced to **the mat room** and his sleeping location
- New child has a **special story read** by new teacher and is allowed free time to help him find a **buddy**.

## *Cleanliness / Hygiene*



We do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed before and after meals and after toileting. All employees are required to wash their hands frequently and also use antibacterial gel.

Infants sleep in separate cribs or pack and plays, with clean sheets used only by them. Beginning at toddler age, washable nap mats are used. Each child has a separate nap mat; with a sheet and a blanket that are washed weekly (unless soiled, then they are washed as often as necessary) and mats are wiped with disinfectant weekly.

Children use separate cups, plates, bowls and eating utensils that have been provided by you. High chair trays, etc. are disinfected after each use. We disinfect toilet seats and clean potty chairs between each use.

## *Fire Drills*



We are required by state law to do 1 fire drill per month at each location. We vary the time of day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. We will not do fire drills when the temperature is below 20 degrees or above 85 degrees. Evacuation cribs with wheels are used to transport infants and non-walking toddlers to the emergency meeting area.

## *Toilet Training*



When you feel your child is ready for toilet teaching, we ask that you begin this teaching at home during a weekend or vacation. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. The child must be showing signs of readiness. The child must be kept in pull-ups or 5-ply training pants at all times. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the potty, more so than at your home. Therefore, we may continue to use diapers or pull-ups until your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom (not just at home, but here, as well) and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement. Parents need to supply training pants with plastic pants or pull-ups, plus a couple of extra changes of clothing each day (don't forget the socks!). During toilet training, we ask that the child be dressed in "user friendly" clothing, as much as possible. The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists, or dresses. Try to avoid really tight clothing, pants with snaps and zippers, and overalls.

## *Nap / Quiet Time*



There will be a designated nap/rest time each day. All children must nap, rest, read or play quietly during this period. Rest time gives children a much needed break during the day. Without rest time, some children are argumentative in the afternoon, short-tempered with others, and not real happy when they go home in the evening. Infants nap at varying times and their schedules will be accommodated. Somewhere between 12 and 18 months, children usually drop down to one nap per day. At this time, we will attempt to put them on the scheduled nap/rest period.

## *Special Needs*

Stepping Stones will make all reasonable modifications to our policies and practices to accommodate children with special needs, unless to do so would be a fundamental alteration of our existing program. Each child will be evaluated on an individual basis to determine eligibility. We reserve the right to offer to the parent a transfer to another center that may be better suited to handle a particular special need.

## *Parental Involvement*



There will be times and ways you can get involved in your child's daycare experience. You are welcomed and encouraged to participate in any or all of these. Some examples of ways to be involved include:

- Lending objects for units of study
- Helping your child at home with the concepts we are studying here (see monthly newsletter)
  - Helping your child prepare for "Show and Tell"
  - Helping to provide treats or other items for our parties

## *Activities / Curriculum*



Our main objective is to have fun, improve social skills, and encourage creative expression. We will utilize a variety of activities to accomplish this goal. Free play, reading, arts and crafts, music/singing, dancing, dramatic play/pretend and puzzles are just some of the activities we will be doing. Music helps to develop young brains and will play a strong role in day-to-day activities. We may have special music activities and may also play music during other activities, for example, during arts and crafts or meal times. Some of the music we will be using may include, classical, children's songs (by a variety of artists), foreign language tapes and others. Children of all ages will be taught age appropriate curriculum daily.

## *Medications*



Parents will provide any medications needed by the child, including over-the-counter and prescription medicine. Written authorization by both parent and physician is needed for us to administer ANY medication, prescription or over-the-counter.

**NOTE: All medicines must be in their original container with pharmacist's or manufacturer's label, child's name, dosage instructions, current date, name of medication, and times to be administered clearly written.**

## *Medical Emergencies*



Minor bumps and scratches are inevitable, but we make every effort to keep the children safe through supervision and childproofing. Minor injuries receive appropriate first aid, and if an emergency injury or illness occurs, you will be contacted as soon as possible. If necessary, your child will be taken to the nearest hospital where you will be asked to meet us. If you are not going to be at your usual place of employment, or at home, please make sure that we have a number where you can be reached. Parents are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation, if required.

The owners of Stepping Stones Early Learning Center, LLC, will not be held liable for any sickness/injury of either parent/guardian or child while on these premises.

## *Center Rules*



There are certain center rules that all children will be taught and expected to follow. This is for the safety and well being of everyone. In addition we realize that we must expect a certain amount of wear and tear where children are concerned, we do not want to have our center "demolished". There will be no running permitted in the center. Hitting, pushing, biting, grabbing, kicking, spitting, or pinching other children/infants/adults will NOT be allowed. No standing or climbing on chairs or tables. There will be no use of obscene, derogatory or disrespectful language. Children may not walk around the center with food, cups or bottles. Respectful treatment of other people and all property, toys, and furniture is expected. Willful destruction of property will be charged to the parent at the cost to replace the item. Please support us in the enforcement of these rules, in order to create a better environment for all (see Departure and Arrival). No smoking is permitted on the premises as per state law; this included parents and staff.

## *Reporting Requirements*



As a child care center we are mandated reporters to the Department of Human Services if we feel a child is being abused or neglected. Always be sure to let your director know when you drop your child off if he/she has any unexplained cuts or bruises.

All children that come to daycare with injuries have them logged into the child's file.

If you ever feel that Stepping Stones is not operating in a safe manner, please bring the matter to our attention. If you desire a copy of the state licensing guidelines, we will be happy to supply you one. We are proud to say we do our best to follow state licensing guidelines to the letter. Our staff is highly trained in knowing and complying with all applicable state and local laws.

If you observe something that you know is a violation of state licensing laws, you can report the incident by calling the Department of Human Services at 570-963-6790 . We pride ourselves in running one of the safest child care centers in Pennsylvania.

## *Spirituality*

Spiritual faith is viewed as an important component to healthy human development. A Christian Bible class is part of our weekly curriculum. To not offend any religious beliefs, we do not celebrate specific holidays but off a winter party, spring party and various dress up dates. Children are presented with the following:

- God is real and loves each person.
  - We can learn from lessons and stories in the Bible.
  - God hears us when we pray.
- You are welcome to talk with the director for a further explanation of this program.

## *Indoor / Outdoor Play*



Indoor play: We provide a variety of age-appropriate toys for indoor play as well as an indoor playroom. Younger children have less-developed organizational skills and can get easily frustrated or upset when there are too many toys to choose from. It is also more difficult for them to help with clean up when there are toys everywhere, because it is so overwhelming to them. For this reason, during free play times, each child may select one or two things at a time to play with. They will be shown how to put those things away before selecting something else. Outdoor play: We will be playing outdoors every day that weather permits.

Please make sure that your child is appropriately dressed for outdoor play at all times. Our activities will include walks, sidewalk chalk, water table and others. We do not go outside when the temperature is below 30 degrees (including wind chill), or above 90 degrees (including heat index). We are mandated by state law to take the children outside so any parents who feel their child is not well enough to go outside must keep them home until they are able to participate in all activities.

## *Illness*



Stepping Stones is a "well-child care facility". At no time do we provide sick childcare. The following illness policies will be strictly enforced, for the health, well-being and safety of all concerned.

**Sick Child Policy:** Under no circumstances may a parent bring a sick child to daycare, if the child shows any signs of illness or is unable to participate in the normal routine and regular day care program. Sick children will expose all children and staff members who they come in contact with. These people can in turn expose the other children. Sick children want care from their parents in the comfort of their own homes. If other children become ill due to exposure to your sick child, either because he/she was returned to day care before full recovery or because he/she was not picked up promptly upon notice of becoming ill, other parents will be unnecessarily inconvenienced. Because this is disruptive to other children and their families, your cooperation on this issue is extremely important. Every effort is taken to reduce the spread of illness by encouraging hand washing and other sanitary practices. **If your child is unable to participate in the normal activities of the daycare (including being able to play outside), then your child MUST stay home.** Children will be visually screened when they arrive in the morning. In the event a child becomes ill and needs to be picked up, the parent(s) will be called and are expected to come pick the child up within one hour (60 minutes). If the parent(s) cannot be reached, or have not arrived within an hour, the emergency contact person will be called and asked to come pick the child up. For the benefit of our staff and other children in our care, a sick child will not be permitted to return to care for 24 hours after condition has returned to normal. The child may return 24 - 48 hours (depending upon the illness) after they have received the first dose of an antibiotic. If a child receives an antibiotic for an ear infection, he/she may return to day care immediately if he/she has been free of other symptoms mentioned for at least 24 hours. If you aren't sure about whether or not to bring your child to care, please call your onsite director to discuss it. Allergy related symptoms, and non-communicable illnesses do not require exclusion if you have a note from your doctor.

**Symptoms requiring removal of child from day care:** Fever: Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100°F or higher taken under the arm, 101°F taken by ear which is our primary method. A child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to daycare, that means the child is fever free without the aid of Tylenol®, or any other fever reducing substance. \*Fever AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion. \* Diarrhea: runny, watery, bloody stools, or 2 or more loose stools within last 4 hours. \* Vomiting: 2 or more times in a 24 hour period. Note: please do not bring your child if they have vomited in the night. \*Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing. \*Runny nose (other than clear), draining eyes or ears. \*Frequent scratching of body or scalp, lice, rash, or any other spots that resemble childhood diseases, including ringworm. \*Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care.

**Just a note:** Many times our child care may get blamed for the illness of a child, meaning that we have "allowed" sick children to come here. Parents may not stop to think that when sick children are brought to our center, our entire staff is also at risk of exposure. How would you feel if another parent brought their sick child and exposed your child? We STRESS this again -- if you are not sure whether or not it is okay to bring your child, please call ahead to ask us. We may require a doctor's decision as to whether or not the child is contagious. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

## *Emergency Medical Plan*

The staff of Stepping Stones will administer first aid for minor injuries. If we feel your child has received a serious injury or illness, the following emergency plan will be followed:

1. Call local Emergency Medical Service (EMS)/911
2. Contact Parent/Contact Emergency Contact if parent cannot be reached
3. Transport to nearest hospital by EMS

The emergency medical facility is: **Regional Hospital of Scranton, 746 Jefferson Ave, Scranton, PA 18510, (570)348-7238**

**EVACUATION PLAN:** In the event of severe weather, fire or physical building problems, children will be evacuated from the building and parents notified immediately. Emergency plans are located in every room and the entrance way. If you have any questions regarding these plans, please see the director or your child's teacher. Fire drills are held each month.

**On Site Evacuation Site:** U-haul office building located on premises

**Off Site Evacuation Site:** Lackawanna Rehab Center located on Terrace Drive, Blakely, PA

Infant/Young toddlers will be pushed to the on-site evacuation location in pack n plays, strollers. Older toddlers and older will walk. Children will be driven in personal vehicles to the off site evacuation location. Once all children are safely evacuated, 911 will be called first then parents will be notified of the evacuation. **Emergency Kits/Information:** Emergency kits will be taken when possible as well as the emergency contact information located in a binder by the door. **Evacuation Routes/Exits:** Exits (all doors are checked regularly to ensure opening).

## *Emergency Plan*

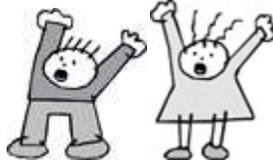
(TORNADO AND DISASTER PROCEDURE): In the event of a tornado or disaster warning, children will be taken to the following locations. When all children are safe, we will make every attempt to contact parents. See Emergency Plan for specific details.

TORNADO: Toddler Room (no windows)

BUILDING EMERGENCY: U-Haul Office building

ON-SITE EMERGENCY: Lackawanna Rehab Center, Terrace Drive, Blakely, PA

## ***Discipline***



We maintain a positive discipline policy, which focuses on prevention, redirection, love, consistency and firmness. We stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. The children are explained the rules of the center frequently, so they are all familiar with the guidelines. Please keep in mind that there WILL be disagreements between children. Young children have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys, bite, etc. We will try to prevent problems, redirect when appropriate, discuss inappropriate behavior, encourage making amends when offense involves another person, and sometimes withdraw privileges based on the principle of "natural consequences". An example might be where a child is misusing a toy then he/she will not be allowed to play with the toy for a period of time. The use of time outs will be rare except when a brief cooling off period is needed. Sometimes when children are fighting or throwing toys, we will put the toy in a short time out, and then bring it back into circulation a little later. This seems to work better than giving the child a time out. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name calling or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will ever be withheld from children as a means of punishment.

If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above mentioned techniques, we will hold a conference with the parents. Together, we will try to find a solution. You may be called to remove your child if his/her behavior prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children. If the problem continues, other arrangements for the care of the child will have to be made, for the safety and well-being of all.

## ***Termination/Exclusion/Inclusion/Expulsion Policies***



We reserve the right to terminate a child for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay
  - Routinely late picking up your child
  - Failure to complete the required forms
    - Lack of parental cooperation
- Failure of child to adjust to the center after a reasonable amount of time
  - Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
    - Our inability to meet the child's needs
  - Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
    - Serious illness of child
- Rude or inappropriate behavior of a parent toward a child or staff

We appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating, and will give the same courtesy in return. Parents are required to give two weeks written notice when they decide to terminate child care. The two weeks will be paid in full,

regardless of whether or not the child is in attendance.

The provider reserves the right to give written notice of immediate termination where there are extreme circumstances that affect the well-being of the provider or other children in attendance, non-payment and/or any other reason the provider sees fit.

Anyone who terminates daycare and has a balance that is outstanding will need to have the account settled within 30 days. All accounts not settled within 30 days will be turned over to a collections agency regardless of amount owed. All accounts turned over to collections will have a \$20 per week late fee plus 35% collections fee added to amount due.

### ***Suspension/Exclusion Policy***

If there is a behavioral issue with your child, the following will be our procedures and policy:

- 1) First offense: Parents will be notified, staff will redirect child, assess environment for contributing factors.
- 2) Second offense: Parent conference to discuss behavior, gather ideas and plan of action to help eliminate the behavior
- 3) Third offense: Child will be suspended for 1 week to give the parents & child a chance to address the issues at home. After a conference with parents and staff, we may have the child start back 1 day a week to slowly introduce them back into the program to see if the behavior has stopped. If the behavior continues and the child is a danger to staff, other children or to himself, the child will not be allowed to come back to the center. If the child disrupts the normal schedule where it interferes with other children learning and/or their safety, the child will not be allowed to return. Stepping Stones also maintains the right to not allow the child back at all after suspension.

**\*\* However, any severe behavior such as continual biting, injuring another child or staff or behavior that disrupts the regular program continually will be grounds for immediate termination from the center.**

# Inclusion Policy

## **Policy Statement:**

Stepping Stones Early Learning Center, LLC (referred to as Stepping Stones hereafter) welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and development experiences that support the full access and participation of each and every child. We believe that each child is unique and work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the child to provide the support every child needs to reach their full potential.

## **Procedures:**

### Admissions/waiting list

Children of all abilities are accepted into Stepping Stones and families interested in having their child attend the program will be given an equal opportunity for admission. A waiting list may be maintained and children will be accepted from the list on a first come first served basis.

### Inclusive Environment

Early childhood educators at Stepping Stones use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children when planning. Staff will make every attempt to make any adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and early childhood educators will work with therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. Any adaptations will be reviewed with families and other professionals supporting the child.

### Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff will be briefed on the need for confidentiality and will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy. Written records will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the director and the child's teacher. No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian during enrolment or transition to another receiving program or school without first receiving the written permission of the parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility held by early childhood educators as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect as outlined in Pennsylvania law or when information is subpoenaed by the court.

### Family Centered Practices

Stepping Stones acknowledges and respects the priorities each family has for their child. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with staff to ensure that each child has an opportunity for optimum success. Stepping Stones communicated with each family daily and has regular meetings to discuss the child's successes and challenges.

### Professional Development and Support for Staff

Training and support is provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children. All staff receive an orientation on inclusion policies and attend training focused on effective inclusion and/or other disability topics whenever possible. The director provides additional support and resources as appropriate.

## Collaboration with Other Professionals

Many children with disabilities or other special needs are supported by developmental and educational professionals such as therapists, teachers and others. Stepping Stones welcomes those professionals and works with them to assure the child's success. The service provider is encouraged to provide services to the child in the context of the early childhood classroom environment and the child's teacher and the service provider work collaboratively to determine the best strategies to support the child in the group setting. Stepping Stones supports the teacher's participation in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.

## Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center:

### IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or him/herself.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.
- Parents exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

### PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSIONS

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunizations records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child. Verbal abuse to staff.

### CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outburst
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Biting., hitting, kicking

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called and correspondence will be sent home indicating what the problem is and every effort will be made by both the center and the parent to correct the problem. If after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety, behavior does not improve and the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove him/her. The parent will be given a minimum of one week's notice to find another center to provide care for this child unless there is immediate harm to staff or other children possible. However, in the event of extreme danger or harm to another child or staff, the child may be terminated immediately with no notice to parent.

## ***Revisions to Handbook and Contract***

There will be a yearly revision to this handbook and the accompanying contract. All families will sign a new contract each year.

We reserve the right to make changes in rates and policies as we deem necessary. You will be notified, in writing, of any changes that may occur. Every attempt will be made to give at least two weeks notice of changes.