

# **STEPPING STONES CHILDREN'S CENTER**

## **Parent Handbook 2024-2025 edited**

Welcome to Stepping Stones. Parents are an integral part of a successful early childhood program since through your involvement, we are better able to meet the developmental and personal needs of the children. As early childhood professionals, we serve as a valuable resource for parents regarding most areas of child development. We like to think that families and early childhood programs can and should work together to provide an environment that facilitates the growth of a child into a physically and emotionally healthy individual.

This handbook has been developed to help facilitate the relationship between teachers and parents by providing them with specific information about our center. It includes descriptions of our policies and procedures, program philosophy, role of the staff, goals for the children, and our expectations from parents. In addition, we have included a schedule of our program day and examples of our curricular activities.

We hope this handbook explains the activities and procedures that you may observe make you familiar and comfortable with our program.

### **I. Background Information**

1. Stepping Stones Children's Center Inc. (hereafter referred to as Stepping Stones) is licensed by the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services Child Care Services Division to provide care for 24 children.
2. Copies of the Vermont Childcare Licensing Regulations are available at the center and online
3. Stepping Stones accepts children from 24-months through five years of age.
4. The center is open from 8:30 am - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
5. We are in an Early Development and Learning Partnership with several local school districts (Act 166). This collaboration helps ensure that children have access to a high quality,

developmentally-appropriate preschool experience and a successful transition to kindergarten. We will ask your support in sharing information about your child (names, addresses, developmental assessments (required by Act 166) and your contact information) with these school districts to improve quality in both preschool and kindergarten for all children.

6. We do not discriminate against and race, creed, religion, gender or abilities. This applies to hiring our staff as well as families and children that we serve.

7. Stepping Stones follows the State of Vermont Child Care Licensing regulations and we ask that you bring to our attention any questions or concerns you have regarding the care of your child.

## **II. Philosophy of the Program**

The philosophy of an early childhood center largely influences the types of activities, curriculum, and the role of the adults at the center. Therefore, it is imperative that parents become familiar with the philosophy behind the center in order to understand the focus of the program.

Our program focuses on the development of the whole child. What we mean by this is that we look at the cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and creative needs of the children. In the cognitive realm we believe that children progress from one stage of development to another (often with stages overlapping); they need time to feel confident and competent in one stage before they move on to another. Every child develops at his/her own pace and is not rushed or hurried. To support and encourage this we work to provide the children with challenges they can master as they move from stage to stage. In the physical realm we also work on establishing challenges while giving children the time they need to practice a skill over and over so they have the confidence to take new risks. Supporting children's emotional and social development encompasses a large portion of our work. It is our belief that if you can teach children how to get along with each other, then you can teach them anything. Caring, respect, and sensitivity

for oneself and others is modeled and nurtured and we believe that children are social learners connected to each other, their families, and their teachers. Individual differences are discussed and celebrated with families and teachers invited to share their home cultures with the program. We welcome home contributions to menu planning, holiday celebrations, book/ music selections, and anything appropriate to share with children as they are encouraged to use and share their discoveries to cement their learning and further the learning of their peers. In the development of the child's creative use of materials in unusual ways, divergent thinking skills are fostered by encouraging children to express themselves in at least "100 Languages," i.e., dance, painting, drawing, clay, dramatic play, conversations.

Our philosophy related to curriculum is multi-faceted. It is our belief that children learn best through hands-on experiences and play. We also believe the children need to have experience in making choices and self-selecting materials with a curriculum/daily schedule supporting these two ideals. Children are encouraged to follow their interests and those are an important focus of our program. Our learning and study about the Reggio Emilia, Italy, schools shapes some of our ideas in this area. Our curriculum is based on the interests of the children rather than being solely directed by the teacher. For example, after observing a child comparing colored leaves in the backyard, the teacher might offer a painting activity supplied with autumn colors or ask the children to assist in the making of these colors. This change of focus carries us in wonderful and unexpected directions. There have been projects about rainbows, mazes, and Little Red Riding Hood. There have been studies of seeds, families and the workings of the toilets! The learning of the children is much more meaningful when it comes from them where teachers and children become partners in learning through exploration together. From focusing on the rhythms of the children we have also learned to slow down our pace. We take time to let their interests evolve. We allow the projects to emerge and last for a natural lifetime- sometimes projects go on for months. A study might last a couple of days or ten minutes. Our work in small groups has deepened and enriched the children's experiences.

Lastly, we feel that in order for children to grow they need a setting that is rich, inviting, comfortable, and safe. We look for materials that are aesthetically pleasing and stimulating. We add to the dynamic aspect of our environment by rearranging the space every so often incorporating the children's ideas or the current project. We create indoor spaces that encourage small groups of children to play together and use the outdoors as an extended classroom.

Through our use of the Bright Wheel application, parents receive daily photos and texts describing school happenings and for children under age three, records of diaper changes and naps. This also provides parents an immediate means to connect with staff with schedule changes, needs and concerns. Twice per year or upon request, parents meet with their child's Journal Teacher and share developmental milestones, goals and concerns. You are your child's first and most important teacher and maintaining constant communications benefits everyone.

### **III. Corrective Actions**

We encourage children's developing self-control and self-direction. In order to do this they need the opportunity to build self-esteem, develop a positive self-image, make good choices and develop pro-social behaviors. We accomplish this through close supervision and gentle guidance where children are taught to identify and express their feelings. Teachers use techniques like re-involvement, logical-consequences, redirection, positive reinforcement, meaningful praise and taking a break. Time-out is avoided as are any other practices that shame, harm, or humiliate or coerce a child will not be used. Rules are few, simple and stated in a positive manner: "We keep ourselves and our friends safe. People are for gentle touches." These guidance procedures help to encourage independence and self-control while promoting the development of a child's positive self-image. We do not condone violence of any kind towards any human or beings, least of all children. Anyone in the program may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child, for example:

Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time, shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding of affection, seclusion, rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); physical restraint (forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down) except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm. Please be aware that the use of a physical escort as defined below and properly used when necessary to protect the child or others from harm is NOT coercion: **“The temporary touching or holding of the hand, wrist, arm, shoulder, or back for the purpose of inducing a student who is acting out to walk to a safe location.” (H.R. 7124, 2018)** Additionally no use of devices as a means of restricting a student’s freedom of movement or a personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the ability of an individual to move arms, legs, torso or head freely shall be used.

#### **IV. Goals for Children**

Based on our philosophy, we believe that children develop naturally at their own pace. Our program aids children by providing an environment that enhances, encourages and nurtures their development. This is accomplished by identifying a child’s needs and matching these needs to materials and experiences that will stimulate their growth with the following goals for all children:

1. Children are cared for in a safe nurturing environment.
2. The Center provides children with an enriched environment meeting the physical, social and emotional needs of each child. It provides an appropriately stimulating environment that further enhances children’s social, cognitive, and creative development.

3. Children are exposed to a wide variety of activities that facilitate the construction of knowledge through open-ended materials to continue growth in all areas of development.
4. Children are encouraged to act independently in their explorations of materials and performance of activities, but gentle guidance is provided to keep children safe/facilitate successes in new adventures.
5. Tasks and activities that are developmentally appropriate will be provided based on the needs and abilities assessments of each child so children are presented with challenging situations that encourage problem solving but minimize frustration.
6. Children will be exposed to a language and print-rich environment to facilitate their language and literacy development.

#### **V. Role of the Teacher**

Teachers at Stepping Stones are professionals who assume responsibility for establishing an educational program to meet the developmental and personal needs of a child. For these reasons, we have established some guidelines that we feel define the role of the Teacher.

1. Teachers provide a safe environment where children can freely explore their surroundings without fear of harm, and in which children are supervised at all times.
2. Teachers are knowledgeable about child growth and development and use this knowledge to further and facilitate children's learning. Our teachers are professional educators not babysitters and should not be approached to provide services outside of the program.
3. Teachers provide a stable environment maintaining necessary routines but allows for flexibility to most appropriately meet the needs of each child.
4. Teachers facilitate communication between parents and the Center providing an environment that is most beneficial to the child and maintain confidentiality about each child and family.
5. Teachers involve parents in planning a program for their child.

6. Teachers are child advocates by looking out for the child's best interest in the center, the family, and the community. If concerns arise they will be brought to the attention of the director and, as Mandatory Reporters, to the State of Vermont.

7. Teachers organize the setting to encourage open movement and involvement in activities.

8. Teachers are responsible for a group of "Journal" children assigned to them about whom they document the child's social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development. These records keep parents informed about their child's activities and interactions.

Information is gathered on an ongoing basis using observation, work samples, photographs, documentation and the child's journal. Every effort is made to ensure that each child stays with the same teacher for the entire time they attend.

9. Teachers perform formal assessment process utilizing Teaching Strategies Gold (required by the Vt. Agency of Education) or the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (Vt. Department of Health). Outcomes from these tools are used to drive curriculum, improve program quality, determine how a child's needs will be best served and serve as the foundation for parent/teacher conferences.

If a child needs support from an outside source to work through developmental or behavioral issues, teachers and parents decide together that an objective third party may need to perform a norm-referenced or standardized test to determine eligibility for special services. Children under 3 years receive service from the Early Essential Intervention program (Children's Integrated Services). Children 3 years and older are served by the individual's public school district.

Stepping Stones will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of disability with regard to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods and services of Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones will also not discriminate against any individual because of the known disability of an individual with whom the individual is known to have a relationship or association. Stepping Stones will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, or procedures when necessary to afford its goods and services to individuals with disabilities, including children with developmental

disabilities, unless Stepping Stones can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of its goods and services. Stepping Stones shall not exclude a child on the basis that the child poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others unless that risk is significant and cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. Stepping Stones will take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden, i.e., significant difficulty or expense.

10. Teachers are responsible for attending at least 15 hours of annual training to keep them current in the field.

11. Teachers strive to understand a parent's perspective on sensitive issues and provide support to parents during sometimes emotionally charged situations.

12. Most importantly teachers immediately see to the child's physical and emotional needs for food, clothing, cleanliness, safety, security, and nurturance. Above all, we want parents to feel they have selected a Center that they can trust.

13. Stepping Stones will make reasonable modifications for children with disabilities and their parents or guardians, unless Stepping Stones can show that such requested modifications are a fundamental alteration to Stepping Stones' program. Stepping Stones will make individualized determinations based on the specific facts of each request and will not apply a general prohibition against providing particular types of reasonable modifications. Upon receiving a request for a modification, Stepping Stones will initiate an interactive process with the parent(s) or guardian(s) to explore what reasonable modification(s) may be appropriate pursuant to the ADA.



If Stepping Stones believes a child's disability may require that Stepping Stones modify its program or services, but it has not received a request for a reasonable modification from the parents or guardians, Stepping Stones will initiate a dialogue with those parents or guardians. Except in exigent circumstances, no child may be disenrolled on the basis of their disability until and unless Stepping Stones has engaged in a conversation with the parents or guardians about potential reasonable modifications that could accommodate the child's needs. Stepping Stones will provide a response to a request for a reasonable modification in writing, within fourteen (14) days from the date the request is received. Stepping Stones may: 1. grant the request; 2. make a narrowly tailored request for medical documentation relating to the child's disability and the need for reasonable modifications(s); 3. offer a different reasonable modification that addresses the parent or guardian's request for a modification; or 4. deny the request, provided that if a request for modification is denied, Stepping Stones shall document each reason for the denial of the request and shall immediately notify the child's parent(s) or guardian(s), in writing, of the reason(s) for the denial.

## **VI. The Daily Program**

As previously mentioned, our schedule is designed to support the emergent learning philosophy of the school and the rhythms of the children. **Children Make Choices** is the theme of our work. Though it can sometimes look like barely controlled chaos from a parent perspective, this freedom of choice allows children to practice their decision-making skills and have time for extended creative play. A child is free to choose from a wide variety of games, toys, puzzles, interest areas, or gross motor activities. The curriculum for our early childhood program is based on providing children with a large variety of activities and experiences to foster growth and learning. The following is a listing of opportunities children are free to engage in around the center and how they relate to the developing child's growth needs.

1. Manipulatives: These include puzzles, small building blocks, small vehicles, pegboard games, stringing beads, and so forth. These activities encourage the child's development of problem-solving techniques and fine motor skills along with the knowledge about how objects relate to each other.

2. Water/Texture Table: This allows children to experience a large variety of textures and tactile sensations. Children experiment with water, dirt, beans, rice, shaving cream, colloids, etc. Objects such as cylinders, measuring cups, bowls, and funnels are placed at the tables to enable children to experiment with pouring, scooping, and the properties of each of the materials. This encourages fine motor skills, and knowledge about various textures and materials and the physical properties and characteristics of each material.

3. Sandbox: In this interest area children fill, spill, and dig. The size of our sandbox lends itself well to small groups of children working together on projects like building a road, filling large tubs or buckets, or using cardboard tubes to pour sand through. In addition to cooperative play, and developing hand eye coordination, children explore cause-and-effect relationships here.

4. Book Area: Books are spread throughout the program (including outside) with a wide variety of subjects and ethnically/socially diverse representation. While we do not have a planned "story time" books are read to children throughout the day. The cozy feeling of sharing a book with a child or group of children is a wonderful way to introduce children to the joy that can be found through reading.

5. Playdough, Silly Putty, or Clay. These materials are available for the children to roll, squeeze, pat pound, and mold. Clay encourages fine motor strength and manipulation and increased knowledge about another type of texture and material. This is another language development area where dialogue describes actions, textures and characteristics.

6. Gross Motor/Creative Movement. Since children are still practicing many newfound physical skills, time for large motor activity is an essential part of the program. Children climb, jump, crawl, run, walk, hop, and slide, as they master gross motor skills.

7. Writing. A variety of paper and writing implements is always available. Through the use of these materials children develop the fine motor skills necessary for the eventual development of writing skills. Open-ended activities encourage creativity as children use their writing as a means of self-expression thus promoting language and literacy development.

8. Dramatic Play. This interest is likely to be whatever the children may envision or imagine, but the set up to “play house” is a time-tested favorite. The children imitate activities such as cooking, talking on the telephone and caring for “babies” using familiar household items. The dramatic play space is a place where children can practice a variety of social roles and characters as they develop emotional-social competence. In what other place could one be the “baby” who needs someone to feed them a “bottle” one minute and the ferocious dog who lives next door, but comes in and eats up all the food in the next?

9. Teacher Guided Activities. These include activities that are facilitated or directed by the teacher. Teacher-guided activities may be centered on an interest of the children or designed to further the children’s exploration of a current project or study. Though these activities have more structure, they can still be open-ended and process oriented. Art experiences would be one example of this kind of activity. These may include painting, using various materials on various textures, gluing, or collage, sculpture with styrofoam or cardboard, drawing with pens crayons, or colored pencils on various materials. Children of this age are much more interested in the process of creation than they are in the actual product that they produce. It is not unusual for children to go for weeks at a time without bringing something home since some activities end up without a product to bring home. Our Thursday Bread is a good example of this; even though we make and bake bread every Thursday any resulting product is inevitably eaten! Children can get so absorbed in the process of their art that their

creation becomes transformed into the process itself. When children are learning about watercolor paints they always start by using lots and lots of water and very little paint. The resulting painting is often a washed-out monotone shade of gray or brown that the child feels no connection with once it's dry, or sometimes there is so much water that the paper gets holes painted in it until it disintegrates into a pile of sludge.

In terms of a schedule, a typical day for us may look something like this:

8:30 – 10:00 Children arrive:

9:00 – 9:30 Children snack as they are hungry

8:30 – 11:30 Children engage in play and project work with teachers throughout the morning, for example bread making, science lab, sewing, yoga/show, arts, purposeful work (helping in the kitchen or taking care of our plants) and block building, outdoor play with loose parts, gardening and/or neighborhood walk.

11:30 – 12:30 Lunch

12:30-3:00 Nap time for youngest, “Loft Time” for elders

3:00 – 4:30 Stories, inside and outside play, dance, constructive play (repeat of morning)

4:30 – Pick Up at Playground gate

### **Routines and Rituals:**

As you can see our days are busy and full, yet the schedule flows with the needs of the children rather than being ruled by the clock. All of our time frames are flexible except lunch and resting time. Though our day may seem to lack the structure of a typical preschool, we are confident the children are being provided all of the same rich experiences and more. By giving up the constraints of the clock the children have ample opportunity to deeply immerse themselves in their work without being constantly moved from one activity to another.

### **Outdoor Play and Walking Trips**

Outdoor play allows children more opportunities for freedom of choice. Children can choose from a wide variety of activities such as the playhouse, dirt box, ride on toys, balls, etc. The warm weather in Vermont is short lived to miss even a minute of it and provides us with the opportunity to bring many other activities, such as art or the water table, outdoors. Outdoor play happens on a daily basis even in the winter months with activities enabling children to further develop their gross motor skills and give them the benefit of a change of scenery and fresh air throughout the day.

Walking Trips are the main way we explore our neighborhood. Our close proximity to area parks and the make walking field trips to these places a regular event. Any occasion requiring transport is first cleared with parents and uses appropriate, insured vehicles and drivers.

### **Nap/Resting/Loft Time**

Resting is an essential part of our day. Children need an opportunity to rest after a busy morning in order to be refreshed for the afternoon activities. Children are asked to lie down quietly with individually selected book then teachers read books and rub backs to promote rejuvenating sleep. Older children who do not nap read quietly as the younger children are soothed to sleep then continue their developmental work listening to chapter books, writing in journals and finish projects that would not be developmentally appropriate for the napping group (small beading etc.).

### **Mealtimes**

Hot lunch is provided daily as well as a simple morning and afternoon snack following the CACFP guidelines. Our menu is a blend of simple, mostly vegetarian meals and ethnic specialties. Morning snack features any blend of these three items: cereal, bread, protein, fruit

and milk. Lunch usually consists of milk, a non-meat protein such as eggs, cheese, or beans; a fresh fruit and/or vegetable such as peas, cucumbers, or bell peppers, and a starch such as bread, rice, or pasta. Afternoon snack consists of two food groups, such as rice cakes and hummus served with water.

Meals are sometimes served outside and focus on independence and self- help skills such as spreading their own bagel with sun butter or jam. Often younger children have not developed these skills, and will be guided by an older, more competent peer. Snacks are available for a long period of time so small groups of children can come and go from the table as they wish when they are ready for a break from their morning or afternoon play. Mealtimes tend to be very social and we practice using cloth napkins and positive manners (“Please may I have..., thank you).

### **Arrival and Departure Times**

This is a good time for exchanges of information between the teachers and parents concerning the child’s experiences at home and daily activities at the center. Children are helped with the process of the transition from home to school and given as much support as needed. Our front door is kept locked at all times so please knock loudly for admission. We ask that children be picked up promptly, and a fee will be assessed if parents are late to pick up.

### **VII. Health Guidelines**

Your child may not attend if they are sick. Please follow the Vermont Department of Health COVID protocols (<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-colleges-child-care-programs>) and those established by Child Care Licensing Regulations or download the State Licensing Regulations (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs/childcare>).

There are a few illness/health conditions where our policy is a little stricter than the State Regulations. A child or staff member diagnosed as having the following conditions shall be excluded until indicated below:

**Lice:** May return after appropriate treatment is completed, and is nit free.

A child or staff member who has the following symptoms shall be excluded from the child care setting until the symptoms disappear or until otherwise indicated by a medical professional:

**Diarrhea:** 1 loose stool beyond what the child normally has in 24 hours or if bowel movement is extremely loose and causes extensive clean up.

**Vomiting:** 1 or more episodes in the previous 24 hours.

**Fever;** Greater than 100 degrees F. in ear or auxiliary (arm pit).

**Purulent conjunctivitis** (pink eye).

Parents will be called and asked to pick up a sick child, and must do so promptly (within the hour). Any child sent home with a fever may not return to the center until they have been both fever and medication free for 24 hours and tested for COVID if appropriate. All medication sent in with children for staff to administer must be in its original labeled container and placed in the locked box in the NE corner of kitchen counter or in the refrigerator. If you tell your pharmacist that your child attends child care the prescription can be divided into two labeled containers, this enables you to leave one at the center and leave one at home. Parents must also sign and date the medication form and indicate proper dosage information in order for staff to administer medication.

Children who are not well enough to keep up with the regular program are not well enough to be at the center: “Johnny is not well enough to go outside” means the child cannot be in school.

When your child is enrolled, one of the required forms is an immunization schedule that completed by a medical provider. Stepping Stones does not accept children who are not

immunized unless there is a signed exemption form and written notice from your physician that indicates you have discussed this with them, made an informed choice not to immunize your child, and that you are aware your child will be around children who are or will be immunized and may expose your child to the illnesses for which they are being immunized.

Please be advised that your student's health record and individual file is protected under the Family Education and Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. §1232g;34 CFR Part 99) which states: "FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions:

- School officials with legitimate educational interest;
- Other schools to which a student is transferring;
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
- Accrediting organizations;
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law."

### **VIII. Emergency Plans**

As we are not licensed to care for sick children, we ask that you have an emergency backup plan for care if you need to work when your child is too ill to attend.

If a child were to become severely injured at the Center, emergency services (911) will be called and the child would be accompanied by the teacher to the UVM Medical Center. Parents would be notified by phone immediately. In the event that your child becomes ill at the Center and we request that you pick up your child, plan to pick your sick child up within a one-hour time frame. An emergency contact must be listed who can pick up your child within that hour if you are unable to do so - this means that your emergency contact must be local.

In the event of a Center emergency children will be evacuated to the back yard or to the parking lot across the street. Evacuation procedures and fire drills are practiced monthly. In



the event that we were unable to return to the center within a few minutes, children would be evacuated to Dealer.com. Parents would be notified by phone or through Bright Wheel immediately.

Our center follows the Burlington School District guidelines for snow days, if Burlington Schools are closed, we may be closed and you will be notified on Bright Wheel from the director by 7:00 a.m. and closure will be posted on local news channels.

The center is supplied with the requisite first-aid kit. All regular staff members are certified in emergency pediatric first-aid treatment, cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques for infants and children and AED.

## **IX. Celebrations**

We value a childhood experience that is rich in traditions and rituals. We celebrate birthdays by creating a friend-decorated birthday t-shirt for the child. During lunch we ask the child if they would like to be sung to and if they would like to have their new age clapped out. In this way the child feels celebrated without the addition of sugary snacks.

Holidays are celebrated according to our population of families. We want to enrich our own celebrations with any family traditions of your own that you feel are appropriate and that you want to share. Usually we tie in the November/December Holidays with the themes of love and light and spring holidays are connected with the theme of re-birth and renewal.

One of our favorite family holiday celebrations is Thanksgiving. We focus on giving thanks reading the story *Stone Soup* and talk about cooperation and what can happen when we all work together to get something done to provide for others. Children and families are asked to bring in one food item to contribute to making Stone Soup. The children make the soup and by lunchtime, after it has simmered all morning long filling the center with its delicious aroma, we invite families for lunch to help us eat it up! This is a wonderful communal time where we are often lucky enough to include other family members as well.

## **X. Parent Communication and Participation**

We have both formal and informal levels of ongoing communication. Our most frequent and common communication happens daily during drop off and pick up time. In the morning when we hope you will share with us any information from home that you feel might help us better meet the needs of your child. For example: “We had dinner at Grandmas last night and got home a little later than we planned so Suzie might be a little tired today.” At the end of the day we will attempt to connect with you and let you know how your child’s day was. For example: “Mrs. Smith, Jimmy really enjoyed working in the block area today. He and several children worked cooperatively to build a rocket ship. They used great problem-solving skills when they ran out of the block shape they needed.” Daily postings on Bright Wheel will provide immediate communication and photographic depiction of our busy days at Steppers.

We have the best intentions to make this daily check-in at the end of the day a priority, yet sometimes it is not as effective as we wish. In the event that several parents arrive to pick up their child at the same time, or a parent comes when a teacher is right in the middle of a project engaged with children it may not be possible to get the kind of in-depth feedback you would like, or to have a discussion with a teacher about another issue related to your child that you wish to discuss. This was one of the factors that prompted us to start utilizing journals as another more formal way to communicate with you some of the important interests and developmental milestones we observe. Parent attendance is encouraged for a variety of social events during the course of the year to foster the community feel of our program.

It is in all of our best interests for the lines of communication to be open at all times. If you have questions or concerns, it is expected you will speak directly with one of the teachers and/or the director. If after speaking to the director you feel your concern has not been addressed, you should contact the President of the Board of Directors. If your concern is in

regard to a violation of the state licensing regulations you may call the Child Care Concern Line at 1-800-649-2642.

Parents and family members (anyone who is an important or integral part of your child's life) are encouraged to be actively involved and are always welcome to join in our program at the center. All parents are encouraged to share and participate at the level they feel comfortable. Parents who visit the program sometimes read a story, play a game or musical instrument, have lunch, or just observe and enjoy your child. All parents are encouraged to share personal interests, including hobbies, talents, cultural backgrounds, favorite recipes, etc. Parents can volunteer in the classroom, repair equipment, and do gardening, etc. with advanced notice.

Parents unable to participate on site may choose to help by fundraising or collecting recyclable materials for completing a project. Everyone is encouraged to help with fundraising projects to keep costs low. When the Center and parents are able to work together to provide a setting that best meets the child's growth needs, the child will surely benefit.

Stepping Stones will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of disability with regard to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods and services of Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones will also not discriminate against any individual because of the known disability of an individual with whom the individual is known to have a relationship or association. Stepping Stones will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, or procedures when necessary to afford its goods and services to individuals with disabilities, including children with developmental disabilities, unless Stepping Stones can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of its goods and services. Stepping Stones shall not exclude a child on the basis that the child poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others unless that risk is significant and cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices, or procedures or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. Stepping Stones will take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence

of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden, i.e., significant difficulty or expense.

### **XI. Tuition**

Tuition is due on or before the first day of each month. A late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed to any outstanding balances more than 5 days old. We are happy to arrange direct deposit or fund transfer to our accounts for your convenience.

### **XII. Additional Information**

- Stepping Stones closes for various holidays and in-service/conference days throughout the year. The calendar is prepared and distributed via email in August.
- Have 2 extra changes of seasonally- appropriate clothes available for your child in the event that they become wet or soiled. The Center is not responsible for clothing that has been stained by activities or the normal course of play.
- Toys from home should be left at home or kept in the car. We recognize that children sometimes need a transition tool but please be confident that they become engaged in our activities more quickly when they focus on the curriculum and not the whereabouts of a home toy. Candy and gum are not permitted in the program. Please administer “gummy bear” vitamins at home.
- Children are not allowed to touch the outside doors (or the classroom door to the hall) or side gate and may not leave the building without their parent/guardian or teacher. This also applies to older siblings who may be involved in picking up a child. Children may only be picked up by adults 18 years old and older.

- Everyone who works at Stepping Stones is a Mandated Reporter. This means that we are under legal obligation to report any signs or suspicions of child abuse or neglect. We also must report unsafe or improper car seat use. Staff members accused of abuse or neglect, will be reported to the authorities immediately.

- Parents must fill out and complete all admission paperwork prior to admission and they are responsible for immediately informing the Center of changes in phone numbers, addresses, information regarding emergency contacts, or allergies.

- Orientation of new children: If a family's schedule permits, we ask that arrangements be made to allow children a gradual adjustment, having your child attend with you at first, and then progressing to a full drop-off.

- If a child is to be picked up by a person other than the people listed on the release form, a parent must tell the teacher in advance of the pick-up and the adult picking up the child must provide photo identification. The child will not be released from the Center unless these steps have been taken. Children will not be released to any adult who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol and authorities may be called.

- Parking in this neighborhood is at a premium so heed the designated parking areas and do not idle vehicle for more than one minute unless required for temperature regulation.

- Parents of children in diapers provide diapers, wipes, disposal bags. It is best to provide a large supply of all in advance and we will notify you when stores are running low.

- If for any reason you are unhappy with our program, discussion with the director is required at an appropriate time. Should you decide to terminate your child's placement with us before the end of the contract, you will be responsible for your child's tuition until the empty spot is filled or the remainder of the year (depending on which comes first) as outlined in your contract,

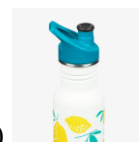
unless otherwise determined by the director. A minimum 30-day notice of termination is required.

- Stepping Stones does not discriminate against race, creed, religion, and/or gender. In order to enrich our program, the Center attempts to enroll children from diverse backgrounds as well as those who are at different developmental stages in their life.

- Building security and access: The front door is locked at all times. Please knock loudly or call our Center phone to gain entry.

**Starting Needs List: LABEL EVERYTHING PLEASE**

- 1.) Completed enrollment form, current immunization record and well-child visit record
- 2.) Medium-sized child's backpack to hold extra items and transport treasured artwork from school to home.



- 3.) Water bottle (Klean Kanteen style with NO straws works best) LABELLED
- 4.) 2 complete changes of clothes ALL LABELLED NOTHING FANCY – we are very messy and clothes get stained quickly.
- 5.) 1 Muddy Buddy or similar rain suit – we go outside in all weather LABELLED
- 6.) All appropriate outside gear for winter (boots, hats, 2 pair mittens, snowsuit/pants & jacket) ALL LABELLED
- 7.) 1 full-sized crib sheet and a warm blanket for rest (small stuffed animal if used at home) it is best to select a stuffy that is not transported daily to avoid any stress if it gets left at school overnight. All sleep items are washed here weekly or sooner if necessary.
- 8.) Inside slip-on shoes so children are prepared to leave in an emergency LABELLED
- 9.) For children in diapers, please provide 30 days' worth of diapers, wipes and disposal bags (doggy poo bags) each month.
- 10.) During spring/summer/fall, provide sunscreen and bug spray – LABELLED
- 11.) 1 Family photo (for Family Wall) and 1 individual photo of your child (cubbies and coat peg identification).
- 12.) 1 or 2 children ready for lots of fun, hugs, new friends and experiences!