

Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc.

Family Handbook

Policies

School Age



Pine Richland Schools:

Richland, Wexford, Hance and Eden Hall

Seneca Valley Schools

Haine, Rowan, Connoquenessing Valley,
Ehrman Crest

July 2023

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Program Information

Stepping Stones Children’s Center has been successfully providing school age programming in the Pine Richland School District since 1993 and in Seneca Valley since 2012.

Below is a list of all the School Age before and after care programs that are offered:

School	Hours of Operation (Monday-Friday)
Richland, Wexford, and Hance Elementary	7:00 am – 9:00 am / 3:30pm – 6:00 pm
Eden Hall Upper Elementary	7:00am-8:15am/3:00pm-6:00pm
Haine, Ehrman Crest, Rowan, and Connequenessing Valley (CVE)	7:00 am – 8:45 am/ 3:25 pm – 6:00 pm

Each before and after school program engages in a variety of lessons based on the early learning standards in STEM, creative expression, language arts, and social and emotional development. We also provide time in the after school program for students to complete homework.

To meet the need for an extended day kindergarten program in our community, Stepping Stones Children’s Center also provides a half-day standard-based kindergarten program for the alternating half of the school day. The Kindergarten LEAP (Learning Extension and Play) program provides care directly in each elementary school.

Below is a list of all Kindergarten LEAP programs that are offered:

School (AM/PM Kindergarten)	Hours of Operation (Monday-Friday)
Richland, Wexford, Hance Elementary	9:00 am- 1:00 pm/ 11:45 am- 3:30 pm
Haine, Ehrman Crest, Rowan, and Connequenessing Valley (CVE)	8:45 am- 12:45 pm / 11:30 am- 3:25

The LEAP program is staffed by early childhood educators and offers a mix between an academic and play based program with hands-on and individualized learning experiences. Our curriculum is based on the PA KEYS early learning standards using thematic units that extend learning that the children are receiving from the district. In addition, our curriculum provides extended learning opportunities based on the development and interest of kindergarten-aged children.

All School Programs participate in the following programs and are monitored year-round:

- DHS- The Department of Human Services inspects all our programs annually. DHS regulations can be found electronically at <http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/055/chapter3270/chap3270toc.html&d=>
- STARS- Keystone Stars is Pennsylvania’s Quality Rating and Improvement System. Programs are monitored to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school age care. More information about PA KEYS can be found at pakeys.org
- ELRC- Stepping Stones works with ELRC to provide financial assistance to working families that need care.

Contact Information

ADMINISTRATION

School Age Director

Ashley Thorne

724-625-2199 x235

schoolage@stepstonescc.org

Assistant School Age Director

Jody Posey

724-625-2199 x234

jody@stepstonescc.org

Billing/Accountant

Kerri Rudolph

724-625-2199 x228

familyaccounts@stepstonescc.org

PINE RICHLAND STEPPING STONES PROGRAMS

Hance Elementary

5518 Molnar Drive

Gibsonia, PA 15044

724-321-8552

hance@stepstonescc.org

Richland Elementary

3811 Bakerstown Road

Gibsonia, PA 15044

724-321-8554

richland@stepstonescc.org

Wexford Elementary

250 Brown Road

Wexford, PA 15090

724-321-8556

wexford@stepstonescc.org

Eden Hall Upper Elementary

3900 Bakerstown Road

Gibsonia, PA 15044

724-553-6707

edenhall@stepstonescc.org

SENECA VALLEY STEPPING STONES PROGRAMS

Haine Elementary

1516 Haine School Road

Cranberry TWP, PA 16066

724-487-2020

haine@stepstonescc.org

Rowan Elementary

8051 Rowan Road

Cranberry TWP, 16066

724-487-2019

rowan@stepstonescc.org

Ehrman Crest

2070 Ehrman Road

Cranberry TWP, PA 16066

724-487-3444

ec@stepstonescc.org

Connoquenessing Valley (CVE)

300 S. Pittsburgh Street

Zelienople, PA 16063

724-487-3483

cve@stepstonescc.org

INTRODUCTION

Stepping Stones Children’s Center, Inc., is a private, non-profit, corporation established in 1979 to provide care and education for children and their families in northern Allegheny and southern Butler counties. The center is incorporated with a volunteer parent and community member Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for the legal, financial, and community matters of the organization. The center is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services in accordance with the standards established by the Department of Labor and Industry and Health.

Trained, professional staff implements each School Age Program. The School Age and Assistant School Age Director manage the enrollment, registration, and regulations of each program. The Site Directors are responsible for the management of everyday operations, planning, and implementing program activities as well as maintaining open parent-teacher communication. Group Supervisors and Assistant Group Supervisors assist in the planning and implementation of various program activities.

PHILOSOPHY

Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization established in 1979. We believe in educating the whole child in an environment in which children feel safe and can thrive. Our childcare programs help children achieve developmental goals that are very critical in the early years and foster those goals throughout their adolescent years. Stepping Stones provides a hands-on learning environment that helps children learn through play and experiences while meeting the goals of state standards. Our qualified teachers are responsive to the needs and developmental milestones of each child.

MISSION STATEMENT

Stepping Stones is committed to providing high quality education and childcare in an environment that fosters positive relationships among our children, staff, families, and the community we serve. We establish a continuity of care by providing meaningful childcare experience from infancy to early adolescents. Our students, parents, and staff will work together to build an atmosphere where each and every child can learn and respect one another in an academic, physical, and social environment.

VISION STATEMENT

Stepping Stones Children’s Center, Inc., will strive to be an organization that exemplifies growth and opportunity for children, their families, and our community at large, by providing the following

- Implementing a research-based curriculum that supports the academic, physical, and social learning needs of every child.
- A future that is brighter, safer, and more productive for children.
- Wider understanding of the needs of children and families.
- Early identification, intervention, and programming for children with special needs.
- More effective networking with childhood programs to incorporate meaningful, learning experiences.

VALUE STATEMENT

Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc., through its families, staff, board, and administration affirms its commitment to these values for our children and the community:

We will work diligently to:

- Create and maintain standards of high quality childcare and education for children and youth.
- Stay current with the ongoing trends in early childhood education and care to provide high quality programs and services.
- Families are encouraged to participate on the board of directors, input in childhood programs, and through open communication.
- Design and maintain high quality physical environments that are safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing.
- Values and respects diversity of children, families, and staff to create a positive environment that fosters emotional growth.
- Serves as advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession.
- Maintains high standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, and confidentiality.

SCHOOL AGE PROGRAM GOALS

- To provide children with the opportunity to explore, discover, and learn through hands on learning in a safe and supporting environment.
- Provide support for emotional, social, and physical development.
- To encourage children to exercise self-control and be accountable members of society.
- A balance of independent, small, and large group activities that includes creative play, educational centers, and physical/motor development.
- Trained and knowledgeable educators who provide developmentally appropriate experiences in accordance with the PA Learning Standards.
- To provide a safe, comfortable, and fun environment to promote healthy social development.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Stepping Stones Children's Center School Age Program admits all children between the ages of five and eleven years without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, and/or ancestry. When the parent/guardian of a child identifies that a child has special needs, the Site Director and the parent/guardian will meet to review the child's care requirements. Stepping Stones does not discriminate on the basis of special needs. The program accepts children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child. Stepping Stones cannot provide one on one care and all school age children must be able to use the restroom independently.

Registration

School Age registration opens in June prior to the start of the new school year. Registration can be completed on our website, electronically, at stepstonescc.org under the "Registration and Forms" tab. Enrollment in the program is on a first come, first serve bases. A health assessment/immunization record that has been completed

after your child's fifth birthday is required before your child can start in the program. Only the DHS or PDE school health report forms are accepted and must be signed and dated by a doctor. Once, your registration has been received and accepted, you will receive an email with the family handbook, welcome letter, and an agreement. The agreement must be signed, dated, and returned prior to the first day of attendance. There is \$100 non-refundable registration fee that will be charged once your registration has been processed.

Tuition Policies

- Automatic payments are the only form of accepted payments. Cash and checks will not be accepted and should not be given to classroom teachers or sent in with your child to school. Tuition will be charged on the 1st of every month. If the 1st of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, tuition will be charged on the next business day that Stepping Stones is open.
- Fees:
 - A \$5 credit card fee is added for each processed credit card payment.
 - A \$35 charge will be added for any returned payments.
 - A \$100 non-refundable registration fee will be charged upon enrollment in the program. For families with multiple children, a \$50 non-refundable registration fee will apply for each additional child. If registration fee is not paid within 14 days of enrollment, your spot in the program may be forfeited.
- Discounts:
 - A 10% discount of tuition will be applied for older sibling(s) enrolled.
 - Only one discount may be applied.
 - Discounts do not apply for children in "as needed" or "extra day" charges.
- **After 14 days, if tuition has not been paid, childcare services may be withheld until payment is received.**
- Program expenses are consistent even when your child misses due to illness, vacation, etc. **Therefore, we cannot extend tuition or reschedule missed days.** To compensate for this fact, monthly tuition is based on a 20 day average.
- August and June tuition will be prorated based on your child's scheduled enrollment.
- A holding fee of 50% of tuition, per child, will be required to hold your child's spot in enrollment. A spot can only be held for a maximum of 3 months.
- A two week notice of schedule changes or cancellations is required prior to the 1st of the month. Tuition charges for reductions in days of care and/or cancellation that are given after the 1st of the month will not go into effect until the next billing cycle. No tuition reimbursements will be given after tuition is charged.
- Extra days of care are available, space permitting, billed as an extra day rate, with prior notification.
 - Before care can be added for a 2-hour delay, extra charges will apply.
- Variable Schedules will be billed at a rate of one day higher than the number of days scheduled.
- There is a minimum enrollment of two days per week. You may enroll on an AS NEEDED basis. If enrolled for AS NEEDED, a space will not be held and attendance will need to be approved by the Site Director before attending. AS NEEDED rate will apply for anyone enrolled for AS NEEDED.
- Tuition includes afternoon snack for the after school program.
- For more information about ELRC childcare subsidy, please contact the numbers below:
 - Allegheny County- 412-255-1603
 - Butler County- 724-285-9431

All Care Days and Program Closures

Days that the district is closed and Stepping Stones remains open, are called “All Care Days”. A calendar of All Care Days and Stepping Stones closure dates will be sent through the Sandbox Parent Portal upon enrollment in the program. A calendar can also be found on our website at stepstonescc.org.

Sign ups for All Care Days will be sent out a month prior. If your child is regularly scheduled to attend before school, kindergarten, or after school on the day that an All Care Day falls, there is no extra charge for care. If your child is not regularly scheduled to attend, there is a \$80 fee for care, which will be charged upon sign up. Charges will not be able to be reimbursed after signing up.

Community Partnerships

The Site Director will maintain a working bulletin board/binder with newsletters and community event postings.

Field trips and activities reflect the need for community involvement, including partnerships with nursing homes, police, fire safety, girl scouts, boy scouts, high school students, athletes, and other community partners.

Activities such as food drives, clothing drives, animal shelter drives, etc. are provided throughout the year by the Site Directors and School Age Director.

Pick- Up and Drop Off Procedures

Drop Off Procedures

Families are welcomed to enter our programs at the appropriate opening time depending on their school district. We ask that families please refrain from arrival **prior** to our opening time, as we need this time to prepare for the day. Children must be accompanied to the Stepping Stones door, please do not remain in your car.

Parking Lot

All children **MUST** be supervised in the parking lot. Please do not leave your vehicle running or leave a child unattended in your vehicle. Please respect the speed limits, which are posted in the parking lot of each school. Please drive carefully and slowly for the safety of all our children.

The DHS regulation states: **§ 3270.177. Supervision** (a) Children may not be left unattended in a vehicle. (b) Children shall be supervised during boarding and exiting vehicles by an adult who remains outside the vehicle.

Absences

Please notify your child’s Stepping Stones teacher directly, if your child will be absent for the day. If you know that your child will not be attending, please let us know in advance whenever possible. Please notify Stepping Stones **AND** the School District directly.

Because program expenses for School Age Programs are consistent even when your child misses time due to illness, vacation, etc., we cannot extend tuition credit or allow “switching” of days to “use” tuition.

Pick Up Procedures

When picking up your child, be sure to let your child’s teacher know that you are taking them. Once you arrive, you are responsible for your child. For your child’s safety, please watch that they do not run in the hallways, rooms, or parking lot. Parents/Guardians must come to the Stepping Stones door to pick up their child. Your child will not be released if the parent remains in their car.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Stepping Stones staff are only scheduled and paid through the closing time of their program. We recognize that on occasion an emergency arises which may cause you to be late to pick up your child. In such an event, **please call** so that we can plan accordingly. In order to avoid additional programing fees, we must impose the following late policy whenever lateness is the routine rather than the exception:

If you child is not picked up by the end of the kindergarten program, you will be charged for the afternoon program. If a child has not been picked up by the close of the program, a late fee of \$20.00 per half hour, per child (for families with sibling children) or fraction thereof, will be charged. A parent who is late 3 times will receive a written notice requiring him/her to make a plan for picking up his/her child on time. If the parent is late again, he/she will be sent a termination warning. With the next lateness, the parent will be asked to make other arrangements for the care of his/her child.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAM INFORMATION

Curriculum Overview

Stepping Stones Children's Center uses a homegrown creative curriculum. Daily lesson plans are developed based on Early Learning Standards. These lesson plans can be found posted in the classroom daily. Lesson plans are created to display a balance of play based learning and hands on education centers. Thematic units are used to explore different areas of math, science, STEM, language arts and creative expression. Lesson plans and accommodations are made to meet the needs of various ages within the program.

Gross motor experiences are an important part of a child’s development and children are encouraged to explore the outdoors and develop their large motor skills on the playground. In the event of inclement weather, children will have the opportunity to use the gymnasium or classroom to play gross motor games.

The after school program offers designated homework time to help assist children with the completion of school assignments. The after school teachers plan thematic activities to included weekly art, science, social studies, or STEM activities.

LEAP CURRICULUM				
Literacy	Math	Science	Social Studies	Art
Phonics	Patterns	Life cycles	World Cultures	Mix Medium Projects
Letter Recognition	Shapes	Earth Science	Social Development	Dramatic Arts

Sight Words	Graphing	STEM	Economics	Poetry
Writing	Addition	Life Science	Historical Figures	Creative Expression
Rhyming/ Syllables	Subtraction	Physical Science	Languages	Colors
Reading	Number Recognition		Problem Solving	

Staff to Child Ratios

Programs are enrolled based on DHS staff to child ratios. In the event of a mixed-age group, the youngest child present ratio would apply.

AGE OF GROUP	STAFF TO CHILD RATIO
Kindergarten	1:12
Older School Age (4th grade and up)	1:15
Mixed Group	1:12
Field Trip	1:8

Continuity of Care

Stepping Stones values the continuity of care between child and teacher. We build rapport with children, families and staff through community events, family engagement opportunities, and positive interactions. By providing regular routines, smooth transition schedules, consistent staff, and nurturing relationships this will enhance long-term relationships and support a continuity of care.

Family/Staff Communication

Stepping Stones will promote communication between families and staff by using emails, Sandbox parent portal, as well as informal conversations. Families are asked to email any important information so that all educators who work with the child can share the parent’s communication.

Conferences/Child Evaluations/Portfolios

Conferences are offered twice a year and upon request to discuss children’s progress, accomplishments, and any difficulties you may have at home or in the program. Stepping Stones teachers will complete the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP-SA) twice a year and share the results with parents. This assessment tool helps to inform parents of their social, emotion, physical and cognitive development. The written evaluations will become a part of the child’s file at Stepping Stones.

IEP/IFSP Written Plans

Stepping Stones is devoted to supporting children and will work with families to provide the best care necessary for the child. With family permission, Stepping Stones teachers will participate in the implementation and development of IEP/IFSP. We ask that a copy be given to Stepping Stones so that teachers at Stepping Stones will use the IEP/IFSP for reference for lesson planning, activities and to support social/emotional development. If an IEP requires one on one support, Stepping Stones is not responsible for providing that support but will work with the families to find agencies to support the needs of the children.

INCLUSION

Stepping Stones uses developmentally appropriate practices and considers the unique needs of all children when planning. Teachers will adapt lesson plans to meet the unique needs of all students. Schedules, routines, and activities are flexible. Teachers will work with therapists, special educators, and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications, and strategies into classroom routines and activities. So that our staff are comfortable and confident in their abilities to assist the different needs of children, we provide annual professional development. 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 success. Teachers will communicate a child's progress frequently through conferences and parent communication portal. We support inclusion by collaborating with outside agencies, such as TSS services, BSCs, Rapid Response Team through PA Keys, when available.)

DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS/ ESL

Stepping Stones is devoted to supporting children in language development. Children who do not speak English as a first language will be supported in the classroom. To support communication between home and school, teachers will use google translate and every classroom is equipped with an iPad with the Translate app. The child's first language will be represented in the classroom in a multitude of ways. Children's books will be available in both English and the first language, classroom materials will be labeled in both languages as well.

TRANSITION POLICY

At Stepping Stones, we take steps to ensure a smooth transition from one setting to another.

- Initial enrollment- Families and children are invited to tour the facility and meet the classroom teachers. During the tour, parents are encouraged to ask questions and are provided with welcome information. Children are given a "soft start" to explore the classroom and materials, while also having time to become comfortable with classroom routines and teachers.
- Transition to Kindergarten- Parents are invited to tour the classroom prior to the first day of school. At this time, teachers are available to provide any information and welcome packets. Stepping Stones also hosts a "Get to Know You" night with the children from Stepping Stones preschool and school age teachers.
- Transition to Self Care- Stepping Stones uses "Kids in Control: A Kid's Guide to Being Responsible" to help children become independent to transition out of childcare. Kids in Control is given to parents as a resource and activities are completed throughout the school year to help prepare students for real life situations and scenarios.

Suspension, Expulsion and Discipline Policy

Some children do not respond to positive supports and behaviors can escalate to an area of concern. If behaviors reach this limit, Stepping Stones has created a policy to address when suspension or expulsion would be put into place. We have developed procedures to ensure that suspensions/expulsions are only used as a last case resort.

1. Stepping Stones Children Center utilizes positive guidance and redirection to help children develop age appropriate self control. Our teachers also take the time to reward and reinforce positive behaviors and to encourage sharing, kindness and expressing their negative emotions in an acceptable manner.
2. If a behavior becomes consistent or concerning, staff will document behaviors. Documentation may include ABC observations, frequency checklists, and running records.
3. Complete the Desired Results Developmental Profile (Ages and Stages SE)- School Age and share with parents.
4. Complete program assessments including but not limited to SACERS-U and School Age PQA
5. Reach out to STARS Quality Coach and/or the ELRC Rapid Response Team and enroll staff, if needed, in professional development related to the areas of need
6. Teachers will complete a behavior log to document strategies that are being used and share the log daily with parents.
7. A Parent Teacher Conference will be scheduled to discuss next steps and to put in place a behavior plan. The behavior plan is not intended to remove the child but to set clear limits and expectations of behaviors. The behavior plan will outline the conditions in which the child would be suspended or expelled from the program.
8. Outside assistance and referrals will be sought through:
 - o Contacting IECMH- www.surveymonkey.com/r/PAExulsionHelp
 - o Intervention Unit Connect Helpline at 1-800-692-7288

Items from Home

Children are responsible for their personal items and Stepping Stones Children's Center is not responsible for any lost, broken or stolen items from home. Cell phones are expressly prohibited.

Electronics are not permitted in the program unless permission has been previously given from a staff member. Please make sure all items are clearly labeled, including clothing items.

All children that participate in Stepping Stones Children's Center programs are consistently well supervised, however, accidents do happen. By enrolling your child in Stepping Stones Children's Center, you assumes all risk for any damages, lost or stolen personal belongings.

School Delays/ Cancellations Emergency Closing Policy

In the event of Inclement Weather/School District closures, Stepping Stones will follow the following procedures:

- School Closures due to Inclement Weather- Stepping Stones Programs will also close to ensure safety of students and staff
- School Delays due to Inclement Weather- Stepping Stones will operate an 8:00am start
- School Closures or Delays due to Temperature- Stepping Stones will remain open for our regular program hours. In this case, please send your child with a packed lunch

Referral Services

Stepping Stones is dedicated to supporting families with social, emotional, educational, wellness, and medical services. Referral Services are posted in the entryway or family binder at each location.

Referral Services may include but are not limited to:

- Behavioral Intervention Services
- Early Learning Intervention (DART, TEIS)
- Early Learning Resource Center
- Outreach Wellness Centers
- Advocacy Programs
- Counseling

FAMILY PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES

Families are encouraged to utilize our “Open Door Policy” to visit or call the center at any time, during program hours, to check on their children. Parent involvement creates a more positive experience for children and helps children perform better when they are in school.

- Communication- Stepping Stones uses Sandbox Parent Portal to maintain open communication between the classroom and parents. By using this app, we can share pictures, daily reports, and messaging.
- Open House- Families are encouraged and welcomed to attend the annual Open House. The Open House is an opportunity for parents to meet staff, tour the classroom, see their children’s work, and interact with other Stepping Stones families.
- Conferences- Conferences are offered twice a year, or as needed based on developmental milestones. Developmental screenings (Ages and Stages, Works Sampling, DRDP-SA, etc), classroom observations and quarterly assessments (kindergarten only) are used to discuss a child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. At this time, the family is encouraged to ask questions and discuss any goals for their child.
- Parent Visitors- Parents are welcomed at any time to volunteer in the child’s classroom whether it is to read a book or to share a learning presentation.
- Board of Directors- Parents, guardians, and community members are invited to serve on Stepping Stones volunteer Board of Directors. These members have the opportunity to have a direct insight and influence into program policies. Board members meet once a month. If you are interested in becoming a board member, please email board@stepstonescc.org.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

Pre-enrollment Requirements

Each child is required to have a health assessment that was completed AFTER their 5th birthday. Health assessments need to be signed and dated by a licensed physician. The PDE and DHS health assessment forms are the only accepted health assessments. Health assessment forms can be found on our website at stepstonescc.org under the “Registration and Forms” tab. Patient summaries or after-visit summaries cannot replace a health assessment.

Children with Severe Allergies and Special Medical Conditions

If your child has an allergy or special medical condition, please inform your Site Director of the nature and extent of the allergy or medical condition and what course of action should be followed in the event of an emergency. A Special Care Plan will be provided to you to more fully inform us of your child's situation. Parents must provide any medication/Epi-Pen that is needed for a child in the program. Parents will also be asked to fill out a medication log for any medications that are present on site. If your child requires an EPI-PEN/medication, the EPI-PEN/medication must be in its original box with the child's name included. We do not have access to EPI-PENS or medications that are given to the school district's nurse.

Illness Prevention

Both parents and educators want to keep children healthy. Despite everyone's efforts, children do get sick. Often people who spread disease do not look or feel sick. Parents and childcare programs share the responsibility for maintaining health and preventing the spread of contagious diseases. By including illness-prevention practices in daily routines, adults can limit the spread of infections. Staff members are required to clean the program space with recognized sanitizing solutions as well as tables before and after administering foods. To prevent the spread of illness, all staff and children are required to wash their hands upon arrival to the program. If a communicable disease is present within the program, a sign will be posted to inform parents of the disease. Signs and symptoms of the disease, incubation period and any other information helpful to preventing the further spread of the disease will be on this posting. Any communicable illness is tracked and reviewed monthly to note patterns and create any further action plan to prevent the spread of disease. We use the reference guide that is dedicated to the health of all children entitled Caring for Our Children for our Education Programs.

Medical Exclusion Guidelines

Children will be excluded from the program if:

1. The child's illness prevents the child from participating in activities that the facility routinely offers for well children or mildly ill children.
2. The illness requires more care than the staff is able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group.
3. Keeping the child in care poses an increased risk to the child or to other children or adults with whom the child will come in contact.

When your child becomes ill at a School Age Care Program, we will remove him/her from the activity of the group and create a comfortable space for him/her to rest. If your child is in extreme discomfort and cannot participate in any activity, we will contact you to pick up your child immediately. If we are unable to reach you, we will contact the emergency numbers listed on your Emergency Contact Form.

Children who have been removed from the program due to illness may not return until they have been symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.

In general, children are not permitted in the program with evidence of:

- A temperature equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees F, axillary (underarm) or 101 degrees F, aural (in the ear).
- One or more episodes of vomiting.
- One or more episodes of diarrhea.
- The contagious stage of any communicable disease.

- Obvious symptoms of a communicable illness such as chicken pox, head lice, conjunctivitis (pink eye) etc.
- Behavior indicating pain or distress.
- Severe colds with fever, productive cough or significant sneezing and nasal drainage.

Communicable Diseases

The Site Director of your child's program must be informed of any child who has a communicable disease. Parents are asked to notify the Site Director if a child with a communicable disease has been at Stepping Stones within a one-week period preceding the diagnosis of the disease. The Site Director will then notify the families of all other children who were in contact with the sick child.

Dispensing of Medication

Stepping Stones staff will administer medication only if the parent or legal guardian has provided written consent. Medications will be kept in a locked box out of the reach of children. Whenever possible, for the well being of the child, the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

- A. For prescription medications, parents will provide staff with the medication in the original, child-resistant container that is labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, the name of the medication, the date the prescription was filled, the name of the physician who wrote the prescription, the medication's expiration date, and administration, storage, and disposal instructions. For over-the-counter medications, parents will provide the medication in a child-resistant container. The medication will be labeled with the child's first and last names and will have specific, legible instructions for administration and storage supplied by the manufacturer.
- B. Instructions for the dosage, frequency, method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided to the childcare staff in writing (by a signed note or a prescription label).
- C. Staff will maintain a medication log. It will record the instructions for giving the medication, consent obtained from the parent, amount, the time of administration, and the person who administered each dose of medication. Spills, reactions, and refusal to take medication will be noted in this log.

Emergency Care Procedures

For your child's safety and protection, all Stepping Stones Staff are certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR. In the event of an accident that requires a need for medical attention, we will proceed as follows:

For immediate medical treatment, a staff member will call 911 and request emergency assistance. If necessary, your child will be transported to the nearest emergency center by the dispatched ambulance. Parents will be contacted immediately. If parents are unable to be reached, we will contact the emergency numbers on your child's Emergency Contact Form.

If a less serious incident occurs, the staff will administer basic first aid on site. Parents will receive an Incident Report stating the details of the injury.

Emergency Drills

Stepping Stones Children Center takes the safety of the children in our program very seriously by preparing for all types of emergency. Each program participates in the following drills:

- Fire Drills- Fire Drills are conducted on a monthly basis. Children are prepared to learn where emergency exits are and where to relocate to when they have safely left the building. Teacher will take roll call before and after exiting the building
- Lockdown Drills- Lockdown drills are conducted to prepare students if there was an intruder in the building. Children would be shown the “safe place” in the classroom that is away from doors and windows.
- EOP Drills- Emergency Operation Drills are conducted twice a year. EOP drills include but are not limited to tornado drills, evacuation drills, etc.

In the event, that children need to be immediately evacuated from the building, children will be taken by bus to the Main Center located at 712 Warrendale Road, Gibsonia, PA 15044.

Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident (scraped knee, small bumps etc.) during the course of the day, a staff member will administer first aid and complete an incident report through the Sandbox Parent Portal. For incidents/accidents involving injuries to the head, ticks, excessive falls or inappropriate behavior, a phone call will be made to the parent also. The report will indicate the date, time, location of the incident, and what happened. Should an injury result in follow up care at the emergency room. Stepping Stones needs to be **immediately** notified. It is a DHS regulation to report these incidents that require a medical follow-up within twenty-four (24) hours.

Meals

Breakfast is available to be purchased through your child’s school district. If you would like your child to have breakfast during the morning session, you will need to follow the school district’s procedures. In the event of an in-service day, snow day, or holiday in which Stepping Stones is providing all day care, Stepping Stones will provide breakfast. Kindergarten students have the opportunity to purchase lunch through the school cafeteria. The parent/guardian is responsible for setting up a lunch account with the school district and providing lunch choices to the Stepping Stones teacher. On days when Stepping Stones provides full day care, parents must provide a lunch.

Afternoon snack is provided by Stepping Stones for all children enrolled in the after-school program. Snack is served upon arrival of the after-school program.

Photographs

No outside agency or individual will be allowed to photograph your child without your consent. The staff reserve the right to take photographs of the children for education/curricular purposes without specific consent. Parents will be asked to give consent for photographs during the enrollment process.

Staff Identification Badges

As part of Stepping Stones Security measures, all staff are provided with a Photo Identification Badge.

Cell Phone Policy

As part of our policy to provide a safe environment for your children, Stepping Stones follows a No Cell Phone Policy for the students. If you feel that you would like to have contact with your child during program hours, parents are invited to call the program's cell phone. Please see Program Phone Numbers in this handbook for your appropriate program's number.

COVID-19

Policies regarding COVID-19 are ongoing and being constantly updated. Stepping Stones will align our COVID-19 health and safety plan to CDC, DHS, PA Health Department and district guideline.

RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

Parents of children in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are at Stepping Stones Children's Center, as provided by law.

- A. No child will be released without the presence or permission of the custodial parent/legal guardian.
- B. Any authorized person who is not recognized by the staff will be required to provide photo identification such as a driver's license, work or school ID before the child is released.
- C. **IF** your child is to be picked up by someone not listed on the Emergency Contact Form; you must call the Site Director with the name of the person, brief description, and approximate time of arrival. We will not release the child to any unauthorized person without your prior notification.
- D. Stepping Stones Site Director(s) will notify the police if an unauthorized person seeks custody of a child.

HANDLING PERSONS WHO APPEAR TO BE IMPAIRED

An impaired condition specifically relates to alcohol, mind-altering chemicals or other medical conditions that render a person unable to operate a motor vehicle and thereby endanger the safety of a child who would be transported by the impaired person.

If a parent/guardian or designated person appears to be unable to safely transport the child, the facility personnel will ask the parent/guardian, or designated person to arrange for alternate transportation. If the person is unwilling to provide such alternate transportation, the matter will be referred to the proper authorities.

COURT ORDERS

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (i.e. Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Stepping Stones Children's Center must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. In the absence of a court order on file, both parents shall be afforded equal access

to their child as stipulated by law. **Stepping Stones Children’s Center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by the request of another, regardless of the reason.**

CONFIDENTIALITY

Within Stepping Stones Children’s Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees who have a “need to know”. Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents and /or children will not be shared with parents, as we strive to protect everyone’s right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and other health related information of anyone associated with Stepping Stones Children's Center. You may encounter children in our School Age Programs who have special needs or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. yelling, hitting, and spitting). Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of Stepping Stones Children's Center are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

Stepping Stones Children's Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the agency. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but to all children, families, and employees associated with Stepping Stones. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential or pressures employees or parents for information will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentially Policy.

MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Stepping Stones Children's Center are considered mandated reporters under this law. The employees of Stepping Stones Children's Center are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behaviors, or conditions prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Stepping Stones Children's Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

STAFF EMPLOYMENT BY FAMILIES

Stepping Stones Children Center does not condone or recommend hiring teachers for babysitting, nannying, mother’s helper, etc. If a client chooses to employ a Stepping Stones staff member anyway, Stepping Stone holds no liability or responsibility to this employment contract. A waiver must be signed by both parties prior to any outside employment arrangement.

PARENT/GUARDIANS CODE OF CONDUCT

Stepping Stones Children's Center requires the parents of enrolled children, at all times, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Stepping Stones Children's Center is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Stepping Stones Children's Center, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the site. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who do not adhere to the Parent Code of Conduct will be considered in violation of these policies and appropriate action will be determined based on the severity of the misconduct.

Swearing/Cursing

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on Stepping Stones properties, programs, or during events at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At **NO TIME** shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

Threatening of Employees, Children, Other Parents or Adults

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society, Stepping Stones Children's Center cannot afford to sit idly by while threats are made. All threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Parents must be in control of and responsible for their behavior at all times.

Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Children

While Stepping Stones Children's Center does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their children. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the Site Director and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, that parent should direct their concern to the Site Director.

Furthermore, it is extremely inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention.

Smoking

For the health of all Stepping Stones Children's Center employees, children and associates, smoking is prohibited in the Site and anywhere in view of the children. Parents who are smoking in their cars must properly dispose (no littering) of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.

Confrontational Interactions with Employees, other Parents or Associates

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of Stepping Stones Children's Center or the parents of other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

DISMISSAL

Stepping Stones Children's Center reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within 30 days of the dismissal. An agency check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal.

The Site Director or designee will assist the parent in gathering any belongings of the child and are required to leave the property in a calm and respectful manner immediately.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the School Age Director if they wish to return to the property. Appointments are made at the discretion of the School Age Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent.

Childcare services may be terminated if any of the following conditions exist:

- A. The child's behavior prevents the child from participating in program activities with other children on a daily basis.
- B. The child's condition requires more care (1:1 Staff-Child ratio) than staff members are able to provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group.
- C. The costs of providing a safe, enjoyable, and supportive environment for the child with special needs exhausts the center's resources.
- D. After the 10th of the month, if tuition has not been paid, childcare services cannot be provided until payment is received or payment arrangements are made with the Executive Director.
- E. The parents/guardians have violated the Parents Code of Conduct

Stepping Stones Children's Center, INC. Organizational Chart

