**FAMILY HANDBOOK**

**Child Care Policies**

**Extended Day Child Care Programs**

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Revised June 2023

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# WELCOME LETTER

Thank you for choosing the extended day childcare program at Stepping Stones Children’s Center. We have been providing childcare in the Pine-Richland area since 1979. We began in a small farmhouse in Richland Township and have grown to eight sites including an Extended Day and seven sites housing before and after school hours care as well as Kindergarten Leap programs.

Stepping Stones is located on Warrendale Road (the red belt) next to the Pine-Richland High School. It is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 A.M. until 6:00 P.M.

All of our programs are staffed with highly qualified Child Care Specialists and a great percentage of our staff has been with us for more than five years! We at Stepping Stones are trained in Pediatric First Aid, CPR, Fire Safety, and Emergency Operations and participate in continuing education trainings relating to children and growth and development. All staff must be in compliance with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Regulations including the Child Abuse, Criminal Record, NSOR, and FBI clearances.

Stepping Stones has an open door policy and invites you to call or stop in at any time during the day. There are also many opportunities for families to participate in the center programs such as attending the holiday parties, coming in as a “guest reader” to read a book to the children, sharing your occupation with the children during Community Helpers week, and serving on the Board of Directors. Stepping Stones provides information including program policies and procedures in the language that best meets the needs of our families. Should a family require this information in a different format, the information would be available upon request.

Again, thank you for choosing Stepping Stones Children's Center. If you have any questions or concerns, please see the directors.

# CONTACT/CENTER INFORMATION

Address:

712 Warrendale Road Gibsonia, PA 15044

Phone:

724-625-2199

Center Hours: 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM

Website: [www.stepstonescc.org](http://www.stepstonescc.org)

Tax ID #: 25-1370951

United Way Contributor Choice #: 285

**Director:** Lauren Zierenberg

**Billing/Accountant:** Kerri Rudolph

[familyaccounts@stepstonescc.org](mailto:familyaccounts@stepstonescc.org)

724-625-2199 X228

[Laurenz@stepstonescc.org](mailto:Laurenz@stepstonescc.org)

724-625-2199 X223

**Assistant Director:** Katie Brown

[Kbrown@stepstonescc.org](mailto:Kbrown@stepstonescc.org)

724-625-2199 X239

# STEPPING STONES CHILDREN’S CENTER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

**Board of Directors**

**Main Center Director**

**Talent Acquisition Specialist**

**School Age Director**

**Accountant**

**Administrative Assistant**

**Main Center Assistant Director**

**School Age AssistantDirector**

**Group Supervisors**

**Site Directors**

**Assistant Group Supervisors**

**Group Supervisors**

**Aides**

**Assistant Group Supervisors**

**Aides**

# 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/Guardian and community member Board of Directors. The Board is responsible for the legal, financial, and community matters of the organization. Monthly board meetings are open to all Parents/Guardians and employees with notice. The center is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services in accordance with the standards established by the Department of Labor and Industry and Health.

The center’s programs are implemented by a trained, professional staff. The Directors are responsible for carrying out the overall mission of Stepping Stones Children’s Center, implementing Board actions, updating the Board and general administrative functions. The Directors manage the overall daily operations of the center’s programs. Group Supervisors are responsible for planning and implementing program activities as well as maintaining open Parent/Guardian-teacher communication. Assistant Group Supervisors and Aides assist in the planning and implementation of various program activities. The center program is expanded and enriched by volunteers.

# 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

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 STATEMENTS

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 in 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.
* Value and respects diversity of children, families, and staff to create a positive environment that fosters emotional growth
* Serve as advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession.
* Maintain high standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, and confidentiality

# 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 strive.  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.

# EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM GOALS

* Children develop a positive self-image and a sense of self as a competent worthwhile individual.
* Children initiate and carry out activities independently.
* Children make a positive impact on the people and objects in the environment.
* Children develop a mental organization for processing information.
* Children develop strategies for coping with developmental issues.
* Children learn to control impulses and channel them into more appropriate modes of expression.
* Children relate positively to other people based on mutual understanding and acceptance of the other person’s point of view.
* Children use symbols for representing experiences, ideas, and feelings.
* Children develop a healthy and physically competent body.
* Children use materials as an outlet for self-expression or for recreating experiences.

By helping our children work toward these goals, we will help them accomplish the major developmental tasks that face them in the coming years.

# ADMISSIONS POLICY

Stepping Stones Children's Center Extended Day Programs admit children from the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, ancestry, or special needs. The program accepts children with special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided for the child.

When the parent or legal guardian of a child identifies that a child has special needs, the Director(s), the Group Supervisor(s), and the parent or legal 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.

## REGISTRATION

Prior to your child’s attendance, a visit to Stepping Stones is encouraged to acquaint each new family with the environment, staff, and schedule for child care.

The following forms will be completed and submitted to Stepping Stones prior to the child’s first day of attendance. The information in these forms will remain confidential and will be shared with other caregivers only as required to meet the needs of the child:

1. **Complete online registration form- this will be sent to you once availability is determined.**
2. **A $100 non-refundable registration fee will be charged upon enrollment in the program. For families with multiple children, a non-refundable registration fee of $50 will apply for each additional child. If the registration fees are not paid within 14 days of enrollment, your spot in the program may be forfeited.**
3. **Child Health Assessment (Including Immunization Record)**
   * (Health Assessments are to be updated at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 months. Once a child turns 2 years old, Health Assessments are to be updated annually.)
   * Please return Health Assessments as soon as possible when they are due as failure to do so will result in non-compliance with the Department of Health and Human Services’ regulations. This could result in your child not attending Stepping Stones.

\*\*\*IT IS CRUCIAL FOR YOU TO KEEP US UPDATED ON ANY CHANGES TO YOUR EMERGENCY CONTACT/PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM!\*\*\*

We are required by State Law to have current forms on file to protect your child and others. The Department of Public Welfare requires all financial agreements and emergency forms to be updated every six months or when a change occurs.

Every July, current families must re-enroll their child/ren for the following school year. This will be prompted by the director. If enrollment is not completed in a timely manner, you could forfeit your spot in the program.

## TUITION POLICIES

### EXTENDED DAY CHILD CARE

* Tuition payments are automatically processed the first of every month, using Sandbox. If the 1st of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, tuition will be charged on the next business day.
* Automatic Payments are the only form of payment accepted; we no longer accept personal checks at this time.  
  o A $5.00 credit card fee is added for each processed credit card payment.  
  o A $35.00 charged will 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 non-refundable registration fee of $50 will apply for each additional child. If the registration fees are not paid within 14 days of enrollment, your spot in the program may be forfeited.
* Discounts  
  o A 10% discount of tuition will be applied for older sibling(s) enrolled.  
  o Discounts do not apply for "extra day" charges.
* Children must be enrolled on a full-time basis for a **minimum of two days per week**. Children enrolled two days a week must enroll for Tuesday and Thursday. Children enrolled in three days a week must enroll for Monday, Wednesday, Friday.
* Extra days of care are available, space permitting, with prior notification.
* For the convenience of having a variable schedule, your tuition will reflect a rate one day higher than the number of days scheduled. (For example: for a 3-day variable schedule, the 4 day per week tuition rate would apply.) This is because staffing remains consistent even when your child does not attend.
* **After 14 days, if tuition has not been paid, childcare services may be withheld until payment is received.**
* A two-week-notice of schedule changes or cancellations is required prior to the 1st of the month, before tuition is charged. Tuition charges for reductions in schedules and/or cancellations 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.
* Tuition includes breakfast and an afternoon snack for children ages 1-5 years.
* For more information about ELRC childcare subsidy, please contact the numbers below:
  + Allegheny County- 412-255-1603
  + Butler County- 724-285-9431
* **The program is available year-round. The center is closed, and care will not be provided on the following holidays:**

July 4th- Holiday

September 4th- Labor Day

November 23rd -27th- Thanksgiving Break

December 25th - Winter Break

December 26th- Winter Break

January 1st - Winter Break

January 15th- Martin Luther King Jr. Day \*In-service Training\*

March 29th - Spring Break

April 1st - Spring Break

May 27th- Memorial Day

We will have shortened hours on the following days:

* December 27th- 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
* December 28th- 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
  + - * + December 29th- 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
* **Holding Fee of ½ of tuition, per month up to 90 days per child** is payable if you withdraw your child from the program for one to three months. This fee is to be paid on the last day of your child’s attendance.
* **Because program expenses for center programs are consistent even when your child misses time due to illness, vacation, holiday closures, etc. we cannot extend tuition credit or reschedule missed days. To compensate for this fact, we build in a ½ day per month missed time factor by basing fees on a 4-week, 20-day month. This means you are actually paying for 48 weeks of care, although your child is receiving 52 weeks of care.**
* Families are encouraged to seek information on the Federal Child Care Tax Credit, ELRC childcare subsidy (for residents of Allegheny and Butler counties), and Stepping Stones Recruitment Incentive Program by calling the Stepping Stones office at 724-625-2199.
* Stepping Stones Children's Center is licensed by the PA Department of Human Services. DHS regulations can be found electronically at <http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/055/chapter3270/chap3270toc.html&d=>

# ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

## ARRIVAL

Stepping Stones opens at 7:30 AM. You and your child may enter the center at 7:30 am (no earlier please, as we need this time to prepare for the day). Please be sure your child’s caregiver is aware that your child has arrived.

## 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**! The speed limit in the parking lot is 5 miles per hour.** Please drive carefully and slowly for the safety of all of 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 the center 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.

Because program expenses are consistent even when your child misses time due to illness, vacation, center closures, etc., we cannot extend tuition credit or allow switching of days to “use” tuition. To compensate for this fact, we build in a ½ day per month missed time factor by basing fees on a 4-week, 20 day month.

# PICK UP PROCEDURES

## DEPARTURE

Stepping Stones closes at 6:00 PM. When picking up your child, be sure to let your child’s caregiver know that you are taking him/her. Once you arrive, you are responsible for your child. For your child’s safety, please watch that he/she does not run in the hallway, rooms, or parking lot.

## LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Stepping Stones closes at 6:00 PM and staff are only scheduled and paid through 6:00 PM. We recognize that on occasion an emergency arises which may cause you to be late. In such an event, please call so that we can plan accordingly. In order to avoid staff time beyond 6:00 PM, we must impose the following late policy when lateness is the routine rather than the exception:

If a child is left after the close of school at 6:00 PM, a late fee of $20.00 per half hour, per child, or fraction thereof, will be charged. This fee is to be paid before the child returns to the facility the following day. A Parent/Guardian 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 and set a date to meet with the center’s A Director to discuss this plan. If the Parent/Guardian is late again, he/she will be sent a termination warning. With the next lateness, the Parent/Guardian will be asked to make other arrangements for the care of his/her child

# CURRICULUM INFORMATION

## CURRICULUM

Stepping Stones uses the Creative Curriculum Program in our programs. This curriculum provides a framework for what actually happens in an environment where children interact with materials, their peers, and adults. Our teachers take into consideration what is appropriate for each age group as well as what is suitable for each child. Children’s play is an essential part of our curriculum. A wide variety of materials are available each day, including books, puzzles, blocks, paint, simple food preparation, sand, and water play. Dramatic play, singing, game playing, flannel board stories, and reading are also used as tools for learning. For young children, cognitive growth is facilitated through various play experiences. Lesson plans and daily schedules are posted on the Parent/Guardian Information Bulletin Boards and are available for you to see. Monthly classroom newsletters are distributed to families.

## 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.

## IEP/IFSP POLICY

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.

## OUTDOOR PLAY

Taking children outdoors is a healthy integral part of our daily schedule and curriculum. The importance of fresh air and exercise as part of a child’s daily routine is recommended by health experts. Children benefit from active outdoor play to release energy and develop large muscle coordination. Stepping Stones will follow the state guidelines for outdoor play. During winter months, with a wind chill of 25 degrees or below, we will not be going outside. During the summer months, with a heat index of 90 degrees or above, we will not be going outside. Gloves/mittens, hats, boots, and sunscreen are essential to provide the necessary protection. Please remember to label all clothing. All age groups play outdoors daily unless weather conditions are such that the health and/or safety of the children are jeopardized.

## NAPTIME

All children at Stepping Stones do participate in a rest time. Children are not required to sleep. However, they are expected to rest. We encourage your child to bring a cuddly friend and/or familiar blanket for naptime. While we may limit the amount of time a child sleeps based on parental requests, we cannot deprive a child of nap altogether if he/she wishes to sleep.

## STAFF TO CHILD RATIOS

GROUP STAFF TO CHILD RATIO

Infants (6 weeks – 12 months) 1:4

Young Toddlers (13 months – 24 months) 1:5

Older Toddlers (24 months – 36 months) 1:6

Preschoolers (3 years – 5 years) 1:10

Stepping Stones meets or exceeds these staff to child ratios in accordance with the Department of Human Services’ Regulations.

## PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION BULLENTIN BOARDS

Each classroom has a Parent/Guardian information area for you to read and keep current on classroom and center happenings. On the Parent/Guardian board, you will find Newsletters, Lesson Plans, Breakfast and Snack Menus, Daily Schedules, and Articles of Interest. Additionally, there is a Parent/Guardian Information Board in the front entrance where you can find information on our licensing, policies, and child development resources.

## REFFERAL SERVICES

Stepping Stones is dedicated to supporting families with social, emotional, educational, wellness and medical services.  Referral Services are posted in the entry way 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/STAFF COMMUNICATION

Stepping Stones will promote communication between families and staff by using the Sandbox App as well as informal conversations. Families are asked to leave notes with important information on the app so that all caregivers who work with the child can share the Parent’s/Guardian’s communication. Caregivers will write notes through the app for families on a daily basis for infants and toddlers. Staff will use these notes to inform families about the child’s experiences, accomplishments, behavior, sleeping, feeding, and other issues related to personal care.

If any difficulties or differences arise, the following steps should be followed:

1. Schedule a conference with the Group Supervisor.
2. Bring the issue to the attention of the Director in writing.

Stepping Stones staff/teachers actively use information about families to adapt the program environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to our families.

## DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNER/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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.

## SCREENING TOOL

The Children’s Center will conduct a screening tool within 45 days of enrollment and as needed.  Stepping Stones uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaires to pinpoint children’s strengths and help identify children with developmental or social-emotional concerns. Results are shared with families and support for referrals are offered as needed. \* Ages and Stages Questionnaires applies to children Birth to 5 years of age. \*

## CONFERENCES

Conferences are offered to families at certain developmental milestones (4, 8, 12, 18, 24, 30, and 36 months- Ounce), twice per year in Preschool Fall and Spring- Work Sampling, and as needed, to discuss children’s progress, accomplishments, and any difficulties you may have at home or at the program. Staff will use daily observations of children to complete child evaluations. Staff will use these observations and evaluations to inform Parents/Guardians about their children’s social, emotional, physical, and intellectual developmental progress. The written evaluations will become a part of the child’s file at Stepping Stones.

## INCLUSION

Stepping Stones use developmentally appropriate practices and consider 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, and 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.)

# DISCIPLINE

Caregivers will use positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of clear-cut limits that foster the child’s own ability to become self-disciplined. Caregivers will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property, and learn to be responsible for their actions. Discipline involves teaching character and self-control. Because people differ in how they approach discipline, families and caregivers must discuss the goals of discipline and the methods that will best achieve the goals for the child.

Caregivers will guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct in relationship to peers and adults. Aggressive physical behavior toward staff or children is unacceptable. Children will be taught to describe their feelings. Good behavior will be encouraged and praised. Caregivers will use discipline that is consistent, clear, and understandable to the child.

## 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 attended 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 seeked through:
   * Contacting IECMH- [www.surveymonkey.com/r/PAExulsionHelp](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PAExulsionHelp)
   * Intervention Unit Connect Helpline at 1-800-692-7288

**There are never any circumstances when it is permissible for staff to use any form of physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. Appropriate use of restraint for safety reasons is permissible.**

### PROHIBITED STAFF PRACITICES

The following are examples of prohibited staff practices:

* **Examples of physical punishment**: Shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling of arms, hair, or ears; requiring child to remain inactive for a long period of time.
* **Examples of Psychological abuse:** Shaming, name calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.
* **Examples of Coercion:** Rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping any body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down, except when restraint is necessary to protect the child or others from harm; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up).

PERMISSIBLE METHODS OF DISIPLINE

* For acts of aggression and fighting (e.g., biting, hitting, etc.) staff will set appropriate expectations for children and guide them in solving problems. This positive guidance will be the usual technique for managing children with challenging behaviors rather than punishing them for having problems they have not yet learned to solve. In addition, staff may:
  1. Separate the children involved.
  2. Immediately comfort the individual who was injured.
  3. Care for any injury suffered by the victim involved in the incident.
  4. Notify parents or legal guardians of children involved in the incident.
  5. If deemed necessary, review the adequacy of caregiver supervision, appropriateness of facility activities, and administrative corrective action if there is a recurrence.
  6. When teachers observe that a child is having difficulties with social interactions with other children in the classroom, we use effective teaching strategies to support the children in building relationships. In some cases, children just need a play break from one another. In these cases, we encourage these children to choose play spaces that are away from one another to support the goodness of fit for every child in their classroom environment. We refer to this as “time -away”. Time-away may be used if other social interaction techniques are ineffective. This teaching strategy may be used selectively for children over 18 months of age, and especially when they pose a risk of harming themselves or others. The period of “time-away” will be just long enough to enable the child to regain self-control. As a general rule, this period will not exceed one minute per year of age. Caregivers will monitor the effectiveness of “time-away” and seek the help of additional support such as a mental health consultant when approved behavior management strategies do not seem to be effective.
* Physical restraint will not be used except as necessary to ensure a child’s safety or that of others, and then in the form of holding by another person as gently as possible only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.
* Medicines or drugs that will affect behavior will not be used except as prescribed by a child’s health care provider and with specific written instruction from the child’s health care provider for the use of the medicine.

# ITEMS FROM HOME

Although children love to bring their favorite toys to school, we discourage it because these items can get lost or broken. Stepping Stones promotes safe play practices, therefore, we do not allow children to bring toys that represent weapons (i.e. guns, knives, swords). We DO encourage your child to bring a cuddly friend and/or familiar blanket for naptime.

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, you assume all risk for damages, lost or stolen personal belongings.

# CLOTHING

Please keep in mind when dressing your children to bring them to Stepping Stones that they will be involved in a variety of activities. Children will be working with art materials, playing outside, and may even experience a food or bathroom related accident. It is important to dress your child appropriately for active play (e.g., no flip flops, dress clothes, etc.), as we believe in the benefits of active play for children during the day.

All children should have a complete change of seasonally appropriate clothing, including socks, shoes, and underwear. The children will be going outside as often as possible. Please have jackets, hats, mittens/gloves, boots, and snow pants available for cold weather play. All items **MUST BE LABELED** – we cannot be held responsible for unmarked items.

# FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips are carefully planned to assure a safe, healthy experience. Stepping Stones strives to achieve an adult-to-child ratio of 1:3. Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance and will include destination, date, time, cost, mode of transportation, and any other pertinent information. There will also be a permission slip that the Parents/Guardians will be required to fill out completely and accurately. All field trip costs for the child/ren are included in the yearly tuition. There may be an opportunity for Parent/Guardian volunteers to chaperone the field trip for their child’s class. Parent/Guardian volunteers will need to pay the field trip cost in advance and obtain all clearances required in order to attend the field trip.

Required Parent Clearances are as follows:

https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/Child-Abuse-Clearances.aspx

<http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_135249.pdf>

* Child Abuse
* Criminal History
* FBI Fingerprinting
* National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR)
* EOP Training (Emergency Operations)

If your child is not regularly scheduled to attend Stepping Stones on a field trip day and you would like them to participate in the trip, please discuss this with your child’s teacher/director beforehand. Your child will be permitted to attend if required ratios can be maintained with his/her addition to the class. If your child will attend Stepping Stones all day on a field trip day in addition to their normally scheduled days, an extra day fee will be applied. Children who are not fully potty trained will be required to have a family chaperone present to attend the field trip.

# TRANSITION

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 with the program**- Children will transition based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements and space availability.  Parents are given a transition schedule and welcome material for the new classroom.   Over a two-week period children will gradually spend more time in the new classroom to help them get acclimated to the new environment and routine.
* **Transition to Kindergarten-** Teachers attend a kindergarten prep meeting with local school districts in which the district provides skills needed to successfully transition to kindergarten and requirements for registration.  Parents are notified of the registration timeline and will assist, if needed, with any documentation required.  Stepping Stones also hosts a “Get to Know You” night with the school age teachers from Stepping Stones.

# ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Electronic Media are limited for the children’s use each day. Internet sites or software are pre-screened to contain non-violence and high-quality educational content.

# TOILET TRAINING

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child’s physical and emotional abilities and your family’s concerns.

# PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

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.
* 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](mailto:board@stepstonescc.org).

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Parents/Guardians are invited to serve on Stepping Stones volunteer Board of Directors and have direct influence and insight into program policies. The Board meets regularly once a month. If you are interested in serving when it becomes time to appoint new members, please call the Main Center at 724-625-2199 and ask to speak with the Director.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

## CHILDREN WITH SEVERE ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If your child has an allergy or special medical condition, please inform the center 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 situation. A Special Care Plan will be provided to you to more fully inform us of your child’s situation.

## ILLNESS PREVENTION

Both parents and childcare providers want to keep children healthy. In spite of everyone’s efforts, children do get sick. Young children get sick more often because their immune systems do not fight illness as well as an adult’s and they have no experience with many of the germs that cause infection. Contagious diseases spread from one person to another. 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, caring adults can limit the spread of infections.

In order to prevent the spread of illnesses of children and teachers, we engage in the following recommended childcare hygiene practices:

* Children are taught and assisted with proper hand washing techniques.
* Children and staff will wash their hands upon arrival, after toileting, before eating and before serving food.
* Toys, especially those used by infants and young toddlers, are washed, and disinfected on a regular basis.
* Tables are cleaned with a sanitizing solution before and after lunch and snacks.
* Sleeping mats are disinfected monthly at a minimum.

We use the reference guide that is dedicated to the health of all children entitled Caring for Our Children for our program.

## MEDICAL EXCLUSION GUIDELINES

Children will be excluded from the childcare 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 childcare 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 Stepping Stones, 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.

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

* A temperature equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees F axillary (underarm) or 101 degrees F aurally (in the ear)
* More than one episode of vomiting
* More than two 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, significant sneezing, or nasal drainage

**Your child can resume care once they are symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication.**

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The Director(s) must be informed of any child who has a communicable disease. Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the Director if a child with a communicable disease has been at Stepping Stones within a two-week period preceding the diagnosis of the disease. The Director(s) will then notify the Parents/Guardians of all other children who were in contact with the sick child by posting a notification outside of the effected classroom(s) and in the entry ways. All information will be kept confidential and is used simply to keep other families informed of illnesses in the center.

## COVID-19

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

## BITING

Biting most commonly occurs during the ages of 1 and 3 years old. We try not to view biting as “bad” behavior, but rather as “inappropriate.” Our primary goal when dealing with both the biter(s) and the child(ren) who are being bitten is to support each child and family as we move through this developmental period.

With this philosophy in mind, we use many preventative strategies within the classroom. These include but are not limited to providing an age-appropriate room arrangement and curriculum, multiples of toys, close supervision, activity changes for stimulation, and redirection.

When biting occurs:

1. The child who has done the biting is told, “no biting” and is redirected to another activity.
2. The child who receives the bite is comforted. The area is washed with soap and water. An ice pack is applied to the area.
3. An injury report is completed.
4. A biting report form is completed when necessary.
5. The Parents/Guardians of each child are notified. The Parent/Guardian of the biter must sign the biting report and the Parent/Guardian of the child who received the bite must sign the accident report. (One copy of these reports is sent home, and one copy is kept at the center.)
6. Information about the biter and the child who received the bite is kept confidential. Names are not provided to either Parents/Guardians by the staff.
7. The staff who work with the child meet to talk about the biting report form and to evaluate the incident to develop an intervention plan
8. If repeated incidences of biting occur from the same child, a Director is asked to observe the room and join the staff team in developing an intervention plan.

Our goal is to find solutions that acknowledge the developmental nature of biting behavior and to provide solutions that demonstrate respect for the children and families involved.

## DISPENSING OF MEDICATION

Parent or legal guardians may administer medication to their own children during the childcare day.

### PROCEDURE FOR MEDICATIONS

1. For prescription medications, Parents/Guardians will provide caregivers 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.
2. For over-the-counter medications, Parents/Guardians 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.
3. Instructions for the dose, frequency, method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided to the childcare staff in writing (using the medication log).
4. Medications will be kept at the temperature recommended for that type of medication in a sturdy, child-resistant, locked container that is inaccessible to children and prevents spillage.
5. A medication log will be maintained by the facility staff to record the instructions for giving the medication, consent obtained from Parents/Guardians, amount, time of administration, and the person who administered each dose of medication. Spills, reactions, and refusal to take medication will be noted on this log.

Families are encouraged to see if a dosage schedule can be arranged that does not involve the hours the child is in the childcare facility. Whenever possible the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

## EMERGENCY CARE PROCEDURES

For your child’s safety and protection, all Stepping Stones staff are certified in Pediatric First Aid and Pediatric 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/Guardians will be contacted immediately. If Parents/Guardians are unable to be reached, we will contact the emergency numbers on your Emergency Contact Form.

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

## INFANT SLEEPING POLICY

Stepping Stones follows the advice of the United States Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics on sleeping positions for infants. They strongly recommend that infants sleep on their backs to reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Our policy at Stepping Stones is that all infants (birth to age one) will be placed on their backs to sleep. Babies who roll over on their tummies while sleeping will be allowed to assume whatever position they choose. If a baby has a health condition for which back sleeping is a problem, a physician’s note will be required. The note shall include the alternative position and an explanation of the infant’s condition.

## SCHOOL DELAYS/CANCELLATIONS EMERGENCY CLOSING POLICY

In the event of inclement weather/school district closures for Pine Richland, Stepping Stones will follow the following procedures:

* School closure due to inclement weather- Stepping Stones will also close to ensure safety of students and staff
* School delays due to inclement weather- Stepping Stones will operate at an 8:00 am start time
* School closures/delays due to temperature- Stepping Stones will remain open for our regular program hours.

## FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

On a monthly basis, all children and staff participate in Fire Drills. Caregivers take time to prepare the children for what will happen during a fire drill, how to react, and why they are important. Four times a year, we conduct Emergency Drills. Our childcare staff are trained in how to act in various types of emergencies, we have an Emergency Drill to prepare the children for different types of emergencies we may encounter.

## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Our Emergency Operations Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

* **Immediate evacuation:** Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc.
* **In-place sheltering:** Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
* **Evacuation:** Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to an alternate location. Once the children are assembled at the alternate safe location, Parents/Guardians will be contacted.

In the event relocation is necessary, we will locate to the following sites:

Main Center:

1st Pine Community Center

2nd Richland Elementary

* **Modified Operation**: May include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children but may be necessary in a variety of situations. We will share information through our Facebook page, family e-mail list, and our website ([www.stepstonescc.org](http://www.stepstonescc.org))
* **Minimum Lockdown**: Staff and children may freely move inside the building but cannot exit the building. No one will enter or leave the building during the minimum lockdown.
* **Maximum Lockdown**: Staff and children will locate to the safest area of the classroom. Doors are closed, blinds are shut, and they will stay in that area of the classroom until otherwise noted.

## INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORTS

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident (scraped knee, small bumps, bite) during the course of the day, a staff member will administer first aid and complete an Injury Report. The report will indicate the date, time, location of the incident, and what happened. When the Parent/Guardian arrives for pick up, he/she will be asked to look over the Injury Report and sign it. The original is sent home with the Parent/Guardian; the copy will stay on file at Stepping Stones for one year. Should an injury result in follow up care (emergency room, Med Express, etc.), 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 provided by Stepping Stones for children ages 1 year and older. Breakfast is served at approximately 8:30-9:00 AM.

Lunches (including a drink) are provided by the Parents/Guardians. Please place your child’s lunch in the classroom refrigerator upon arrival. Each classroom has a microwave where the childcare staff can heat up foods. Please send all lunches ready to eat!

Afternoon snack is provided by Stepping Stones for children ages 1 year and older. Snack is served from approximately 3:00-3:30 PM.

Stepping Stones is licensed by the Allegheny County Health Department. In order to maintain required regulations, we ask that all infant families send their child with a spoon for each feeding, which will be sent home at the end of each day to be washed and returned. Any child using a sippy cup should be sent with a clean, empty cup for breakfast and snack (two clean, empty cups per day). We will provide the drink (for those children ages 1 year and older) but we ask that you send in a cup to use. These cups will be sent home at the end of each day to be washed and returned.

All meals served to children are served at no separate charge regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. There is no discrimination in admission policy, meal service, or the use of facilities.

# PHOTOGRAPHS

No outside agency or individual will be allowed to photograph your child without your consent. The staff reserves the right to take photographs of the children for educational/curricular purposes without specific consent. Children are identified by first name and age only when these photographs are used at the center. When completing annual registration forms, families can choose whether or not to allow photos of their child to be used on brochures, pamphlets, or our organization’s website (without identifying information).

# STAFF IDENTIFICATION BADGES

As a part of Stepping Stones security measures, all staff are provided with a photo identification badge.

# RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS

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

1. No child will be released without the presence or permission of the custodial parent or legal guardian.
2. 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.
3. If your child is to be picked up by someone not listed on the Emergency Contact Form, you must call the office with the name of the person, a brief description, and approximate time of arrival. We will not release the child to any unauthorized person without your prior notification.
4. Stepping Stones Director(s) will notify the police if an unauthorized person seeks custody of a child.

All families are given a unique 4-digit security code at enrollment. This code should not be shared with anyone not needing that information to pick up a child in our care. Whenever a family leaves our center for any reason, the code is deactivated. Anyone visiting our Center without a security code will be asked to identify themselves and their purpose before being admitted to the building.

# 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, in the judgment of the responsible personnel at the facility, a Parent/Guardian or designated person appears to be unable to safely transport a 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 (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Stepping Stones 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/Guardians shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. **Stepping Stones cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by the request of another, regardless of the reason.**

# CONFIDENTIALITY

Within Stepping Stones, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees who have a “need to know.” Confidential and sensitive information about staff, and other families and/or children will not be shared with Parents/Guardians, 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. You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of Stepping Stones are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

Stepping Stones 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 for information which is not necessary for them to know will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

# MANDATED REPORTING AND 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 are considered mandated reporters under this law. The employees of Stepping Stones are not required to discuss their suspicions with Parents/Guardians 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 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

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by Stepping Stones Children’s Center. Any family and employee entering into an employment arrangement must provide a completed and signed waiver (available from the office) to be kept on file at the Center. (See Attached, last page).

# PARENT/GUARDIAN CODE OF CONDUCT

Stepping Stones requires the Parents/Guardians of enrolled children at all times, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Stepping Stones 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, but is the responsibility of each and every Parent/Guardian or adult who enters the center. Parents/Guardians are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents/Guardians who do not adhere to this 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/Guardian or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on agency property 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/Guardian 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/GUARDIANS, OR ADULTS

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today’s society Stepping Stones 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/Guardians must be responsible for and in control of their behavior at all times.

## PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN

While Stepping Stones does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the child care facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for Parents/Guardians to verbally abuse their children. Parents/Guardians are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

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

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one Parent/Guardian to seek out another Parent/Guardian to discuss their child’s inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or Site Director’s attention.

## SMOKING

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

## CONFRONTATIONL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, OTHER PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR ASSOCIATES

While it is understood that Parents/Guardians will not always agree with the employees of Stepping Stones or the Parents/Guardians 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.

Purpose:

The purpose of the complaint process is to identify the means for stating and resolving the complaints of families of Stepping Stones Children’s Center.

Steps in the Process:

1. Parents who believe that a problem exists should first discuss the issue(s) with the Director. This action is encouraged within 30 days of the incident.
2. The Director will hear the complaint and perform whatever investigation is necessary to provide the complainant with an informal assessment of the matter.
3. The Director’s informal assessment shall be concluded within ten days of receipt of the complaint. A written determination will be given to the family at that time.
4. If resolution with the Director is not satisfactory, the family may file a written complaint with the Board of directors. A formal complaint must be filed within fifteen days of receipt of the Director’s recommendation for resolution.
5. The Board shall act to resolve the problem at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Attendance by the family at the meeting is encouraged.
6. The Board may deliberate on complaints in a closed session and provide resolution of the complaint in open session. The Board of Directors will notify the family of the decision in writing within one week of making a decision.

# DISMISSAL

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

Parents/Guardians 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 Director or designee will assist the Parents/Guardians in gathering the child’s belongings and are required to leave the property in a calm and respectful manner immediately. The security code for the family will be deactivated.

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

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

1. The child’s behavior prevents the child from participating in program activities with other children on a daily basis.
2. 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.
3. The cost of providing a safe, enjoyable, and supportive environment for the child with special needs exhausts the center’s resources.
4. 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 Administrative Director.

Our policies and procedures are reviewed and revised as necessary on a regular basis.

“The US Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.)”

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