

FAMILY HANDBOOK

Child Care Policies

Extended Day Child Care Programs



Revised 2016

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WELCOME!

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

Stepping Stones has two Extended Day locations. The Main Center is located on Warrendale Road (the red belt) next to the Pine-Richland High School. The Main Center is NAEYC accredited and has earned a Star 4 Accredited level in Keystone Stars! Stepping Stones at Crossroads on Route 910 (the orange belt) is located in the Crossroads Presbyterian Church. Our Crossroads site is currently a Star 2 designation, working up in the STARS Program. Both sites are open Monday through Friday from 6:30 A.M. until 6:30 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 Public Welfare Regulations including the Child Abuse, Criminal Record, and FBI clearances.

Our extended day child care programs provide breakfast each morning and a snack in the afternoon after rest time. We participate in CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) which monitors monthly the meals we serve.

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 one of the site directors.

STEPPING STONES CHILDREN'S CENTER
Extended Day Program Contacts and Information

Main Center

712 Warrendale Road
Gibsonia, PA 15044

724-625-2199 (Phone)

724-625-2254 (Fax)

main@stepstonescc.org

NAEYC Accredited
Keystone Stars Accredited

www.stepstonescc.org

Tax ID #: 25-1370951

United Way Contributor Choice #: 285

Center Hours: 6:30 AM – 6:30 PM

Days of Operation: July 1st, 2015 through June 30th, 2016
Stepping Stones Children's Center will be closed the following days:

July 3 (Independence Day)
September 7 (Labor Day)
October 12 (Staff In-Service)
November 26 & 27 (Thanksgiving)
December 24 & 25 (Winter Break)
January 1 (New Year's Day)
January 18 (Staff In-Service)
March 25 (Spring Holiday)
May 30 (Memorial Day)

Stepping Stones Children's Center is licensed by the PA Department of Public Welfare.

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 Public Welfare 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 Administrative Director is responsible for carrying out the overall mission of Stepping Stones Children's Center, implementing Board actions, updating the Board and general administrative functions. The Site 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.

I. MISSION STATEMENT

Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc., is a private, non-profit organization whose mission is the total development of children. We are committed to providing high quality education and child care in an environment that fosters positive relationships among our children, staff, families and the community we serve.

II. 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:

- A future that is brighter, safer, and more productive for children
- More effective networking among community organizations
- Wider understanding of the needs of children and families
- Early identification and intervention for children with special needs
- Secure jobs for child care workers in a supportive working environment
- A stronger and more stable local economy

III. VALUES 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 care and education for children and youth
- Monitor the economic climate in the organization to foster quality programming and growth
- Design and maintain high quality physical environments that are safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing
- Promote innovative and creative development of programs, services, and solutions for children and their families
- Respect and foster the unique talents and abilities of each child
- Model behaviors that teach tolerance and respect for differences
- Create a spirit of cooperation and partnership with and among community organizations
- Serve as advocates for children, families, and the early childhood profession
- Maintain high standards of ethical conduct
- Maintain high standards of professionalism
- Encourage teamwork

IV. PHILOSOPHY

Stepping Stones Children's Center, Inc., provides an environment in which children can strive to achieve their full potential for social, intellectual, emotional and physical growth. Each child is unique and special with very individual gifts and strengths that must be nurtured by the adults in their lives. The way in which a child grows and realizes these gifts and strengths depends on Parent/Guardian guidance, love and understanding, and the positive growth experiences of the extended day child care.

Our qualified professional employees are responsive to the needs and developmental progress of each child. In an atmosphere of acceptance, children develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults and peers and a sense of belonging. The development of the child's self-worth and feelings of competency are a priority.

Our child care programs help children achieve developmental goals that are very critical in the early years. To accomplish these goals, we provide an environment that is comfortable and safe. The environment has stimulating materials and equipment and is staffed with knowledgeable, caring adults. The Group Supervisors plan daily programs of activities that help children become successful achievers who have initiative, independence and good feelings about themselves.

We strive to develop in children an awareness and acceptance of other people. We want them to become avid learners and to be well prepared to meet the challenges of going to school when that time arrives. When the children leave our center, we want them to have a positive approach to living that will sustain them throughout their later years.

V. 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 Administrative Director, the Site Director(s), and the parent or legal guardian will meet to review the child's care requirements. To help the program staff better understand the child's needs, the staff will ask the parent or legal guardian of a child with special needs to complete a "Special Care Plan" in conjunction with the child's health care provider(s). The program will attempt to accommodate children with special needs consistent with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If the program is unable to accommodate the child's needs as defined by the child's health care provider(s) or the "Special Care Plan" without posing an undue burden as defined by federal law, the Administrative Director will work with the Parent/Guardian to find a suitable environment for the child.

I. ENROLLMENT

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. **Registration Form**
2. **\$50.00 Annual Registration Fee (non-refundable)**
3. **Child Survey**
4. **Emergency Contact/Parent/Guardian Consent Form**
(Please fill ALL spaces, sign, and date)
5. **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 Public Welfare 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.

II. TUITION POLICIES

Extended Day Child Care

- The **Regular Rate** applies to tuition payments received between the 2nd and 10th of the month.
- The **Discount Rate** applies to tuition payments received on or before the 1st of the month.
- **After the 10th of the month, if tuition has not been paid, child care services may be withheld until payment is received or payment arrangements are made.**
- If your family should have an unusual or emergency type financial problem that may affect your prompt payment, please call our main office to talk with the Administrative Director. We can often arrange a payment schedule which will meet your family's needs.
- Children must be enrolled on a full-time basis for a **minimum of three days per week.**
- 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.
- Tuition includes breakfast and an afternoon snack for children ages 1-5 years.

• **The program is available year-round. The center is closed and care will not be provided on the following holidays:**

Independence Day (7/3/15)

Labor Day (9/7/15)

*Columbus Day (10/12/15)

Thanksgiving (11/26/15, 11/27/15)

Winter Break (12/24/15, 12/25/15)

New Year Holiday (1/01/16)

*Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (1/18/16)

Spring Break (3/25/16)

Memorial Day (5/30/16)

*Professional Development Days for Staff

- A **Holding Fee of \$150.00 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. This is a non-refundable fee and is not applied to future tuition.
- **Because program expenses for center programs are consistent even when your child misses time due to illness, vacation, 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, CCIS child care subsidy (for residents of Allegheny and Butler counties), and Stepping Stones Recruitment Incentive Program by calling the Stepping Stones office at **724-625-2199.**
- A \$25.00 charge will be assessed for each check returned unpaid due to **non-sufficient funds.**



**Extended Day Care Program
2015-2016 Tuition Schedule
Effective July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016**

Care Provided	# Days/Week	Discounted Tuition Rate <small>If paid on/before the 1st of the month</small>	Regular Tuition Rate <small>(If paid after the 1st of the month)</small>
Infant Care	2	\$587.00	\$617.00
Monthly Rates	3	\$829.00	\$869.00
(6 weeks – 14 months)	4	\$1035.00	\$1088.00
	5	\$1206.00	\$1266.00
Extra Day of Care \$68.00			
Toddler Care	2	\$567.00	\$595.00
Monthly Rates	3	\$796.00	\$836.00
(15 months – 35 months)	4	\$991.00	\$1040.00
	5	\$1152.00	\$1208.00
Extra Day of Care \$66.00			
Preschool Care	2	\$485.00	\$509.00
Monthly Rates	3	\$688.00	\$722.00
(36 months to start of Kdg)	4	\$864.00	\$908.00
	5	\$1016.00	\$1066.00
Extra Day of Care \$56.00			

- **Annual Registration:** A fee of \$50.00 per child (non-refundable) is due upon registration.
- **Sibling Discount:** A 10% off tuition for older siblings is valid for children enrolled in any Stepping Stones program, excluding School-Age Summer Camp.
- **Late Pick-Up Fee:** Stepping Stones closes at 6:30 PM. If picking your child up after 6:30 PM becomes the routine rather than the exception, a late fee of \$10.00 per half hour or fraction thereof, will be charged. This fee is to be paid before your child returns to the facility. (Please refer to the Parent Handbook for complete Late Pick-Up Policy details)
- **Non-refundable Holding Fee:** A fee of \$150.00 per child is payable if you temporarily 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. This is a non-refundable fee and is not applied to future tuition. If your child's time out of the program exceeds three months, Stepping Stones reserves the right to fill your child's spot.
- **Tuition Refund:** A two week notice of child withdrawal is required to suspend the billing and receive a refund for any unused services.
- **Recruitment Incentive:** Save 10% off one month's tuition by referring a new family to Stepping Stones. (Please see policy for complete Recruitment Incentive Program details)
- Please make checks payable to Stepping Stones Children's Center. Checks can be given to a staff member at your child's program or mail to: Stepping Stones Children's Center

712 Warrendale Road Gibsonia, PA 15044

ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

I. ARRIVAL

Stepping Stones opens at 6:30 AM. You and your child may enter the center at 6:30 (no earlier please, as we need this time to prepare for the day). Please sign your child in on the Parent's/Guardian's Sign In/Out Sheet, and give information to the staff about any changes for the day. Please be sure your child's caregiver is aware that your child has arrived.

II. 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

III. 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 for center 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. 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

I. DEPARTURE

Stepping Stones closes at 6:30 PM. Please sign your child out on the Parent's/Guardian's Sign In/Out Sheet. 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.

II. LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Stepping Stones closes at 6:30 PM and staff are only scheduled and paid through 6:30 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 6:30 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 6:30 PM, a late fee of \$10.00 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 Administrative 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

I. 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 and are also available on our website, steppingstoneschildrenscenter.org

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. Gloves/mittens, hats and boots 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.

II. 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 Public Welfare Regulations.

III. PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION BULLETIN 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 hallway of each center where you can find information on our licensing, policies, and child development resources.

IV. FAMILY/STAFF COMMUNICATION

Stepping Stones will promote communication between families and staff by using written notes as well as informal conversations. Families are asked to leave written notes with important information so that all caregivers who work with the child can share the Parent's/Guardian's communication. Caregivers will write notes 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:

- a. Schedule a conference with your child's teacher.
- b. Schedule a conference with the Site Director(s).
- c. Bring the issue to the attention of the Administrative Director in writing.

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

V. CONFERENCES

Conferences are offered to families at certain developmental milestones (4, 8, 12, 18, 24, 30, and 36 months), twice per year in Preschool, and as needed, to discuss children's progress, accomplishments, and any difficulties you may have at home or at the program. Caregivers will use daily observations of children to complete child evaluations (Ages and Stages completed within 45 days of enrollment, Ounce completed at developmental milestones (4, 8, 12, 18, 24, 30, and 36 months), and Work Sampling completed two times per year in Preschool (Fall and Spring). 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. Observations and evaluations are also entered into the Early Learning Network online database (with parental permission) as part of our affiliation with the Keystone STARS Program.

VI. 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.

VII. TOYS 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.

VIII. 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.

IX. 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 must be paid in advance in order for your child to attend. There may be an opportunity for Parent/Guardian volunteers to chaperone the field trip for their child's class.

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 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.

X. TRANSITION

Your child's transition in child care should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to center. Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition between learning programs. Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will speak with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

Transition to elementary school. Our Pre-K teachers work with local elementary school teachers to ensure smooth transition from the early childhood setting to the elementary classroom. Those

families in the Pine-Richland School District may want to consider enrollment in our Kindergarten program or Before/After School programs to help with this transition and meet additional care needs.

XI. 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.

XII. 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

We encourage you to come for a visit anytime. Parents/Guardians are free to call during the day to give additional information or see how their children are doing. Parent/Guardian involvement certainly enhances our child care programs, and we welcome your continued support. If you have a special talent or hobby that you would like to share, we welcome your visit. Please arrange a convenient date and time with your child's teacher. When visiting with your child's class, we ask that you please sign in at the office and sign out upon your departure.

Families are encouraged to utilize our "Open Door Policy" and stop by or call the center at any time to enquire about their child(ren). In addition to our "Open Door Policy" Stepping Stones Children's Center operates with a belief that families are highly encouraged to speak with their child's teacher and raise any concerns that they may have regarding the program and other issues that may be effecting their child. Stepping Stones Children's Center believes that open communication between families and Staff is vital to providing the highest quality education and care for our children. Stepping Stones Staff work openly with families to explore agreeable solutions to any concerns or suggestions that families may have and then incorporate these changes and ideas into classroom lessons and programming.

Stepping Stones Children's Center's teachers are available for conferences upon request and have also developed multiple means of communication such as child daily reports, parent notebooks, and casual conversation at "pick up" and "drop off" times.

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 and ask to speak with the Administrative Director.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

I. PRE-ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Each child is required to complete a pre-enrollment packet of information. This packet is to be returned to the center's office prior to the child's first day of attendance. All children are required to have an updated Health Assessment form filled out by a licensed medical professional in their file. The Health Assessment form must be completed and returned within the first 30 days of enrollment.

II. 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. For certain instances, we have developed steps to follow in the event of a severe allergic or medical reaction or situation. See below for further information.

A. Diabetes: Hypoglycemia Episode

Hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, happens when blood glucose drops below a normal level, approximately 60 mg/dl. Extremely low blood sugar levels can lead to severe symptoms that require medical attention.

The feelings (symptoms) associated with low blood sugar are called "insulin reactions". Those symptoms and the blood sugar level that triggers the symptoms can differ from child to child. Each child tends to develop his/her own set of symptoms so, after 1 or 2 episodes, you will learn to quickly recognize an insulin reaction. The blood sugar level should be tested using the child's test kit as soon as you suspect a low blood sugar.

Possible symptoms of insulin reaction:

- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Cold Sweat (unlike sweat from playing hard)
- ✓ Staring at nothing
- ✓ Drowsiness
- ✓ Hunger
- ✓ Dizziness
- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Rapid Heart Rate
- ✓ Shakiness
- ✓ Paleness
- ✓ Weakness
- ✓ Unsteady When Walking
- ✓ Acting Differently than Considered Normal For That Child

Insulin Reactions usually come on suddenly, over a period of minutes rather than hours, and all insulin reactions must be treated right away. Give the child a source of quick acting sugar

(approximately 15 grams of carbohydrate) as directed by the parent in the detailed hypoglycemia emergency action plan.

Allow the child to sit quietly and wait for the treatment to take effect. This is the hardest part as people who experience low blood sugar do not feel the results of the treatment right away and are often tempted to continue to eat until the symptoms go away. This could result in high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) later in the day. Recheck the blood sugar in 15 minutes. If it is still low, the child should have an extra 10 to 15 grams of carbohydrate. Repeat the process until the blood sugar is in its normal range.

If a low blood sugar episode is not treated, the child may suffer a seizure or lose consciousness. If the child loses consciousness, he/she will need immediate medical attention. One staff person should CALL 911 to have the child transported to an appropriate medical facility. Another staff person should administer Glucagon if the parent has provided a Glucagon Rescue Kit. (The parent should sign a permission form when providing the Glucagon Rescue Kit which should be kept attached to the kit.) Glucagon is a natural hormone that rapidly causes the level of sugar in the blood to rise. By injecting Glucagon even before emergency help arrives, further complications can be prevented and it can help the child recover. Specific instructions for the preparation and administration of Glucagon should be provided in the detailed hypoglycemia emergency action plan.

Glucagon may cause the child to vomit so be sure to gently roll the child onto his/her side after giving the injection. Although this does not always happen, you should be prepared in case it does.

All care givers in the room as well as all members of the Administrative Team should be trained in the preparation and use of the Glucagon kit.

III. ILLNESS PREVENTION

Both parents and child care 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 child care 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 child care 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.

IV. MEDICAL EXCLUSION GUIDELINES

Children will be excluded from the child care 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 child care 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 degrees F axillary (underarm) or 101 degrees F orally (in the ear)
- More than one episode of vomiting
- More than one episode 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

V. COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The Site Director(s) must be informed of any child who has a communicable disease. Parents/Guardians are asked to notify the Site 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 Site 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). All information will be kept confidential and is used simply to keep other families informed of illnesses in the center.

VI. 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 personally. 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 Site 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.

VII. DISPENSING OF MEDICATION

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

Procedure

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 child care 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 child care facility. Whenever possible the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has any type of reaction.

VIII. 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.

IX. 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.

X. 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. Twice a year, we conduct Emergency Drills. Our child care staff are trained in how to act in various types of emergencies. Once in the fall and the spring, we have an Emergency Drill to prepare the children for different types of emergencies we may encounter.

XI. 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 Crossroads
2nd Richland Elementary

Crossroads: 1st Main Center
2nd Wexford 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.

Please listen to **KDKA** for announcements relating to any of the emergency actions listed above. We will also try to share information through our Facebook page, family e-mail list, and our website (www.stepstonescc.org)

XII. 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.

XIII. MEALS

Breakfast is provided by Stepping Stones for children ages 1 year and older. Breakfast is served at approximately 8:30 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 child care 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 participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsored by the USDA to serve healthy breakfasts and snacks to your children. Meals served here must meet nutrition requirements established by the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program. Good nutrition today means a stronger tomorrow!

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 under the Child and Adult Care Food Program 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.

XIV. 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).

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 Site 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 ORDER

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 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 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.

I. 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.

II. 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.

III. 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.

IV. 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.

V. CONFRONTATIONAL 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.

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 Site 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 Administrative Director if they wish to return to the property. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Administrative Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or Parents/Guardians.

Child care 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, child care 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.

Babysitting Release and Hold Harmless Agreement

Student's Name: _____

Parent Names: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: _____

I fully understand that _____ may babysit for my family, but she does so not as a Stepping Stones Children's Center employee but as an independent hire. Each family is responsible for their own research, referral, and background checks; none are implied or endorsed. I hereby acknowledge that I am voluntarily choosing to employ this person for child care, and agree to assume any such risks that may arise from doing so. We are aware of the program's No Babysitting Policy and choose to take exception to that policy and accept any and all consequences of my choice to do so.

I hereby release, discharge and agree not to sue Stepping Stones Children's Center, its agents, employees or other guests for any injury, death, or damage to or loss of personal property arising out of or in connection with my employment of this person for child care, pet care, house sitting or any other situation of employment either in my home or any other location, regardless of cause, including negligence.

In consideration for being permitted to hire this person for personal employment outside Stepping Stones Children Center, I hereby agree for my child(ren), heirs, administrators, executors and assigns, that I shall indemnify and hold harmless Stepping Stones Children's Center from any and all claims, demands, actions or suits arising out of or in connection with hiring this person.

I understand that I cannot request, nor can this employee accept adjusting their work schedule with Stepping Stones Children's Center to accommodate my babysitting needs.

I have carefully read this *Babysitting Release and Hold Harmless Agreement* and fully understand its contents. I am aware that it is a full release of all liability and sign it of my own free will. As parent/guardian of this minor(s), I take full responsibility for all child care decisions, and all events resulting from those decisions.

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____