



Parent Handbook

2205 2nd Ave.
Muscatine, IA 52761

Phone: (563) 264-1871 or (563) 264-8117
Director (Shawna) Cell: (563) 299-8984
Fax: (563) 288-4098

Email Address: steppingstoneslearningcenter@outlook.com

www.steppingstoneslearningcentermusc.com

Table of Contents

Confidentially.....	4
General Eligibility.....	4
Welcome.....	5-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Facility • Mission Statement • Statement of Philosophy 	
Personnel.....	6-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indirect Care Employees • Direct Care Employees • Volunteers/Substitutes • Visitor Policy 	
Communication.....	8-10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProCare Software • Social Media • Building Security / Video Surveillance Policy • Program Evaluations • Commitment 	
Program Description.....	11-15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Description • Classroom Placement/Advancement/Transition • Infant, Toddler, Pre-school Room Care • Developmental Screening • Personal Items & Toys 	
Hours of Operation.....	16-17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday Closing • Center Emergency & Personal Days 	
Child Care Center Fees.....	17-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late Pick Up Fee • Vacation / Illness Days • Extended Absence Fee • Subsidized Childcare Policy 	
Getting Started.....	21-26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation • Admission • Arrival and Departure • Access Policy • Special Accommodations Policy • Parking Policy • Discharge Policy 	

Supply Lists..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front & Back Infant Room • Younger & Older Toddler Room • 2-3 Yr. Old, 3 Yr. Old Room, 4-5 Yr. Old Room 	27-28
Safety Policies..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Sleep Policy • Pacifier Policy • Biting Policy • Discipline/Behavior Policy • Childcare Incident Reports 	28-35
Activity Policies..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation/Field Trip Policy • Non-Center Activity Policy • Holiday/Celebration Policy • School Pictures • Playground/Indoor Gym Policy 	36-38
Health and Safety Policy..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common Child Illnesses and Exclusions • Medication Administration • Rest Period Policy • Potty Training Policy • Cloth Diapers • Sunscreen & Insect Repellant Policy • Handwashing Policies • Tobacco & Nicotine Smoke Free Environment • Alcohol & Drug Policy • Gun Policy 	38-47
Emergency Procedures..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Evacuation • Evacuation of Immobile Infants • Labeled Emergency Exits • Access to Exits • First Aid Kits 	47-49
Emergency Healthcare Policies..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Precautions & Exposure to Blood or Body Fluids Policy • Medical and Dental Emergency 	49-50
Emergency Plans..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe Weather/Blizzard • Tornado • Fire • Bomb Threat 	50-52

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power Outage • Earthquake/Structural Damage • Chemical Spills • Intruder • Intoxicated/Substance Impaired Parents • Lost or Abducted Child • Pandemic 	52-54
Reporting Child Abuse & Neglect..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Reporter • Abuse Allegations Against an Employee • Childcare Center Licensing Consultant 	55-57
Nutrition Policies..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allergy Policies 	58-60
Staff Policies..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Staff Orientation • Staff/Child Ratio • Staff Handwashing 	60-62
Parent Involvement..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent’s Participation • Parent Acknowledgement 	62-63
Complaints & Center Contact Information.....	63

CONFIDENTIALITY

To protect each family’s confidentiality, Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC will not share information about a child or a child’s family with anyone who is not authorized to receive this information.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

Stepping Stones Learning Center is licensed by the Iowa Department of Human Services. In addition, the center is inspected annually by the Muscatine Fire Department and the Muscatine Health Inspector. We also have a Food Program inspector that comes in as well as inspectors from Childcare Resource and Referral. The license to operate is posted in the entry way, and the law and rules governing daycare facilities are available in the office for review.

WELCOME

Our entire staff welcomes your family to our program. We appreciate your confidence in our ability to care for your child during these most important years of growth, development, and learning.

We provide a secure and happy atmosphere for your child. Your child is offered an opportunity to participate in a full program balancing the areas of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth.

We are committed to promoting the well being of your child and your family. This Parent Handbook is designed to provide you with essential information concerning our program, policies, and day-to-day operations. Our policies have been developed to ensure the safety of the children and staff at Stepping Stones Learning Center. We will notify you in writing of any changes to this handbook. Please keep this handbook readily available for future reference. Should you have questions or concerns at any time, please do not hesitate to call the Center (563) 264-1871 or (563) 264-8117 or send an email to steppingstoneslearningcenter@outlook.com.

HISTORY

Owner/Director Shawna Martin first opened her home for daycare in 1997 when she could not find quality daycare for her two children. As the years went on and the number of children needing to be cared for grew, Shawna hired assistants to help her.

She had outgrown her home and decided to purchase a facility. The childcare center officially opened at 2205 2nd Ave. in 2007 it was called Happy Home Daycare Center.

Owner/Director Shawna Martin decided to change the name in 2013 to Stepping Stones Learning Center to make it more of a learning center for all the children. Stepping Stones Learning Center provides quality childcare and pre-school in a learning environment to children from 6 weeks to 8 years old. Our moto is “Every Step Counts”

FACILITY

All visitors must enter through the main entrance of the center and ring the bell for someone to help them. Parents will receive a code when they enroll to setup their account in our ProCare app. In the ProCare app the parents will be able to sign their child in and out of the center.

The classrooms are arranged so that all the children have easy access to developmentally appropriate activities and materials. Classrooms are equipped with a sink to facilitate easy clean up and to help with infection control. There are diaper changing spaces and bathrooms accessible to each age group. Stepping Stones Learning Center has two separate outdoor play areas, which include age-appropriate play materials designed with children’s abilities and interests in mind.

MISSION STATEMENT

Stepping Stones Learning Center is a leader in the child care profession, designing innovative and flexible opportunities that achieve superior outcomes for children and families. We are committed to creating a culture that continually improves services, sustains a high-quality team-oriented work environment, and provides “Quality Child Care”. At Stepping Stones Learning Center, our goal is to make every moment of your child’s day a wondrous learning experience!

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Stepping Stones Learning Center is concerned with the child’s total growth and development and provides opportunities for children which promote:

- Physical development
- Social competence in relating to adults as well as to peers.
- Emotional growth and control
- Cognitive learning.

Stepping Stones Learning Center is concerned with the development of children’s skills. These include:

- Social skills: consideration for others; cooperation
- Psychological skills: self esteem; independence
- Physical skills: walking, running; climbing
- Cognitive skills: ideas; words; colors; numbers; problem solving

PERSONNEL

Shawna and Michael Martin own Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC. Shawna Martin is the Director, Jacob Martin is the Co-Director, Michelle Sebastian is the On-Site Supervisor and the Head Cook, and Courtney Martin is the lead-teacher in the younger toddler room as well as the over-seer for our infant/toddler areas.

Stepping Stones Learning Center has one full time Lead Teacher in each classroom. Each Lead Teacher is required to have a Child Development Associate Degree or be working towards it. The Lead Teacher is responsible for planning and implementing the daily lesson plans. The Teacher Assistants are under the direct supervision of the Lead Teachers in each classroom. The Teacher Associates are responsible for assisting with the daily activities in the classroom and substituting for the Lead Teacher in his or her absence.

INDIRECT CARE EMPLOYEES

The following is a list of indirect care employees whose responsibilities vary greatly but are always available to assist with routine care as needed:

Director
Co-Director
On Site Supervisor

DIRECT CARE EMPLOYEES

Stepping Stones Learning Center utilizes the Department of Human Services' minimum requirements to guide our adult to child ratios. These requirements are as follows:

<u>AGE</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Front Infant Room - 6 weeks to 10 months	1:4
Back Infant Room – 10 months - 18 months	1:4
Younger Toddler Room – 16 months – 24 months	1:4
Older Toddler Room – 24 months – 2 ½ or 3 yrs.	1:7
2-3 yr. old Room – 2 ½ yrs. - 3 ½ yrs.	1:7 and/or 1:10
3 yr. old Room	1:10
4-5 yr. old Room	1:12

VOLUNTEERS / SUBSTITUTES

All volunteers and substitutes shall sign a statement indicating whether they have any of the following:

- (1) A conviction of any law in any state or any record of founded child abuse or dependent adult abuse in any state.
- (2) A communicable disease or other health concern that could pose a threat to the health, safety, or well-being of the children.

The center shall have the volunteer or substitute: (1) Complete form 595-1396 DHS Criminal History Record Check, Form B (2) Complete form 470-0643, Request for Child Abuse Information. (3) Sign a statement indicating the volunteer or substitute has been informed of the volunteer's or substitutes' responsibilities as a mandatory reporter.

VISITOR POLICY

All visitors must sign in and out of our visitor log located in the front entrance lobby on the shelf. They must state their name and the purpose of their visit. They must put what time they entered the building and when they leave must put the time left.

To ensure the security of all involved, picture identification is required for all unfamiliar visitors. In addition, visitors are required to be accompanied by a staff member and are never to be left alone while in the center.

COMMUNICATION

The Center functions best when a line of communication exists between the parents/guardian, directors, and the center staff. Parents will be notified of concerns and changes in center routines. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns involving center procedure with the directors. Through sharing information with appropriate persons, using a positive approach, all problems can be eliminated.

Parents can communicate with staff by calling the Center at 563-264-1871 or message through the ProCare app. Staff will be posting children's daily routine and activities on the app to share with the families. Parents can also communicate with the director through phone and/or email. Each family will be emailed a digital copy of the parent handbook at time of enrollment and if anything changes in the handbook, they will get an Amendment page emailed to them. Parents will read thru all the policies and producers that are outlined in the handbook.

If translation of Stepping Stones Learning Center parent handbook is needed we will use google translate to help families go thru the parent handbook. If families would like or need assistance with reading the handbook Stepping Stones Learning Center will have someone read aloud our parent handbook to them. If at any time you need assistance with any paperwork that you are given, please contact the director and we will help you out or contact someone that can be of assistance.

Stepping Stones Learning Center would like to stress the importance of open communication between parents, teachers and the director. Creating an environment where parents and staff communicate freely is crucial to the success of our program. If at any time you have questions, comments, or concerns you are encouraged to share them with the Director or Co. Director. Contact information is available on our website at www.stepsstoneslearningcentermus.com.

In addition to utilizing our web-based software, Stepping Stones Learning Center will also communicate with parents via phone calls, emails, conferences, etc. If you are not comfortable with web-based communication or do not have access to the internet, please let us know and we will do our best to make sure you receive all necessary information in another format. It is the parent's responsibility to check their child's backpack each night

for important paperwork, any take-home written communication from teachers, and projects that their child has made at the center.

State of Iowa regulations requires Infant and Toddler classrooms to record specific care notes to inform parents of their child's day. These notes may also contain information pertaining to the supplies needed for your child when those supplies are running low. Your child's care notes can be accessed by logging in to the ProCare website or by waiting until the end of the day when you receive your "daily report". These "daily reports" open the gateway of communication between teachers and parents. Please read through them carefully. For this reason, it is important that parents thoroughly read the "daily reports" sent via email.

PROCARE SOFTWARE

The quality of early childhood development is dependent on the connection between parents and childcare providers. Stepping Stones Learning Center uses a web-based child care software program called ProCare. ProCare is an excellent tool to help promote and simplify the parent /provider connection. ProCare can be accessed both via personal computer and/or a smart phone. Each parent will have their own unique ProCare user ID that can be entered when dropping-off or picking-up their child.

The ProCare software will also be used to keep an ongoing line of communication with parents. Throughout the day your child will have photos, videos, notes about their care, or other information uploaded to his or her account. By logging in to your ProCare account you can get a sneak peek into your child's day. Parents may also receive alerts or notifications from ProCare with information such as weather-related concerns or reminders of information in need of updating.

While accessing ProCare during the day is encouraged it is not required. Any information posted to your child's ProCare account will also be emailed to you at the end of the day in the form of a "daily report". After checking your child out for the day, a "daily report" will be generated and immediately sent to all parent/guardian email addresses on file. The daily report will include care notes, photos, and a summary of your child's day. If you do not wish to receive "daily reports" you are able to opt-out. If you are having trouble logging in to your ProCare account, are not receiving "daily reports" or forgot your log-in information, please contact Stepping Stones Learning Center for assistance.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please like our Facebook page & website www.steppingstoneslearningcentermusc.com Stepping Stones Learning Center will post information and special activities as well as pictures of the children. This is a secure page that only parents of children that attend the daycare and staff at the daycare can see the information. There is a permission slip that needs to be signed to allow your child's picture to be posted.

BUILDING SECURITY/VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY

To ensure the safety and security of all children, staff, parents, as well as the security of our childcare facility, Stepping Stones Learning Center is equipped with 24-hour video surveillance system recording. Security cameras are installed in classrooms, outdoor playground, hallways, main lobby, main entry door, and all the parking areas.

The system not only promotes the safety and security of the people and children on our premises, but it also assists Stepping Stones Learning Center in evaluating teachers to ensure they're providing the highest quality of care. The following are just some additional benefits of having security cameras installed in childcare centers: security cameras are an effective deterrent of crime; individuals tend to perform better when monitored by security cameras; and they can provide peace of mind to our parents and staff.

To protect the privacy of all children, parents, and staff, our surveillance system/security cameras are for internal purposes only. These recordings are not available for dissemination, nor viewing by Stepping Stones Learning Center parents, and members of the public. Only the Directors, Owner, and City or State Officials are allowed to view our security system. Security camera recordings will be deleted by PERMAR SECURITY every 20-30 days.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

Stepping Stones Learning Center asks parents to complete a program evaluation annually. The information gathered from these anonymous surveys is used by the center, directors, and staff to develop goals for our center and to improve the overall quality of care at our center.

A parent's point of view is different from a teacher's point-of-view. Therefore, parent feedback on the program evaluations is very important to the success of our program and satisfaction of our families.
discuss the differences.

COMMITMENT

Excellent quality childcare with skilled and loving caregivers can help fulfill a child's need to grow and learn about the world around them. Stepping Stones Learning Center has a commitment to sharing the responsibilities of parents in helping each child reach his/her potential in a safe, warm and loving environment.

We hope that you and your family will find our center and staff an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The goal of Stepping Stones Learning Center is to provide comprehensive childcare and preschool for children and families. We believe that each child is an individual who deserves to be respected and appreciated for his/her own unique character. We also believe that young children learn best by interacting actively with their environment.

We believe that the best curriculum for your child is one that provides for growth in all areas of development – Social: interactions with peers and adults; Emotional: affirmation, expression and understanding of a child’s own feelings and others’ feelings; Physical: large and small muscle skills, awareness of his/her body’s capabilities, Cognitive, intellectual, and creative: basic concepts and problem-solving skills that will lay the foundation for future learning.

At Stepping Stones Learning Center we incorporate fundamentals from Creative Curriculum & Gold Assessments which also aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards.

Currently there are seven program rooms that are grouped by age, developmental, behavioral, as well as mandated by the Iowa Department of Human Services. Each classroom maintains the mandated teacher/child ratio. Children move to next classroom based on their chronological age, developmental level, availability in the next classroom as well as the teachers & director’s evaluations.

CLASSROOM DESCRIPTIONS

The classrooms are as follows (again the age the child can be moved to a different classroom can vary depending on developmental, behavior, and ability to succeed in other room, as well as availability in the next room.) The following is what each classroom is licensed for:

Room:	Age:	Licensed:	Room:	Age:	Licensed:
Front Infant	6wks-10 months	12	2-3 yr. Old	2 ½ yrs. – 3 ½yrs.	21
Back Infant	10-18 months	8	3 yr. Old	3 yrs. – 4 yrs.	10
Younger Toddler	16-24 months	12	4-5 yr. Old	4 yrs. – 5 yrs.	12
Older Toddler	24 months – 2 ½ or 3 yrs.	18			

Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC total capacity is 93 children.

Each classroom operates autonomously; however, each program is a continuum of the previous to assure a smooth transition for the child. Program objectives in each of the four areas provide for structured and unstructured time and include a healthy blend of quiet and active time. Daily schedules are posted in each room and followed each day. A daily report is provided for each child in the Infant & Toddler Rooms and is available for all children upon request.

The Curriculum is developmentally appropriate for each classroom. In each classroom they have a structured day and incorporate circle time, story time, music time, arts & crafts, free play, center play, large/small motor activities, indoor/outdoor time, mealtimes, and rest time.

CLASSROOM PLACEMENT/ADVANCEMENT/TRANSITION

The developmental stage of your child, age of your child, along with available space based on staff-to-child ratios required by State Licensing Authorities, will determine which classroom your child will be assigned. Your child will go to the same room daily until it is time to transition to a new room.

Children will transition to a new room in accordance with licensing regulations, your child's ability to adjust, and enrollment needs. Before permanent transition is made, you will have the opportunity to meet with your child's teachers to discuss the transition process, your child's progress, and of course any concerns or questions you may have. The transitioning process usually takes a week or more. Please be assured that your child's teachers will do everything possible to make this a smooth and pleasant experience for your child.

Transition from one classroom to the next is dependent on space available. Therefore, a child's birthday will not be the only factor determination a child's transition to another room. The transition of your child from one classroom to the next does not necessarily affect the rate category you are billed. Class sizes mandated by DHS are established by the age of children in the room. For this reason, the billing category your child falls into is based entirely on his/her age.

FRONT & BACK INFANT CARE

Infant and toddler care offers an opportunity for our staff to share in a special relationship with your family. If your child is under 16-18 months of age, he/she will stay in the infant area. Each baby has a crib/cot and storage area of his/her own. Designated spaces are available for feeding, soothing and playing one-on-one with the caregiver.

As infants grow, staff socializes with the children and gives them words of what they see, hear, and feel. First opportunities for play are available on an individual developmental level.

The following guidelines will ease the transition for your infant or toddler into our program:

- ❖ Daily communication, thru the ProCare app, helps assure the best care of your child. You may use the ProCare app to send the child's teacher messages concerning your infant. Additionally, please update your child's information forms as your child's schedule changes.
- ❖ You also need to provide breastmilk or formula. Once your child starts eating baby food & or cereal, we provide that.
- ❖ Once child gets on table food, we will provide that for Breakfast, Lunch, and snack. The child's diet must meet nutritional needs to meet state requirements.
- ❖ Whole white milk is given to children under 2 yrs. old.
- ❖ We can puree our fruits and veggies that we provide to the children that are on table food for infants. If that is something you are interested in talk with the director, and we can explain it in more detail.
- ❖ The parent must label all items brought into the center. Sometimes it is busy at drop off and pick up time and without the child's belongings labeled they may get mixed up. The center will us a labeler and marks the child's bottles & caps with the child's name.
- ❖ Please provide at least two changes of clothing (season related) for use in emergencies. All items should be labeled with a permanent marker.
- ❖ Infants in the back infant room will be transitioned to cots about 12-14 months. If we feel the child is ready, we will transition them earlier.
- ❖ Older infants in the back infant room will be worked with at mealtimes drinking out of cups with no lids.

TODDLER ROOM & PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Children will be taught on an individual basis unique to their own stage of development. Children 16-18 months of age and older participate in age-appropriate activities which are planned to coordinate with specific weekly topics that are familiar to them.

Each week topics and activities are changed to keep children's interest at peak levels. Classrooms are arranged into learning centers which allow children the freedom to "play" and develop skills.

Opportunities are available for:

- ❖ Art and creative expression

- ❖ Science and discovery
- ❖ Sand and water play
- ❖ Language and reading development.
- ❖ Block and transportation play
- ❖ Imaginative and dramatic play
- ❖ Music and movement
- ❖ Small motor development
- ❖ Large motor skills
- ❖ Food experiences
- ❖ Problem solving and number concepts.
- ❖ Social awareness
- ❖ Health and safety
- ❖ Field trips and/or special visitors
- ❖ Self-help routines

The daily schedule is carefully planned and balanced between self-directed and adult-guided activities, and the rooms are arranged into learning and activity centers. During “free play”, children have the freedom to choose activities and playmates. Each child is offered group experiences, one-on-one interactions, as well as time to play alone if he/she chooses.

Children are encouraged to participate in activities but are never forced to do so. The activity plan for the week is posted for your review, and we encourage families to participate in our curriculum activities as often as they desire. We offer children an opportunity to play outdoors daily, weather permitting.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING/MONITORING TOOL POLICY

The Teaching Strategies GOLD™ is the assessment tool used to evaluate and track each child’s individual development during their time at Stepping Stones Learning Center. It is an on-going assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing, and documenting each child’s development. The same tool is used from birth through pre-school aged children, to allow a more complete picture of your child’s development. By tracking a child’s development, our teachers are able to plan activities that are appropriate for each child’s developmental abilities.

Parent-teacher conferences will typically be offered twice per year. The goal of the parent-teacher conference is to gain insight into your child’s development both in the center setting as well as the home setting. During conferences, your child’s development, and any goals you may have for your child will be discussed. Parents are encouraged to request conferences whenever they feel it necessary.

PERSONAL ITEMS AND TOYS

Due to possible choking hazards the following items are NOT allowed:

- Teething necklaces or bracelets
- Jewelry of any kind
- Small hair clips
- Clothing that the child wears all day with strings or hoods.

We do not allow any diaper bags brought into the center at all. Each child needs to bring in a bag daily so we can send home any required papers and/or dirty clothes. Children should not bring money, gum, food, small items or play guns or swords to the center.

Each child is given a cubby in which to store personal belongings. Children are allowed to bring one item of their choice on their show-n-tell day. Other than that day children are not allowed to bring in toys, blankets, and/or food from home. This eliminates broken and/or lost items brought from home. The Center has an abundance of toys for the children to play with and share. If your child is bringing a blanket or security item for rest time it must stay here at the center for the whole week and then we can send it home on Fridays to be washed. We do not allow items to come and go everyday due to germs and health hazards this may cause.

All items brought into the center must be labeled with the child's name. If items are not labeled, we will label them, so they don't get misplaced. When bringing in more supplies when your child is low, please make sure you are labeling the packages, so they don't get misplaced as drop off time is a very busy time.

All staff will and have the right to search each child's backpack that they bring into the center each day. We cannot allow things brought into the center that are dangerous to the children. If we find items that are not allowed in your child's backpack, we will take them out and put them in the main office and give them to you at pickup. Please as a parent/guardian check your child's bag before leaving home each day.

Since the activities planned for your child may involve paints, clay, and outdoor play, we suggest dressing your child in play clothes that are washable, roomy, and easy for them to manage. To help your child master self-help skills, try to select clothes that are designed to develop independence and self-confidence.

Shoes are required at the Center. We do not allow "flip flops" or loose sandals that do not buckle. This type of shoe makes outside play dangerous.

In the winter months we will send out a note when to bring in snow pants, hat, gloves, winter coats, & boots. These will need to be stored at the center for daily use. In the summer months we will send out a note when to bring in swimsuits, towels, & sunscreen.

HOURS OF OPERATION / HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Stepping Stones Learning Center is open Monday through Friday. The childcare center opens at 4 a.m. and closes at 5:30 p.m. Stepping Stones Learning Center runs a pre-school program Monday through Friday from 8:30a.m-3p.m. All children enrolled in the childcare center will also receive pre-school at no additional cost starting in our 2-3yr old room. The infant and toddler rooms also run a structured daily schedule with lots of learning activities. The curriculum that we run for all ages is Creative Curriculum which also aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards.

Our center is staffed for specific opening and closing times, and staff are not scheduled otherwise. A late pick up fee of \$10.00 is applied per child if they are not picked up by our closing time of 5:30. Then a late fee of \$5.00/min/child is applied for lateness after 5:35p.m. If no one is here by 5:35 p.m., we will contact the person you provided on your emergency contact lists.

The late pick-up fee will be sent to you thru the ProCare message by the director immediately after pickup and payment is required before child can return to daycare. If the late fee is not paid within 24 hours, then your child will be removed from the program until paid. If this becomes an ongoing problem, you will be talked to by the director and possibly removed from the program.

The Center is closed on all major holidays, which include:

New Years Eve
New Years Day
Good Friday
Memorial Day
July 4th
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day
Friday after Thanksgiving
Christmas Eve
Christmas Day
Day after Christmas
The Week Between Christmas and New Years the center will also be closed.
(3) Professional Development Days – February, June, October

Should any of these holidays fall on a weekend, we will be closed on the closest Friday and/or Monday. **Tuition is not waived or altered for closings.**

A calendar of center closures and upcoming events is determined annually and distributed to all families around August or September.

The Center will make every attempt to operate during periods of inclement weather. In case of severe weather conditions and/or emergency situations, the Director may decide to delay opening the center, close the center early or close the center for the day. Parents will receive a message through ProCare app for closing information.

Each family at time of enrollment will fill out a contact with times that their child will be attending the childcare center. These times must be followed. We staff our program depending on the children's enrollment. If these contacted times need changed you must let us know right away so we can update our records.

Professional Development Days are very important for the staff to have time to take training classes to better our care that we give, gather information from a guest speaker, or attend a conference. To accomplish this, we include three professional development days per year. These days will take place in the months of February, June, & October. The center will be closed to all children. **Tuition will still be paid as expected.**

CENTER EMERGENCY / PERSONAL DAYS

We can take 5 personal or emergency days during each calendar year if needed. We are a family-run childcare center. In the case of a family emergency or death of a loved one, we reserve the right to close and use emergency time. We will make every effort to give fair and ample warning so that other care may be set up. Parents will not be charge for these days that we would have to take off.

We do reserve the right to close for any reason in which we cannot operate in a safe manner. For example: loss of electricity, water, heat or in extreme circumstances loss of air conditioning, and medical epidemics. Childcare fees will still be required to be paid if this would happen.

CHILD CARE CENTER FEES

2023-2024 Full-Time Tuition Rates **Effective April 1, 2023**

Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC only offers full-time care for infants through pre-school age children and has very limited spaces for school-age children

Enrollment Fee-(non-refundable) \$40.00 (1) child (non-refundable at time of enrollment)
 \$70.00 (2 or more children)

Full-time consist of up to 55 hrs. a week. If over that then an additional \$10.00/hr. per child will be applied.

If paying with credit card, we will charge an additional 2.5% weekly to your child’s rate. If paying by ACH or cash, there is no additional fee applied.

Class Grouping:	Ages	Full-time Rate
Infants	6 weeks-16 months	\$232.10/wk.
Toddlers	16 months – 3 years	\$232.10/wk.
Pre-school	3 years – 5 years	\$200.00/wk.
Before or After School	Kindergarten – 6 th grade (Only if spots are available)	\$80/wk.
Before & After School	Kindergarten – 6 th grade (Only if spots are available)	\$105.00/wk.
Full-time School-Age	Kindergarten – 3 rd grade (Only if spots are available)	\$160.00/wk.

The school-age kids will be put in the 4-5 yr. old room

If 2 or more children are enrolled full time, there is a 10% sibling discount off the oldest child.

Tuition Rate Increase: Tuition rates are subject to change according to annual budget and operational assessments. If tuition rates are increased, families will be given a 30-day notice.

Payment is due every Friday of each week unless other arrangements have been made and noted in your family contract.

If you receive state assistance your copayment must be paid every Friday unless other arrangements have been made and noted in your family contract.

If payment is not paid by the following Monday, parents will receive written notice from the Director indicating a \$10.00 per day delinquent fee that will be assessed beginning Monday. If payments are not paid by Wednesday of the next week your child will not be allowed to return to childcare until it is paid in full with the \$10.00/day late fee included.

If account balances are two weeks behind, then your child's spot will be immediately terminated, and we will have no choice then to file a small claim on your account.

Children must arrive by 9:00 am to participate in our program. Exceptions will be allowed for medical appointments. Please notify us by 9:00am if your child has an appointment and will be in later or will not be in at all for the day.

If your child is a no call no show two days in a row, then it will serve as notice of intent to withdraw the child from care. A simple phone call or a message in the ProCare app is all it takes.

It is strongly encouraged that children are not left more than 10 hours per day. If children are in care more than 10 ½ hours a day, then there will be an additional charge of \$10.00/hr. per child.

If payment and delinquent fees are not paid by the following Monday, your child will be withdrawn from Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC.

- There is no additional cost for meals.
- There are no reductions for vacations, illness or center closing which result in the child's absence.
- Full tuition is due regardless of holidays.
- Parents will be given 2 weeks notification in case of a tuition increase.
- Written notice must be given to the Director at least two weeks in advance of the parent's intention to withdraw his/her child from care.
- Tuition payments must be kept current. Fees unpaid for two consecutive weeks will serve as notice of intent to withdraw the child from care.
- Parents are expected to submit a schedule of hours that they anticipate needing care. If the time the child is at the center exceeds the schedule without approval, the late pick-up fee will be applied.
- All Tuition payments will be auto deducted from the Tuition Express Payment Form that is filled out at time of enrollment. These payments will be processed on Thursday of each week and posted to the child's account on Fridays of each week unless otherwise noted on the payment contract form. If you are paying with a bank account (ACH) there is no additional charge for that, but if you choose to pay with a credit card there will be additional 2.5% fee added to your account weekly. If you pay with cash payments must be made on Friday of each week unless other arrangements have been made with Stepping Stones Learning Center.
- All returned ACH (checks) or credit card payments will result in a \$35.00 fee.

VACATION/ILLNESS DAYS

Full-time families will receive 5 free days (after 90 days of enrollment) to use at any time throughout the year for vacation and/or illnesses.

Five free days are per family not per child. The free days will start January 2 and expire on December 30 of each year.

A two-week advance notice of parents' upcoming vacation is required in writing, or you may not use your free days.

THE FREE DAYS CANNOT BE USED FOR HOLIDAYS OR DAYS YOUR CHILDREN ARE IN ATTENDANCE AT THE CENTER.

EXTENDED ABSENSES / SUMMER CARE

If your child does not need care over the summer or for an extended time, we ask that you pay a 3-day-per-week rate until their normal care resumes. This will secure your child's spot over the summer, as well as if they must be out for an extended timeframe. You can send your child during those 3 days, or you can keep them at home. However, tuition is still due each Friday.

SUBSIDIZED CHILDCARE POLICY

Stepping Stones Learning Center accepts childcare assistance from the Iowa Department of Human Services. Families wishing to enroll using childcare assistance must follow all center policies including the policies for subsidized care. Stepping Stones Learning Center is a private owned center, and we reserve the right to terminate care if the center policies are not followed.

Stepping Stones Learning Center only enrolls fulltime children. If you receive childcare assistance, you must receive 10 units a week for your child to attend.

1. This notice must be received before the first day that the child is scheduled to start at the center.
2. Families are only allowed 4 absence days in a month. If more than that they will be required to pay the daily rate of \$40.00/day as the childcare assistance program does not pay more than 4 absence days a month.
3. Co-pay amounts must be paid the week of care on or before Friday unless other arrangements have been made.
4. No care will be provided without written approval from the subsidizing agency unless you pay weekly (in advance) until we receive the approval letter. If you do get approved you will be refunded the amount you paid minus any copay fees

- once we receive payment from the agency. If you get denied you will be given the option to terminate care with Stepping Stones or continue paying the weekly rate.
5. Children must arrive by 9:00 am to participate in our program. Exceptions will be allowed for medical appointments. Please notify us by 9:00am if your child has an appointment and will be in later or will not be in at all for the day.
 6. If your childcare assistance is not renewed by the time of it expiring, they will not be able to attend until it is approved again.
 7. If your child is a no call no show two days in a row, then it will serve as notice of intent to withdraw the child from care.
 8. Children are only allowed to be in care for up to 10 hours per day and childcare assistance only pays for care while the parent is working.

GETTING STARTED

Selecting childcare is very important and we understand that you will have many questions for the staff that will be caring for your child. We want to make sure that all new families have an opportunity to discuss and review our program, so please plan an orientation day with our director. This must be scheduled before the first day of attendance so that we can cover our policies and procedures, answer all your questions, and go over any necessary paperwork.

During your initial visit to our center, the Director or Co. Director will tour the facility with you and discuss the organization's goals, routines, and policies. You will be given a pre-enrollment form to fill out and return if you are interested in enrolling your child. Once the form is received it will be reviewed by the Director to see if we have spots available for your child/children. There is a \$40.00 non-refundable enrollment fee that must be paid when turning in the pre-enrollment form.

ORIENTATION

The adjustment to any program is different for every child. No child will be allowed to start without first touring the facility. We want the child to be familiar with the place before they are just dropped off. Once your family has been through a tour and would like to choose us for care, we will go over our handbook in more detail, go over all policies and procedures, and any concerns from the family. We will also go over required paperwork, tuition rate, fees schedule, and supply checklist.

Like many businesses, Stepping Stones Learning Center operates on a tight budget. We depend upon our tuition payments to pay teacher salaries, building expenses, and purchases for the center. Tuition is due every Friday for that week. (Unless other arrangements have been set)

ADMISSION

Before your child's first day at the center, we require that you complete and return the enrollment packet as well as bring all your child's supplies. Without this packet turned in your child will not be allowed to attend.

Once the child is accepted to the program or placed on our waiting list a \$40.00 non-refundable registration fee is required. Parents are required to complete a registration packet which includes the following:

- Child Intake Form
- Parental Emergency Medical Consent
- Pick-Up Authorization Form
- Travel Release
- Photography Release
- Tuition Express Payment Fee Form
- Sunscreen Release / Bug Spray Release – (Summer Months)
- Water Play Release – (Summer Months)
- Iowa Department of Public Health Certificate of Immunization
- Physical Examination – Dr. fills out (School-age physical – parents fill out)
- Allergy/Food Exception Statement – if needed
- Childcare Payment Contract
- Signed Paper verifying you received a parent handbook and will follow all the outlined policies.
- Iowa CACFP childcare center parent letter
- Iowa child and adult care food program enrollment form
- CACFP – Building for the future brochure.
- CACFP Iowa Eligibility application
- Classroom Daily Schedule
- Pre-school supply list
- Up-coming important dates
- Pre-school Assistance Application – If Requested

Additional Information needed if enrolling a child under the age of 1 year old.

- Basic Infant Information Sheet
- Sleep Sack Authorization – Infant Packet
- Diaper Rash Cream Authorization – Infant Packet
- Infant Foods tried at home.

These forms assist us in providing the highest quality care for your family, and they must be received before your child may be enrolled in our program. The information you provide is strictly confidential and will not be released without your consent. You may have access to the information in your child's file at any time.

All enrollment papers will be updated each August. Doctor physical forms must be renewed each year. If your child's physical is overdue, we must have the date of your scheduled appointment, or the child will not be able to attend till the physical is current. An updated Immunization card must be turned in each time the child receives new shots. Once they are done receiving shots for a while, we will need a new immunization card updated each year.

It is the parent's duties to notify us in writing concerning changes in the following:

- ❖ Address
- ❖ Telephone Number
- ❖ Email Address
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Custody
- ❖ Other important information about your child or family including all allergies and immunization records.
- ❖ Changes in persons authorized for release of your child.
- ❖ Schedule change (only allowed if approved first by director)

If a family needs assistance completing the necessary paperwork, understanding communication from the center, or finding services and resources in the community we will contact Child Care Resource and Referral, and/or the Department of Human Services to assist the family.

Stepping Stones Learning Center prohibits discrimination against its families, 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.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Currently we are not allowing parents into the building. Drop off and pick up will be done outside of the building. Parents pull into the turnaround, and we have a door buzzer informing us that someone has pulled up. A staff member will greet you at the main entry door to get your child from you and send them / take them to their classroom. The staff member will use a walkie and call your child down to their room and a staff member will be there waiting for the child.

At pick up the same thing happens parents pull into the turnaround, and we have a door buzzer informing us that someone has pulled up. We then call for your child and bring the child out to the car in the turnaround. Parents will get out of their car to get the kids from the staff.

Tears are normal the first few days. A firm, quick “goodbye” generally works best and helps relieve insecure feelings. We encourage you to message on the ProCare App or call the center with any concerns you have and readily accept suggestions on making this a positive experience.

Stepping Stones Learning Center is staffed for specific opening and closing times, and staff are not scheduled otherwise. Any pickup after closing time of 5:30p.m will automatically incur a late fee to be paid the next morning at drop off.

Fees charged are as follows: Late pick up fee of \$10.00 is applied per child if they are not picked up by our closing time of 5:30p.m. The fee is figured by the director and a message will be sent out in the ProCare app letting you know the amount due and must be paid in full the following morning at drop off.

If the late fee is not paid the next morning after late pickup, then your child will not be able to attend until it is paid in full. If this becomes an ongoing problem, you will be talked to by the director and possibly removed from the program.

If no one is here by 5:35 p.m., we will contact the person you provided on your emergency contacts. The assessment of more than 3 late charges will subject the family to a warning that their child’s position at Stepping Stones Learning Center may be forfeited.

The protection and welfare of your child is our primary concern. To maintain our safe procedures, please follow the following:

- Parents must sign their child in and out daily on the ProCare app. A code is given at time of enrollment for this. If you need the code again, please let us know. Each person has their own code so we can track who is dropping off and picking up the child.
- No person other than who is on the child’s pickup list will be allowed to pick up the child. If you need to add or remove someone, please let us know. We also will require photo id from the person at pickup if we are not familiar with them.
- In the case of separation/divorce agreements, parents maintaining custody of child will be asked to submit in writing when the visiting parent may pick up the child. If there is a court custody document, we must have this in the child’s file.
- Child will enter and exit through the front entrance doors only. We will not allow child to enter or exit from other doors or from the playground.

ACCESS POLICY

Your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us. We work vigorously to prevent harm to the children in our care and are diligently proactive in supervising the children and others present in our center.

Any person in the center who is not an owner, staff member, substitute or volunteer who has had a record check and approved to be involved with the children shall not have "unrestricted access" to children for whom that person is not the parent or guardian nor be counted in the staff to child ratio.

"Unrestricted access" means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for childcare.

It is imperative that centers not allow people who have not had a record check assume childcare responsibilities or be alone with children. This directly relates both to child safety and liability to the center.

Individuals who do not have unrestricted access will always be under the direct "supervision" and "monitoring" of a paid staff member and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be by the lead teacher in the classrooms.

"Supervision" means to oversee an individual engaged with children in an activity or task and ensure that they perform it correctly.

"Monitoring" means to oversee and ensure proper conduct of others.

The main door of our building will be unlocked from 4a.m-5:30p.m We have a key fob locked lobby entry door that will only be opened with a key fob or if the office buzzes you in.

Anyone that enters Stepping Stones Learning Center that is not an owner, director, and/or staff member must sign in and out on the sheet by the front door.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

We believe in providing childcare to everyone including those children that may have some special need requirements providing reasonable accommodations. Stepping Stones Learning Center will require a copy of a care plan such as IEP to determine the needs of the child and necessary preparation. Often children will not have a diagnosed need therefore, Stepping Stones will work closely with the child's physician, health consultant, AEA, and therapists. All policies and procedures remain the same including our sanctions for misconduct. Once a care plan has been established, the plan will be written, reviewed,

and updated annually or as necessary to address changes. The plan will be maintained with the child's confidential records.

PARKING POLICY

Parking spaces for parents are in the front parking lot of our building. Parking is also available on the side of the building. Please do not park in the turnaround unless it is going to be a fast drop off or pick up. Please make sure you are not parking in front of the door for the safety of the children. We strongly recommend that all vehicles are turned off and locked when unoccupied. DO NOT leave children unattended in a vehicle. As mandatory reporters, we will be forced to report this action to the proper law enforcement agency.

DISCHARGE POLICY

Stepping Stones Learning Center has the right to terminate services at any time. Termination may occur for any of the following reasons but are not limited to failure to comply with the fee agreement and/or payment arrangements, unresolved behavior conflict by a child, or any type of hostile situation. All decisions to terminate services, communication concerning the identified problem and/or appeal or review of the termination shall be handled by the director or co-director.

FRONT & BACK INFANT ROOM SUPPLY LIST:

- ❖ **Formula** - If your infant is using formula, you must provide a can with the child's name on it. You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Breastmilk** - If your child is using breastmilk, you can bring in fresh, frozen, or both. Whichever works for you. The bags must have your child's name and date on them.
- ❖ The Center will provide baby cereal, baby food, chopped foods when your child is ready (talk with the director) when you feel your child is ready.
- ❖ **Diapers** – A package of diapers must be brought and will be stored for your child's exclusive use. You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Wipes** – One package of baby wipes with each package of diapers.
- ❖ **Diaper Ointments** – You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Bottles** – You will need to supply 3 bottles for your child to use these can stay at the center to be washed and sanitized – or you can take home each night and bring back.
- ❖ **Pacifier** – If your child takes one, please bring 2 or 3 to stay at the center.

- ❖ **Clothing** – At least three sets of weather permitting extra clothing with child’s name clearly marked. We will put them in the child’s box.
- ❖ **Family Photo** – This is for the family tree we have in all the rooms.
- ❖ **Infant Schedule** – If child is on a certain feeding and or napping schedule, please write that down for us. The more we know the better it is.
- ❖ **Small Bag** – This is for any items that we need to send home each day.
- ❖ At time of admission 3 boxes of Kleenexes & 3 packages of baby wipes. These items will be collected again each January, April, & August.
- ❖ As Infants start standing and walking, they must have shoes. This is for their safety. The floors can be slick with just socks on.
- ❖ Back Infant Room children do go outside on the playground and must wear shoes outside.
- ❖ Back Infant Room children will need coat, hats, gloves as well as they do go outside weather permitting.

Notes will be sent out on the ProCare app for parents when any supplies are low. Please check your child’s ProCare account for these notes. When you bring in more supplies, please make sure that you are marking them with the child’s name.

YOUNGER & OLDER TODDLER ROOM SUPPLY LIST:

- ❖ **Diapers** – A package of diapers or pull-up (with tabs) must be brought and will be stored for your child’s exclusive use. You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Wipes** – One package of baby wipes with each package of diapers.
- ❖ **Diaper Ointments** – You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Clothing** – At least two sets of weather permitting extra clothing with child’s name clearly marked. We will put them in the child’s box.

In winter, snowpants, hat, gloves, and boots for outdoor play. In summer, swimsuits, water shoes, & sunscreen for sprinkler play.

- ❖ **Shoes** - All children must wear shoes. In the winter months please have a pair of extra shoes at the daycare to change into. Shoes must be worn all day at the center.
- ❖ **Backpack** – This will come and go each day with your child. This is so we can send home items with the children and so you can put the requested items in it to come back to the center.
- ❖ **Family Photo** – This is for the family tree we have in all the rooms.
- ❖ At time of admission 3 boxes of Kleenexes & 3 packages of baby wipes. These items will be collected again each January, April, & August.

- ❖ **School Supply List** will be handed out in August or at time of enrollment.

Notes will be sent out on the ProCare app for parents when any supplies are low. Please check your child's ProCare account for these notes. When you bring in more supplies, please make sure that you are marking them with the child's name.

2-3-YEAR-OLD, 3-YEAR-OLD & 4-5 YR OLD PRE-SCHOOL ROOMS:

- ❖ **Diapers or Pull-ups** – If needed bring A package of diapers or pull-ups (with tabs) must be brought and will be stored for your child's exclusive use. You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Wipes** – One package of baby wipes with each package of diapers.
- ❖ **Diaper Ointments** – You will be informed when we are running low.
- ❖ **Clothing** – At least two sets of weather permitting extra clothing with child's name clearly marked. We will put them in the child's box.

In winter, snowpants, hat, gloves, and boots for outdoor play. In summer, swimsuits, water shoes, & sunscreen for sprinkler play.

- ❖ **Shoes** - All children must wear shoes. In the winter months please have a pair of extra shoes at the daycare to change into. Shoes must be worn all day at the center.
- ❖ **Backpack** – This will come and go each day with your child. This is so we can send home items with the children and so you can put the requested items in it to come back to the center.
- ❖ **Family Photo** – This is for the family tree we have in all the rooms.
- ❖ At time of admission 3 boxes of Kleenexes & 3 packages of baby wipes. These items will be collected again each January, April, & August.
- ❖ **School Supply List** will be handed out in August or at time of enrollment.

Notes will be sent out on the ProCare app for parents when any supplies are low. Please check your child's ProCare account for these notes. When you bring in more supplies, please make sure that you are marking them with the child's name.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

Our Safe Sleep Policy is designed to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), suffocation death and other infant deaths that could occur when an infant is in a crib or asleep. Because your child's safety and well-being are very important to us, we will adhere to the following:

- Infants up to twelve months of age will be placed to sleep on their back for every nap or sleep time unless the infant's primary care provider has completed a signed waiver and Special Care Plan indicating that the child requires an alternate sleep position due to medical needs and it must be signed by the infant's physician and parent/guardian and have an expiration date.

- When infants under 4 months of age roll onto their stomach during sleep they will be gently rolled back to their backs each time during sleep. Once infants are developmentally capable of rolling comfortably from their backs to their fronts and back again, there is no evidence to suggest that they should be re-positioned on to their back.

- Infants will be placed for sleep in safe sleep environments; which includes a firm crib mattress covered by a tight-fitting sheet in a safety-approved crib (the crib should meet the standards and guidelines reviewed/approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and ASTM International), no monitors or positioning devices will be used unless required by the child's primary care provider, and no other items will be placed in the infants except if they take a pacifier. If the pacifier falls out of the infants mouth it will be taken out of the crib immediately.

- Infants will not sleep in a car seat, bouncy seat, infant seat, swing, jumping chair, play pen, or play yard, highchair, chair, or any other type of furniture/equipment that is not a safety-approved crib (that follows the CPSC and ASTM safety standards).

- If an infant arrives at the facility asleep in a car safety seat, the staff will immediately remove the sleeping infant from this seat and place them on their back in a safe sleep environment (i.e., the infant's assigned crib).

- If an infant falls asleep in any place that is not a safe sleep environment, staff will immediately move the infant and place them on their back in their crib.

- Soft or loose bedding will be kept away from sleeping infants and out of safe sleep environments. These include, but are not limited to bumper pads, pillows, quilts, comforters, sleep positioning devices, blankets, flat sheets, bibs, pacifier clips, outfit with ties or hoods, etc. Also, no blankets or any other items will be hung on the sides of cribs. Swaddling infants is not allowed at Stepping Stones Learning Center, but we will use one-piece zip up sleep gowns and or sleep bags will be used.

- Toys, including mobiles and other types of play equipment that are designed to be attached to any part of the crib will be kept away from sleeping infants and out of safe sleep environments.

- When staff place infants in their crib for sleep, they will check to ensure that the temperature in the room is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult, check that bibs and garments with ties or hoods are removed (clothing sacks or other clothing designed for sleep will be used in lieu of blankets).

- Infants will be directly always observed by sight and sound, including when they are going to sleep, are sleeping, or are in the process of waking up.
- The room lighting will allow the staff to see each infant's face, to view the color of the infant's skin, and to check on the infant's breathing and placement of the pacifier (if used).

Each infant will have their own crib labeled with their name and their ability to roll on their own or not. The infants bedding will be taken off after each nap and the crib mattress will be sprayed with our sanitizing spray. Once that is dried the staff will place a clean tightly fitted sheet on the mattress for the child's next nap.

The cribs are checked periodically throughout the day to make sure everything is tight and safe for the infants. Stepping Stones Learning Center keeps all the manufacturer certificates on file for the cribs and makes sure they are always in compliance.

Parents/Guardians for all infants in our care at Stepping Stones as well as all staff will be given our safe sleep policy information at time of enrollment and when any of the policies change they will be updated. We will also have safe sleep brochures available for anyone that would like to have a copy. In our infant rooms we will have postings of safe sleep, so everyone knows.

All staff will remain alert and actively supervise sleeping infants in an ongoing manner. Also, the staff will check to ensure that the infant's head remains uncovered and re-adjust clothing as needed.

PACIFIER POLICY

Written permission from the child's parent/guardian is required for pacifier use in the facility. We will abide by the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations on pacifier use:

- We will not offer a pacifier outside of a crib in rooms where there are mobile infants or toddlers. No child will be allowed to walk around with a pacifier. No pacifiers will be given to any child outside of our infant rooms.
- Pacifiers will be inspected for tears before use.
- Pacifiers will not be clipped to infant's clothing, toy animal, or tied around an infant's neck.
- When we have written permission from the child's parent/guardian, we will offer the pacifier when placing the infant down for nap time.
- If the infant falls asleep and the pacifier falls out of the infant's mouth, we will remove it from the crib.

BITING POLICY

Even in the best childcare center, there is biting that occurs among infants, toddlers and sometimes preschoolers. This is an unavoidable consequence of grouping young children

together. When it happens, it can be scary and very frustrating for children, parents and teachers.

Understanding the reason for biting is the first step to changing a child's behavior. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, simple sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, seeking attention, frustration, boredom, and stress. Childcare group situations are difficult: dealing with others constantly around, sharing attention and toys, and too much or too little stimulation are all very difficult for children.

Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. When biting breaks out, a high-quality childcare program immediately takes action, not to blame the biters but to change the environment and help children change their behavior.

It is important that the caregivers remain calm and in control of their emotions when biting occurs. Staff will not show anger or frustration towards the child. The staff will calmly respond to the child, letting them know that biting is not ok. In addition, the following steps will be taken.

1. The teacher will remove the child from the situation and focus caring attention on the child who was bitten.
2. Encourage the biter to help take care of the child that was bitten (hold ice pack, comfort the child).
3. The staff will talk to the child who bit (if able to communicate) and talk about different strategies that the child can use next time instead of biting. This will be done in a short simple way.

It is important to explore the reasons for biting when it occurs. Staff will work with parents to gather information about the child's behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Examples of some triggers would be: communication deficits, transitions, hunger, lack of sleep, need for oral stimulation or teething pain. Once triggers are identified, staff will work on prevention strategies and start teaching replacement skills.

Below are some examples of how the teacher will begin this assessment.

1. The teacher will examine the context in which the biting is occurring and look for patterns. The teacher will use the Center Action Plan for documentation and ask the following questions:
 - Was the space too crowded?
 - Was it over a certain item?
 - Was there too little to do or too much waiting?
 - Was the child who bit getting the attention and care he/she deserved at other times, other than when he/she was biting?
2. The teacher will change the environment, routines, or activities if necessary.
3. The teacher will work with the child who is biting to resolve conflicts and frustrations in more appropriate manners, including using words, if they are capable of them.

4. The teacher will observe the child, to get an idea of why and when they are likely to bite.
5. The teacher will identify children likely to be bitten and make special efforts to reduce their chance of being bitten.
6. The teacher, parent and director will meet regularly to regulate an action plan and to measure the outcome of these changes.
7. If biting continues the teacher will observe the group more closely and work with the parents to seek out additional resources as necessary to shadow the child who is biting.

First Aid in response to biting (both child and adult)

1. Wear gloves, clean wound with soap and water. Run water over wound for 5 minutes.
2. Apply ice or cool compress to help reduce the pain or swelling.
3. Bandage the wound as necessary.
4. Write a detailed incident report for both children involved with the incident.

First Aid if bite breaks the skin. (Both child and adult)

1. Wear gloves, clean wound with soap and water. Run water over the wound for 5 minutes.
2. Control the bleeding.
3. Cover the wound with sterile dressing and bandage.
4. Write a detailed incident report for both children involved with the incident.

When children bite or are bitten, their parents are informed the same day. All information is confidential, and names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents. In addition, biting is always documented on our biting log form which is completed by the teacher and the director is notified. One copy is given to the parent and one copy is kept in the child's file.

When biting occurs, here's what you can expect from us:

- We will put the child's safety first and provide first aid as well as comfort, support and advice to any child who is bitten.
- We will provide appropriate programming for children to help prevent biting.
- We will make current information and resources on biting available to you.
- We will provide teachers with adequate knowledge and training to deal properly and effectively with biting.
- We will take your concerns seriously and treat them with understanding and respect.
- We will tell you what specific steps we are taking to address biting and explain the reasoning behind those steps.

- We will respond to your questions, concerns and suggestions—even when our response to some suggestions is no.
- We will work to schedule conferences about biting with you, at a time you can attend.
- We will keep your child’s identity confidential if he or she bites. This helps avoid labeling or confrontations that may prolong the behavior.

We wish we could guarantee that biting will never happen in our program, but we know there is no such guarantee. You can count on us to deal appropriately with biting so it will end as quickly as possible. We want the best for all the children in our program. If you want more information on biting or have questions or concerns, please let us know—we are here to help you and your child on their journey to independence!

DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOR POLICY

At Stepping Stones Learning Center we support social and emotional learning by talking and listening to the child and playing with and responding to the child’s needs. All staff lead, using positive guidance and redirection, planning ahead to prevent problems, encouraging appropriate behavior, using consistent clear rules, and whenever possible, involving in problem solving to foster the child’s own ability to become self-regulated.

If the child understands words, consequences are explained simply to the child before misbehavior occurs and at the time of any disciplinary action. Staff encourage children to respect other people, be fair, respect property, and learn to be responsible for their actions.

Staff members work with families and everyone else who cares for the child to use the following approaches for discipline:

- Encourage desired behavior by providing engaging materials based on children’s interests, ensuring that the learning environment promotes active participation of each child.
- Help children learn what to expect in the childcare environment and how to promote positive interactions and engagement with others.
- Provide a predictable daily schedule with routines, activities, reminders, and transitions to foster the desired behaviors.
- By understanding what abilities, the child has acquired and is expected to do as a next step in development, staff can facilitate smooth and steady progress in self-mastery and independent pro-social behaviors (e.g., toddlers want to demonstrate their independence and often say “no” to a yes-or-no choice but happily choose between 2 equally acceptable alternatives).
- Establish, teach, and support learning of simple rules expressed as what to do, rather than what not to do.

- Positively describe the desired behavior (e.g., “You did a nice job putting your toy away,” rather than nonspecific praise such as “Nice job”).
- Model and demonstrate to help children understand positive alternative behaviors as the first approach to correcting a behavior that is not acceptable (e.g., lower your voice when the child is yelling).
- Suggest another activity unless the behavior is too disruptive and unsafe to be ignored.
- Adjust the approach to the temperament and needs of the child, anticipating and preventing situations that are likely to evoke undesirable behavior.
- Limit the use of time out. Select one persistent unacceptable behavior that will predictably result in a time-out experience. Use this method only for children who are older than 2 years, and then only to interrupt the unacceptable behavior for a short period, usually no more than 1 minute per year of age. End the period of time-out with a positive statement about the child’s ability to do what is expected.
- Staff intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive to protect all the children and encourage more acceptable behavior. During acts of aggression and fighting (e.g., biting, hitting), the staff tells the child clearly that the aggressive behavior is not allowed (e.g., “No biting”; “No hitting”). The staff tells verbal children what is appropriate (e.g., “We bite food”; “We use words to say ‘I am angry’”). In addition, the staff may separate the children involved.
- Provide comfort and care for any injury to the victim of the aggressor and notify parents of the children involved in the incident about what happened and how the situation was resolved. Although the children may say who was involved, staff will not identify the victim to the family of the aggressor or the aggressor to the family of the victim.

Prohibited Behaviors: The following behaviors are prohibited in our facility. Some may require mandatory reporting of an instance of child abuse.

- Use of Any Form of Corporal Punishment: Corporal punishment means punishment inflicted directly on the body—hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, twisting, pulling, squeezing hurtfully, forced rest, forcing a child to eat or put soap/spices or foreign substances in the child’s mouth, isolating a child in a different room/hallway/closet/dark area/play area/any area where the child is not seen and supervised, trying to restrict movement by binding or strapping into a seat except a car seat when traveling in a vehicle, taping, using or withholding food as punishment or reward, or taking away physical activity/outdoor time as punishment.
- Toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child.
- Any form of emotional abuse, including rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, isolating, or corrupting a child.
- Any abuse or maltreatment of a child as an incident of discipline, or as any other inappropriate practice.

- Abusive, profane, or sarcastic language or verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child’s family.
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment.

Physical restraint will be used only in an emergency to protect the child, other children, or staff from imminent, serious, physical harm and only if removal from the situation is not an option. Restraint will not be used as punishment, for the convenience of staff.

Corporal punishment and verbal or physical abuse are prohibited.

At times it is in the best interest of a child or group of children that a child be suspended from Stepping Stones Learning Center to assure our program provides a safe and nurturing environment for all children.

If a child aged three or older demonstrates a pattern of aggressive behaviors that injures other children or adults and requires regular removal from the group, the child will be suspended. Re-admittance into Stepping Stones Learning Center program will not be accepted until a formal and authorized behavior plan is established.

No child will be discharged from our facility without first working with the child and the parents to reach a workable solution to improve behavioral problems. If unacceptable behavior continues, a warning of dismissal will be given to the parents. At this point the director and staff at our center will continue an effort to work with the parents and the child to solve the problem. In the event a child’s behavior is threatening the safety of the children in our center or impedes the learning process of the group, the director will ask that that child be removed immediately. All efforts will be made to avoid this.

CHILD INCIDENT REPORTS

Child Incident Reports will be completed to document incidents involving a child, including minor injuries, minor changes in health status, or other behavioral concerns. Incidents will be reported to the parents and /or legal guardians on the day of the incident. The report will include what occurred, where the injury is located on the child, illness symptoms, and the care that staff provided, as well as doctor follow-up as necessary.

A photo will be taken if there is a mark on the child. Parents, or the authorized pick-up person, will be asked to sign these reports to indicate they have received the report and a copy will be provided to take home and a copy will be placed in the child’s file.

If the injury is significant, the parent will be called at the time of the injury to report the injury and a photo will be taken. In the event of an emergency, 911 will be called.

Examples of injuries that should be documented include:

- Child maltreatment (physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect abuse)

- Bites that break the skin, left a mark, and cause significant pain
 - Anything requiring first aid
- Falls, burns, broken limbs, tooth loss, other injury
 - Aggressive/unusual behavior
- Ingestion of non-food substances
 - Medication error

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The Muscatine Community School District busses the children to and from Madison Elementary school only unless the child has an IEP set up with the school district. If your child leaves the center for school, we will have a detailed permission slip that must be filled out and returned for your child's file.

The bussing fees will be billed by the school district. Stepping Stones Learning Center has nothing to do with the bus fees.

Children ages 3 and older may have the opportunity to go on field trips throughout the year. When field trips are scheduled, we will use the Muscatine Community School District's busses. When transporting children, we will always make sure that we are at least one staff over all ratios.

We will call 911 in case of an emergency. Staff vehicles will not be used to transport children except in the event of an emergency evacuation. Should evacuation be necessary, staff vehicles equipped with car seats will be used.

FIELD TRIP POLICY

Field Trips will be scheduled throughout the year for children in the 3-year-old room and older. Examples of field trips include visits to the parks, museums, libraries, grocery stores, and other establishments that provide fun and educational tours.

You will be notified of the dates in advance on the ProCare calendar as well as we will send out a letter explaining the field trip and a permission slip that will be required to be filled out, signed by the parent, and returned to the center. Transportation will be provided by the Muscatine Community School District Bussing.

Fieldtrips require an extra staff member as well as parent volunteers; therefore, all volunteers will be required to complete a volunteer statement before attending the activity and show proof of identification. (E.g., driver's license or photo id)
Some field trips will inquire an additional fee. Permission must be given for your child to participate.

If your child is not allowed to go on any of the field trips you MUST find alternative care for the day of the field trip as we will not have staff staying back for your child. Staff will take the emergency contact binder with all the emergency numbers for each child and staff member that are on the field trip. When on field trips we will always make sure that we are at least one staff over all ratios.

NON-CENTER ACTIVITY POLICY

If your child participates in non-center activities such as music, gymnastics, playgroups, special services, etc., you will be responsible for transporting your child to and from these activities.

If your child participates in an activity on a regular basis, please provide your child's teacher and the director with your child's schedule and whether your child will be returning to the center following the non-center activity. This will ensure that we stay within the teacher-to-child ratios required by the state licensing guidelines.

If an adult, other than the parent, will be transporting your child to and from the activity, you must:

- ❖ Provide written notification to the center.
- ❖ List this person on the Parental Emergency Medial Consent form as someone who is authorized to pick up your child.

Your child will not be released to anyone who is not authorized to pick up your child.

HOLIDAY / CELEBRATION POLICY

Birthdays are exciting events for children. Although birthdays are special, we request that they be celebrated simply – no gifts, please. If you would like to provide a special pre-packaged birthday treat or special holiday treat you are more than welcome to do so.

We will allow parents to bring pre-packaged food items for children's birthdays or special holidays. You are always welcome to bring in non-food items to hand out to the children for birthdays or holidays. However, we will discourage parents from bringing items that may present a choking hazard such as hard candies, chewing gum, gumdrops, dried fruit, nuts, or popcorn.

Holidays that are celebrated at the daycare center are the following:

- Mother's Day (moms invited for Muffins the Friday before Mother's Day)
- Father's Day (dads invited for donuts the Friday before Father's Day)
- Grandparent's Day (grandparents invited for graham crackers)
- Valentine's Day (pass out valentine's)
- Easter (have Easter egg hunt)
- Halloween (trick-or-treating at a few close businesses as well as daycare)
- Christmas Party (gift exchange \$5.00 limit)
- Christmas Concert with Santa (At Central Middle School children sing for family)
- Spirit Week is in March & September or October (wear themed clothes)
- Pre-school Graduation (Ceremony in June for the children that go to school)

SCHOOL PICTURES

School pictures are scheduled each year in the fall (October) & spring (April) also. Pre-school graduation pictures in the Spring (April). Individual photos are taken in the fall and spring of each calendar year. Each child will be photographed individually we do not do sibling photos as we don't have the space or time.

Once the pictures are taken the turnaround is about 3 weeks and then we receive the picture packages at the center. Parents are not allowed to take the pictures out of the center until payment is received. They may look through the pictures in the director's office, and a code is given to view them online as well.

We also enjoy keeping a photo journal of our center activities. These photos may be displayed in classrooms, hallways or included in articles of community interest in the local newspaper. The center should be notified on the permission form if you do not wish to have your child photographed.

PLAYGROUND AND INDOOR GYMNASIUM

Stepping Stones Learning Center meets the physical needs of the children by providing an outdoor playground containing a variety of outdoor play equipment and substantial green space for the children to run. The playground is an educational environment where your child will learn about his or her physical capabilities and the social skills involved in both organized and informal play.

The playground is viewed as an outdoor classroom with many opportunities for learning. Children will be given several opportunities to be outside (weather permitting) through the day.

In addition to our outdoor playground, we will be adding an indoor gymnasium. The indoor gymnasium will be utilized for large-group activities during the day and will replace the outdoor play area during inclement weather. Like our classrooms, we have rules that must be followed in our outdoor & indoor play areas.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Every child must have a current physical examination report signed by a physician and certification of immunization prior to admission to the center. The date of the physical examination report must not be more than 12 months prior to the first day of attendance at the center. The written report must include past health history, status of present health including allergies, medications, and acute or chronic conditions. After enrolling in the center, a yearly physical report signed by a licensed physician is required. The physical report should include any changes in the child's health.

As your child receives additional shots, please send an update immunization record. Failure to provide this information can be cause for removal from the program since current immunization records are required for centers to maintain a valid license.

In the case of religious exemptions, for physical examinations, the parent must provide a signed written statement setting out the specific procedures to be followed in the event of a medical or dental emergency. The child's teacher and the Director must be knowledgeable of this plan. The plan must be part of the child's file.

If parents are not available in the event of an emergency, a list of people who can be contacted and who are knowledgeable of the parents' wishes must be provided to the Director.

Medical exemption for immunization must be completed by one of the following: An MD, a DO, a PA or ARNP. When an exemption is granted for religious reasons, certificate of exemption signed by the child's parents must be in the child's file.

COMMON CHILD ILLNESSES AND EXCLUSION

Children do become ill and at times that may not be convenient for parents. It is highly recommended that parents begin making plans now for sick childcare in case your child does become ill. If your child appears ill at home, please do not bring them to the center.

The center is a place for healthy children. Unfortunately, we do not have the staff or facilities to care for children who are too ill to take part in regular activities. The child should be temporarily excluded from Stepping Stones Learning Center when the child's illness causes one or more of the following:

- Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
- A need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- An acute change in behavior: lethargy, lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a quickly spreading rash.

- Fever with behavior change or other signs and symptoms in a child older than 2 months (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea).
- For infants younger than 2 months of age, a fever with or without a behavior change or other signs and symptoms.
- A child with a temperature elevated above normal is not necessarily an indication of a significant health problem. A fever is defined as:
 - For an infant or child older than 2 months, a fever is a temperature that is above 101 degrees F by any method.
 - For infants younger than 2 months of age a fever is a temperature above 100.4 degrees F by any method.
 - Temperature readings do not require adjustment for the location where the temperature is taken.

If these occur while your child is at the center, you will be contacted. If your child has a contagious disease such as chicken pox, mumps, strep throat, pink eye, flu, impetigo etc., please keep your child at home for as long as your physician recommends. You will be asked to provide a doctor’s note before your child may return to the center. In many cases, this is 24 to 48 hours after treatment begins. Please notify the center of any contagious illness so the other parents may be informed.

You will be contacted to pick up your child if he/she becomes ill during the day. Families should make arrangements to arrive as quickly as possible after initial contact by the staff. Stepping Stones Learning Center will have a quiet area for ill or injured children that become that way during the day. This area will be quiet and under supervision by the director and the child will be placed in that area until parents arrive for pick up. This area will be in the director’s office.

If there is an incidence of a communicable disease, notices will be sent out on the ProCare app to all the families that attend the childcare center. The notice will include the communicable disease, the symptoms, what classroom it is in, and the affected child was last in daycare.

If your child has a known medical condition, please inform the Director and your child’s teacher. If there are any special instructions for the care of your child, please inform the Director and your child’s teacher.

Mildly ill children who can participate normally in the center’s activities may remain at the center. This may include children with colds, runny noses, mild ear infections or children who are teething.

The following is the chart that we follow for when to exclude a child from care and how long they have to remain out of childcare.

Illness	Exclude	Return to Childcare
----------------	----------------	----------------------------

Chicken Pox	Yes	When all blisters are crusted with no oozing (usually 6 days) and resolution of exclusion criteria.
COVID-19	Yes – For 10 days	10 days after symptoms start and 24 hours with no fever and improved symptoms OR 10 days after positive test (if no symptoms).
Diarrhea (infectious)	Yes (there are special exclusion rules for E.coli 0157.H7, Shigella and cryptosporidiosis).	When diarrhea stops and health care provider and public health official states the child may return
Diarrhea (non-infectious)	Yes, if stool cannot be contained in the diaper, or if toileted child has 2 or more loose stools in 24 hours, or blood in stool	When diarrhea stops and resolution of exclusion criteria.
Fifth Disease	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Hand and Mouth	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria. Or is excessively drooling	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Head Lice (Pediculosis)	Yes – If there are live moving lice bugs. No – If just have nits they don't need excluded.	Treatment recommendations can be found here: https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html
Impetigo	Yes	After child has been seen by the doctor, after 24 hours on antibiotic, and blisters are covered.
Influenza	Yes.	When child is fever free for 24 hours and resolution of exclusion criteria
Molluscum Contagiosum (Pediculosis)	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	Skin disease similar to warts. Do not share towels or clothing and use good hand hygiene
MRSA	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria	Wounds should be kept covered and gloves worn during bandage changes. Do not share towels or clothing and use good hand hygiene.

Otitis Media (ear infection)	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria.	If excluded due to presence of other exclusion criteria, resolution of exclusion criteria.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Yes	Child may return after 5 days of antibiotics and resolution of exclusion criteria
Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)	Yes	Child may return after having 3 doses of medicine unless health care provider recommends different.
Ringworm	No. Unless child meets other exclusion criteria	Treatment of ringworm infection maybe delayed to the end of the day. Child may be readmitted after treatment has begun. Cover lesion(s) if possible. Do not share clothing, bedding or personal items.
Strep Throat	Yes	When resolution of exclusion criteria and after 24 hours of antibiotic.
Vomiting	Yes	When vomiting has resolved and resolution of exclusion criteria

Please refer to Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards (Online Database) <https://nrckids.org/CFOC> or the Iowa Department of Public Health EPI Manual <https://wiki.idph.iowa.gov/epimanual> for guidance on specific diseases not included in this list. Contact your local Child Care Nurse Consultant <https://idph.iowa.gov/hcci/consultants> for additional information.

**IN ALL CASES, STEPPING STONES LEARNING CENTER
RESERVES THE RIGHT TO SEND A CHILD HOME WITH
SUSPICIOUS OR PROLONGED SYMPTOMS.**

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

We will administer medication, prescription or over the counter, with the written authorization from the parent or guardian as well as from the prescribing physician. Medication must not have expired. All medication will be stored in a locked container in the kitchen refrigerator (if needs refrigerated), and if not, it will be stored in a locked

container in the main hallway cabinet. We will make every effort to give medication as scheduled but circumstances may cause the time to be later than specified. Once a medication is given to a child, we will make a note in the ProCare app letting parents know that the medication was administered as well as fill out the medication permission slip log.

Medication will only be administered by employees that have been trained in medication administration. If possible, we request that medication be scheduled outside of childcare hours. Stepping Stones Learning Center will not administrate the first dose of medication. All medication needs to go home at the end of the period designated on the permission slip. To ensure compliance with DHS and Health Department regulations the following procedures must be followed:

Over the Counter Medication: Must come in original container and must not have expired. Medication must have written dosage for the age of child being given the medication.

If medication states 2 years and under contact physician, we must have a physician statement of dosage for children younger than 2 years to administer the medicine or apply the cream. Stepping Stones Learning Center will not supply any medications such as Tylenol.

Prescription Medication: The prescription medication must be brought to the childcare center in the original labeled prescription container. For long-term medication, do not send more than one month's supply. Parent permission forms must be signed prior to administering the medication. We will not give medication with verbal permission. Permission forms must be renewed every 30 days.

Devices (Epi Pen, nebulizer, inhaler): Parent or health care provider will provide written instructions on indications for use that include signs and symptoms that medication is needed. The parent will demonstrate the use of the device and special care after use to all staff who will be using the medication. An Action Plan will need to be filled out and placed in the child's file.

Please be sure that all medicines are properly labeled. (ALL MEDICATION MUST be in the original container with the pharmacist label which specifies the child's name, dosage, doctor's name, and date of prescription).

WE CAN NOT GIVE ANY CHILD SOMEONE ELSE'S MEDICATION. Please also provide the appropriate measuring device to be used to administer the medication.

The infant rooms are the only rooms that are allowed to have medications left at the center longer than 7 -10 days. All other rooms are only allowed to have medications for the duration of 7 -10 days or told different by a doctor note.

By state law, Stepping Stones Learning Center cannot give any medicine without written consent from the parent and child's doctor. The center does not keep extra medicine on hand.

After the authorization period ends, all medicines are sent home or thrown away. Medicines with expired dates will not be given. Unused medications will be returned to the parent.

Parents must complete a permission slip annually to allow application of sunscreen & bug spray over the age of 6 months. Under the age of 6 months, we **MUST** have a doctor's note (signed by the doctor stating we can apply sunscreen).

Parents must complete a permission slip monthly to allow application of diaper ointments. Parents must also complete a permission slip monthly to dispense Tylenol, Ibuprofen, etc.

If the authorization to administer medication is in effect, a notation will be made on the child's daily ProCare log indicating the medication was given and the times it was given.

REST PERIOD POLICY

Time is set aside each day for a rest period. This regular rest time contributes to the enjoyment of daily activities and your child's general health. Children are not required to go to sleep but will be expected to rest quietly so as not to disturb those who choose to sleep. Parents are asked to help encourage this behavior. We provide the cot, sheet, and blanket for the child. Rest periods are the following times:

- 12p.m-1:30p.m Back infant room
- 12p.m-1:30p.m Younger & Older Toddler room
- 12p.m-1:30p.m 2-3 yr. old pre-school room
- 12p.m-1:15p.m 3 yr. old pre-school room
- 12p.m-1:15p.m 4-5 yr. old pre-school room

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

Research has shown that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are ready physically, mentally, and emotionally. When you feel your child is ready to toilet-train, we will be happy to assist you. Your child may be ready to potty-train if he/she is:

- ❖ Staying dry for several hours
- ❖ Able to communicate the need to use the toilet.
- ❖ Appears to be aware of wet or soiled diapers.
- ❖ Is in a cooperative mood.

- ❖ Knows how to play own pants up and down.

There is no definite age when a child is ready – toilet training will begin in the older toddler room or the 2-3 yr. old room depending on the child. We would like your child potty-trained by the time they enter the 3 yr. old pre-school room.

Both the parents and staff should use the same procedures for training, so it does not confuse the child. If there is too much anxiety or stress, it may be better for the child to wait and try again later. During training, it is very important to dress your child in suitable clothing and provide clothing changes. Remember, pull-on pants work best.

Everyone sits on the potty at each diaper change / bathroom time starting in our younger toddler room. This is to get them familiar with the potty. We have a small toilet set on the toilets in our toddler rooms. Children may also use the step stool to place their feet on while they are sitting on the toilet as it helps them with the fear of falling in the toilet.

Once noticing a lot of dry diapers/pull-ups, we start sending child with our potty-training children into the bathroom ever 30 mins to try to go. We will also send them to try and go before we go outside to play and send them again immediately when we come inside. During transition times from one activity to another we send them in to the bathroom to try to go.

When child is dry for a whole week, we will ask parents to bring in underwear to start the potty-training process without wearing pull-ups. We will ask for lots of extra clothes and socks. We will also ask parents to bring in an extra pair of shoes to keep in their cubby.

Once child is wearing underwear, we can still put them in a pull-up for naptime if we feel it is still needed. Once dry during the day and dry at naptime also we will send all the extra pull-ups home with the child.

We will not wash any children's clothes at the childcare center. If the child has wet or BM clothing, they will be placed in our green diaper bags and sent home.

We are not allowed to give children candy or prizes to use the potty. Once they start going on the potty, we give them stickers to wear as rewards.

CLOTH DIAPERS

Only disposable diapers or pull-ups may be used at Stepping Stones Learning Center, unless the child has a documented medical reason that does not permit their use.

Documentation from the child's physician must be provided to the director before cloth diapers will be used while the child is at the center. Families must provide a wet bag and small metal trash can with a footstep lid for storage of soiled cloth diapers while at the

center. Staff will not rinse out any diapers. They will be taken off and put directly into the wet bag that is stored in the trash can.

SUNSCREEN & INSECT REPELLANT

Between the months of March and October, all families will be required to supply sunscreen for their child/ren for outdoor activities if they want. A permission slip must be on file before sunscreen will be applied to a child. Sunscreen must be SPF 15 or above and will be applied by classroom teachers twice a day.

If parents want insect repellent applied to their child during the day, they must provide the spray and fill out the permission slip before it can be applied.

This form requests that parents provide sunscreen & bug spray for his/her child. Siblings must have their own there is no sharing allowed as it would be too hard to keep switching it from one classroom to another.

We will log in our ProCare app when your child got them applied each day. It also informs the parents that sunscreen & bug spray will be applied to each child whenever the center deems necessary. This form must indicate any medical conditions, allergies or concerns pertinent to the application of sunscreen & bug spray.

HAND WASHING POLICY

Staff will assist children with hand washing to maintain good personal hygiene and to prevent or minimize the spread of illness or disease. For infants, a clean, separate cloth will be used for washing and rinsing. Children's hands will be washed at the following times:

- ❖ Before eating & after eating
- ❖ After diapering or using the restroom
- ❖ After nose blowing
- ❖ After handling animals
- ❖ After playing outside

TOBACCO-FREE AND NICOTINE-FREE SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

Stepping Stones Learning Center facilities, vehicles, and grounds are off limits for tobacco and nicotine use including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, snuff, pipes, snus, Electronic Smoking Devices (ESD) and nicotine products that are not Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved for tobacco cessation. This requirement extends to students, employees, and visitors. This policy applies at all times, including Stepping Stones sponsored and non-sponsored events. Persons failing to abide by this

policy are required to extinguish their smoking material, dispose of the tobacco/nicotine product or leave the Stepping Stones Learning Center premises immediately. It is the responsibility of the administration/upper management to enforce this policy.

ALCOHOL & DRUG POLICY

Stepping Stones Learning Center has a zero-tolerance policy for the use of alcohol, illegal substances, or the misuse of prescription medications on our property or the presence of these substances in the body while on our property regardless of when they were consumed. This policy applies to staff, visitors, and parents of enrolled children. If a staff member suspects a parent may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, we are mandated by the state to report such suspicions.

GUN POLICY

No type of guns are allowed in or on Stepping Stones Learning Center property by anyone other than law enforcement officers.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Every precaution has been taken to make our building and grounds as safe as possible. If a medical emergency arises, staff will first attempt to contact the parents or guardians. If they can't be reached, staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on your child's medical consent form. If needed staff will call for paramedic help, and your child will be taken to the hospital by ambulance. Your signature on the form gives the hospital permission to care for your child.

All staff are certified in CPR, First Aid Training, Universal Precautions, and Mandatory Child Abuse Training. All staff also receive regular in-service training so they can act quickly in case of an emergency. Should an accident occur:

- We will notify you immediately. Please be sure we have accurate phone and emergency numbers.
- If we cannot reach you and we feel it is necessary, we will call 911 and they will transport your child to the emergency room, and we will continue our attempts to contact you.
- For all incidents involving blood or bodily fluids, disposable gloves will be used. Please let staff and director know if your child is allergic to latex.

CENTER EVACUATION

In an emergency situation, the children and employees will remain in designated safe areas on Stepping Stones Learning Center property unless instructed to leave by emergency personnel.

Stepping Stones Learning Center staff will evacuate the children from the building using the fire evacuation plan or will follow the specific instructions from the public officials who may be directing the evacuation. Transport of the children will occur only if it is unsafe to remain on the center's property. If it is deemed unsafe to remain on center property, the children will be taken to the HNI building across the street from the center to await pick up by an authorized person. Staff will send a message to notify parents through the ProCare App and/or cell phones.

Before leaving the center, the lead teacher in each classroom will be responsible for gathering the following items:

- All children in their classroom
- The ProCare Tablet
- The first aid backpack which has first aid supplies, all children in their classroom emergency contact numbers, and diapers and wipes for the infant/toddler rooms.

Once everyone is out of the building the director, co-director, and or on-site supervisor will do a final sweep of the building to make sure everyone is accounted for.

EVACUATION OF IMMOBILE INFANTS

In the case of a natural disaster (e.g., tornado or fire) or any circumstance which would require the evacuation of the infants and staff located in the infant area an accurate count of all infants' present must be taken immediately. Infants are to be placed in the cribs that have been designated for evacuation at the ratio of four infants to one crib. The cribs designated for evacuation have been fitted with metal casters to ensure a smooth transition from the infant areas to the evacuation site.

LABELED EMERGENCY EXITS

Emergency exits are always identified and visible. Each classroom and hallways have lighted Emergency lights by the exit doors that have bright lights to help lead them out. The exits for escape are arranged so the path to safety outside is unmistakable.

As soon as children can learn to recognize exit signs and pathway markings, they will benefit from having these paths of escape clearly marked. Adults who come into the building as visitors need these markings to direct them as well.

ACCESS TO EXITS

An exit to the outside or a common hallway leading to the outside is directly accessible from every room. If it is necessary to pass through another room for direct access to the outside, the other room will not have a barrier or door that is locked to prevent access through it. No obstructions will be placed in the corridors or passageways leading to the exits. All exits to outside of the building will have lighted exit signs above the door. These exit signs are checked monthly to make sure that they still work.

FIRST AID KITS

Stepping Stones Learning Center maintains at least one readily available first aid kit in each classroom where children are in care, including a first aide backpack in each classroom that the staff take outside on the playground with them as well as field trips, and outings away from the center.

Each first aid kit in the classrooms as well as all bathrooms will be hung up on the wall in a closed container for storing first aid supplies, accessible to employees at all times but out of reach of children. The first aid backpacks will be bright red bags with the first aid symbol on the front of it. These bags will be hung up on a hook in each classroom where it is always accessible to staff but out of the reach of children.

EMERGENCY HEALTHCARE POLICIES

Upon enrollment or diagnosis, children who have special health care needs such as food allergies, seizures, or asthma must have an emergency action plan completed by their healthcare provider on file. The action plan will be updated at least annually.

Stepping Stones Learning Center staff are all trained in CPR and First Aide. If a child becomes seriously ill the following steps will be taken:

- A staff member will assess the symptoms based on the emergency action plan.
- First aid will be administered as stated in the plan.
- If the action plan calls for administering emergency medication the staff member will let the director know and the director will notify a parent or guardian. If a parent cannot be reached a designated emergency contact person will be called
- If the action plan requires life-saving medication, 911 will be called immediately.
- A supervisor will remain with the child and provide care until EMS arrive.

- The teacher or supervisor will complete an illness report about the illness and the care given.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS/EXPOSURE TO BLOOD OR OTHER BODY FLUIDS POLICY

Gloves MUST be worn by staff when diapering or when contact with blood or other body fluids is possible and when cleaning contaminated surfaces. Spills of urine, feces, vomit, or blood shall be cleaned from the surface with soap and water then the surfaces will be sprayed with the disinfect/sanitizer solution. Any blood contaminated material or soiled diapers shall be disposed of in a double layer plastic bag with a secure tie. Soiled diapers will be stored in a container with a lid separate from other waste.

MEDICAL AND DENTAL EMERGENCY POLICIES

Before the child's first day in attendance at the center, a parental emergency medical consent form must be completed and signed by the parents. This form will specify where emergency medical and dental health care should be obtained. It is the parents' responsibility to update this information as necessary.

All dental emergencies require that the parents and the child's dentist be contacted. Staff are required to wear disposable gloves and to wash hands after attending to all injuries. All items exposed to blood will be placed in a double layer plastic bag, sealed, and discarded immediately.

When an immediate response is required the following emergency procedures will be utilized:

1. First aid will be administered by the staff, and 911 will be called if needed.
2. A staff member will ride with the child by ambulance, if allowed to do so, to the local hospital or health care facility and will stay with them until a parent or guardian arrives.
3. The parent will be called as soon as possible. If a parent cannot be reached a designated emergency contact person will be called
4. We will share with the medical personnel the contact information of the doctor, dentist, and hospital provided by the parent at registration including permission to obtain medical care.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR SEVERE WEATHER/BLIZZARD

The Director will decide prior to opening if the center will be closed due to inclement weather. Closing information will be sent out thru the ProCare app as an email and/or text message. It will also be put on Stepping Stones Learning Center's face book page.

Should severe weather develop while the center is open, staff from each room will be responsible for gathering the following items:

- All children in their classroom
- The ProCare Tablet
- The first aid backpack which has first aid supplies, all children in their classroom emergency contact numbers, and diapers and wipes for the infant/toddler rooms.

Once in their required safe area one staff will go back in their classroom and do a final sweep to make sure they got everyone out of the room. Once that is done then one staff will do a name to face check on the ProCare app to make sure they have all the children accounted for in their care.

Director & management staff will check with each lead teacher in each classroom to ensure that all children are accounted for. It may be necessary to move the children into the areas designated as tornado shelters. If weather is severe enough to close the center, parents will be sent a message thru the ProCare App and/or by telephone and asked to pick up their children as soon as possible.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR TORNADO

Tornado drills are conducted once a month on different days each month and at different times of the day to ensure that all children and staff are familiar with the emergency procedure. Designated safe areas are posted in every classroom with clearly marked maps & written instructions. Indirect care employees are assigned to help specific classrooms to get to the appropriate safety area in the building. The co-director will check every classroom to make sure all children have evacuated safely.

The signal for the tornado drill is a blown horn over the walkie talkies that we use. This horn is only used for this purpose.

Should severe weather develop while the center is open, staff from each room will be responsible for gathering the following items:

- All children in their classroom
- The ProCare Tablet
- The first aid backpack which has first aid supplies, all children in their classroom emergency contact numbers, and diapers and wipes for the infant/toddler rooms.

Once in their required safe area one staff will go back in their classroom and do a final sweep to make sure they got everyone out of the room. Once that is done then one staff will do a name to face check on the ProCare app to make sure they have all the children accounted for in their care.

In the event of a real tornado, the above procedures will be followed. In addition, the director will carry the weather radio to listen to the latest news and weather updates.

All staff and children will remain in the tornado shelter until all clear has been sounded. If there is structural damage to the building, the director will call 911 and then determine if it is safe to exit the building.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR FIRE

Fire drills are practiced monthly and are kept on file in the Director's office. Fire escape routes are clearly marked and posted in each room. Staff and children are trained through monthly drills to react quickly and efficiently to the building's fire alarm system. Drills are conducted once a month on different days and at different times of the day to ensure that all children and staff are familiar with all the exit points.

Fire escape routes are posted in every room with clearly marked maps and written instructions. Indirect care employees are assigned to help specific classrooms to evacuate the building. The co-director will check every classroom to make sure all children have evacuated safely.

When the fire alarm goes off, the lead teacher in each room will gather all the children in their classroom, along with the ProCare tablet, and the first aide backpack and then check which way is the safest to exit the classroom. If the route is clear, the staff will then quickly escort the children to the designated outside meeting area. Exit routes are illuminated with battery powered emergency lights.

The first staff to the exit door will hold the door open as the children and staff exit the building. The children and staff will meet in the designed areas. Staff will assure that all children are accounted for. The drill will not be complete until all staff and children are out of the building. The director will shut all windows, turn out the lights, close the doors, check all bathrooms for children and then go to the meeting point. No one will re-enter the building until the "all clear" signal is given.

In the event of a real fire, staff will be given further directions by the fire department and/or Stepping Stones Learning Center's Director on where to take the children. The children and staff will stay in the designed emergency meeting area until emergency personnel give the "all clear" signal.

Parents will be notified, and child will remain on the premises in the designated area until their parents arrive. In case of inclement weather, staff and children will walk to the HNI building across the street from Stepping Stones Learning Center.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR BOMB THREAT

The emergency plan for fire will be followed. The Director will call 911 and inform the emergency personnel that a bomb threat has been received. The Director will follow any additional instructions provided by the emergency personnel at the time of the call. Staff and children will return to the building once the search has ceased and the building has been declared safe. The evacuation procedure will be followed as set out in the emergency plan for fire.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR POWER OUTAGE

Should Stepping Stones Learning Center lose power while the center is open, staff from each room will be responsible for gathering the following items:

- All children in their classroom
- The ProCare Tablet
- The first aid backpack which has first aid supplies, all children in their classroom emergency contact numbers, and diapers and wipes for the infant/toddler rooms.

Designated staff from each room will be responsible for leading the children into the large pre-school room. The Director will inform the power company of the outage. The Director will check with staff to ensure that all children are accounted for.

If it has been determined that the power outage will interfere with continued operation of the center, parents will be contacted to pick up their children. If it is necessary to evacuate the premises, the evacuation procedure as set out in the emergency plan for fire will be followed.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR EARTHQUAKE OR STRUCTURAL DAMAGE

In the event of an earthquake, staff will direct indoor children to take cover under tables. For children outside the building, staff will instruct the children to move away from the building and sit down together with staff. The Director will call 911. Structural damage will be assessed by official personnel and the Director before children are allowed to remain in or re-enter the building. If it is necessary to evacuate the premises, the evacuation procedure as set out in the emergency plan for fire will be followed.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR CHEMICAL SPILLS

In the event of a toxic spill in or near the center is witnessed by the Director or staff, 911 will be called immediately. Staff and children will cooperate with official personnel. Staff and children will be brought into the building to a safe location determined by official personnel and the Director. Staff and children will remain at the designated

location until all clear is given by officials. If evacuation is necessary, staff will follow the evacuation guidelines set out in the emergency plan for fire.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR INTRUDER

Staff will first alert the Director and then other staff should an intruder enter the building. The Director will approach the intruder and inquire as to why the person is on the premises. During this time, staff will ensure that all the children are accounted for. If the Director determines the intruder should not be on the premises, the intruder will be asked to leave. If the intruder refuses to exit the building or uses force or threat of force, the Director will call 911.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR INTOXICATED OR SUBSTANCE – IMPAIRED PARENTS

Staff will immediately alert the Director of the situation. If time is of the essence, staff will talk to the parent until the Director arrives. The Director and/or staff will talk to the parents about the danger of taking a child and/or operating a vehicle while intoxicated and ask the parents if there is another adult who can be contacted to pick up the child. The Director will focus on the welfare of the child.

If the parent demands to take the child while in such a condition, the Director/staff will release the child to the parent. If the parent does leave with the child and the Director/staff have reason to believe the parent is substance-impaired, the Director/staff must act in their role as mandatory reporters and file a child abuse report to the police and DHS. The Director/staff shall escort parent and child to the parking lot to get the tag number, a detailed description of the vehicle and the direction of travel. Director/staff will call 911.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR LOST OR ABUDCTED CHILD

Staff will alert the Director immediately. A complete search of the building and outside area will be conducted by the director, co-director, and designated staff person. If the child has not been found within a reasonable time, the Director will call 911 and provide a description of the child and what he/she was wearing. After calling 911, the Director will call the parents.

In case of abduction, a description of the abductor, if available, and the child will be provided to the police. If staff or Director is warned that an unauthorized person is coming to take the child, the child will be accompanied by staff to the back office where the door will be closed and locked. If an unauthorized person arrives to take the child, no information about the child will be released and the person will be asked to leave the premises. If the person refused to leave, the Director will call 911.

PANDEMIC

If the state or federal government has issued a public health emergency, Stepping Stones Learning Center will consult the Iowa Department of Public Health and the Center for Disease Control for guidance. Operating procedures may change according to their recommendations.

Should the center have a case of the illness named in the health crisis, Stepping Stones Learning Center may close temporarily to disinfect the building and to allow time for families and staff to quarantine. The decision to close may be made by the IDPH, DHS, or Stepping Stones Learning Center. Upon re-opening, procedures may be put in place such as use of hand sanitizer, limiting of people entering the building, and changing drop off and pick up procedures.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Stepping Stones Learning Center is mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect. Child abuse is defined in Iowa Code section 232.68 as one or more of the following six categories: Physical abuse, Mental Injury, Denial of Critical Care, Child prostitution, Sexual Abuse, Presence of illegal drugs. The law requires childcare providers to report signs of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services. Our staff is required to take Iowa's mandatory reporting of child abuse which trains childcare providers how to recognize and report abuse and neglect. Our staff is trained concerning their responsibilities to recognize and report suspected child abuse of any child in care at the center and will fulfill their legal obligation to do so. If you suspect abuse or neglect, you can report anonymously by calling the local Department of Human Services at 563-263-9302.

MANDATORY REPORTER

All staff are Mandatory Reporters and must complete a two-hour class that is renewed every five years.

Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC will report to the Department of Human Services, as required by state and local laws, any instance where there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse, neglect, or exploitation may have occurred. Failure to report any suspected case of abuse could result in revocation of our license, immediate termination, or suspension of employment and/or individuals could be criminally charged for failing to report.

Section 232.69 of the Iowa Code requires that every employee of a licensed day care or preschool facility who, in the course of employment, reasonably believes a child has suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental injury, child prostitution, denial of critical care, bestiality in the presence of the child, manufacture of a dangerous substance, or is in possession of a dangerous substance, shall immediately report the suspected abuse directly to the Department of Human Services.

Section 232.70 of the Iowa Code requires that each report made by a mandatory reporter, as defined in Section 232.69, shall be made both orally and in writing. The oral report must be made by telephone or otherwise to the Department of Human Services. If the person making the report has reason to believe that immediate protection of the child is advisable, that person shall also make an oral report to an appropriate law enforcement agency. The written report must be made to the Department of Human Services within 48 hours after the oral report.

By law, the oral and written reports shall contain the following information, or as much thereof as the person making the report is able to furnish:

- a. Names and home address of the child and his parents or other persons believe to be responsible for his care.
- b. Child's present whereabouts if not the same as the parent's or other person's home address.
- c. Child's age.
- d. Nature and extent of the child's injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries.
- e. Name, age, and condition of other children in the same home.
- f. Any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injury to the child, the identity of the person or persons responsible for the injury, or in providing assistance to the child.
- g. Name and address of the person making the report.

Legal sanctions for failure to report are as follows:

- a. Any mandatory reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report a suspected care of child abuse is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.
- b. Any mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to report is civilly liable for damages proximately caused by such failure (Legal Reference 232.75). Any mandatory reporter who, in good faith, makes a report of child abuse or participates in the investigation of a child abuse has immunity from any liability, civil, or criminal. Records and/or information pertaining to the abuse may be release to the child's abuse investigator without release required in other situation (Legal Reference 232.73)

ABUSE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE

If an employee is being investigated for an abuse allegation by DHS, Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC management will take the following steps:

*Cooperate with and review the allegation statements with the DHS investigator.

*Take action concerning the employee's work status. The specific action will depend on the individual situation but will likely fall within one of the following options:

1. The employee may continue working during the allegation investigation with or without modifications to job duties/responsibilities.

2. The employee could be suspended with pay until the investigation is complete.

3. The employee could be suspended without pay until the investigation is complete.

All parents/guardians receive this notice in their handbook:

Dear parents:

The people who care for your child have a special status under the law. They're mandatory reporters. They don't really report "child abuse". What they must report is their suspicion that someone may have purposely hurt your child. They have no choice under the law. Trained investigators decide whether or not abuse actually took place.

All children get bumps, bruises, scrapes as part of growing up. It is important however that you tell your child's teacher/caregiver about any unusual injuries or conditions.

Sincerely,

Stepping Stones Learning Center LLC

To Report Child Abuse Anytime,

Call: TOLL FREE STATEWIDE (1-800-362-2178)

CHILDCARE CENTER LICENSING CONSULTANT

The following is the Childcare Center Licensing Consultant

Heidi Brown

Child Care Licensing Consultant

Division of Field Operations, Centralized Service Area

Parent Handbook Effective April 2023

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services

Cell: 515-631-8846

hbrown@dhs.state.ia.us



A copy of the licensing standards is available on the Department of Human Services website. (Chapter 109 of Administration Rules)

NUTRITION POLICY

Breakfast, lunch & afternoon snack are provided by the center as part of our regular program. Menus are planned in accordance with CACFP (USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program) to meet your child's daily nutritional requirements and our licensing guidelines. Monthly menus will be posted in your child's classroom and on the Information Board. Breakfast is served at the following times:

- 7:00a.m school-age kid's room
- 8:05a.m 4-5 yr. old pre-school room
- 8:05a.m 3 yr. old pre-school room
- 8:05a.m 2-3 yr. old pre-school room
- 8:10a.m Younger & Older toddler room
- 8:10a.m infant room

Breakfast is not served after 8:30 a.m. and children arriving after that hour should eat prior to arrival.

Lunch is served at the following times:

- 11:10a.m infant room
- 11:10a.m Younger & Older Toddler room
- 11:20a.m 2-3 yr. old pre-school room
- 11:30a.m 3 yr. old pre-school room
- 11:30a.m 4-5 yr. old pre-school room

Lunch is a well-balanced hot meal delivered from the kitchen to each room and it is served family style.

Afternoon snack is served at the following times:

- 2:05p.m 4-5 yr. old pre-school room
- 2:05p.m 3 yr. old pre-school room
- 2:05p.m Younger & Older Toddler room

- 2:05p.m infant room
- 3:00 school-age room (All after school children will have a snack when they arrive after school)

We do ask that parents not bring food from home into the center except for the infant feeding and the children with special diets due to religious/medical dietary needs. If your child has food allergies, religious or special dietary needs, please discuss this with the director prior to your child's first day.

If your child has a medical exception to a food item on our menu, please provide the director with a list of foods that your child should not eat, why these foods present a problem and include any foods that may be substituted. There is a doctor's form that must be filled out and signed by a doctor for any child that has food allergies.

Our meals are planned around food children generally like and they are encouraged to try a variety of new foods. Portions are served according to the child's age & the CACFP guidelines. If your child is allergic to any items, please make a notation on the application and medical forms and make staff aware of the situation. Please help us monitor your child's safety by reviewing the posted menu and reminding staff when the items appear. See our Allergy Policy for more information.

Infant parents will supply breast milk for the day or frozen for the week. All breast milk MUST be labeled with the child's name & date. Formula should also be supplied incase we run out of breast milk. A quiet area will be available for nursing mothers who wish to come to the center to nurse their infant.

When your child begins eating baby food, we ask that you provide us a list of the foods that the child has already had. The center will provide baby food, baby cereal, along with the bowls and the eating utensils.

The center can also puree the vegetables & fruits that they serve at mealtimes. If you are interested in that for your infant, please talk with the director for more information.

ALLERGY POLICIES

The following policies and procedures regarding allergies have been developed to further protect the children in our care. These polices require the full understanding and cooperation of staff and parents:

1. Children with a history of allergies will have these problems specified by the child's health care provider on their medical form.
2. The Director will review medical forms upon enrollment with parents and if a child has special medical needs, a health plan will be developed. This plan will include written instructions from the child's physician regarding the management of his/her allergies.

3. Teachers will become familiar with the care plan, including all floaters and subs who will work with the child. The plan will be posted in the classroom as well as the kitchen. The plan will be clearly marked, as well as the location of any medications or epipens.
4. If the Director determines that the program's food service cannot safely provide snacks and/or meals, the parents will be responsible for providing substitute healthy food which will be served by the staff. To the extent possible, the program will provide alternative foods for special medical diets.
5. The care plan will be revised at least yearly or more if medications change.
6. Children receiving medications for allergies in the childcare setting must have an updated permission form every six months for that medication or more often if medication regimens change. Over-the-counter medications (such as Benedryl) require a doctor's note, including a dosage.
7. An allergy list is maintained by the Director for all children who are enrolled. It is posted in each classroom and the kitchen. It is revised and reviewed monthly.
8. The person who is responsible for food service will read all food labels to identify known allergies.
9. For children with life-threatening allergies (usually peanuts) – Their classrooms will be clearly marked to exclude that food from the area. Other parents in the classroom will be educated about the importance of not bringing foods from home into the classroom without prearranging it with the teacher and making sure the foods are safe. Teachers will be aware of all foods entering the classroom and will exclude all foods that could contain the threatening allergens. If in doubt about any food, it must be excluded from the classroom. Classroom celebrations may not include homemade foods (in these classrooms) and must include only foods that are clearly labeled for allergens. Those foods will be checked before they enter the classroom. Parent education will include some ideas and suggestions for "safe" foods. Unsafe foods will be excluded from special occasions as opposed to excluding the child with allergies from the occasions, whenever possible, so the child does not feel singled out.
10. Due to the possibility of "cross contamination" between groups, no food is allowed on any playground with the following exception. Classrooms may serve food from the regular center menu in picnic format on the playground with the following stipulations – 1) other classrooms sharing the playground space must be informed in advance so they can consider any implications to their children with allergies; 2) teachers must take special care to clean up the area thoroughly after eating; and 3) no trash from the meal may be left outside – it must be taken to the dumpster after the meal. In addition, teachers should have an overall sensitivity to the need to clean up thoroughly after any common area events involving food so as not to leave any hazard behind for a child from another classroom that might have allergies.
11. All staff members will be trained in the management of allergies and allergic reactions as a part of their orientation, including all substitutes and floaters. The topic will also be included in the staff's annual CPR/First Aid training as a refresher.

STAFF

Our staff members are selected for their positions based on their education and work experience in the field of early childhood education and the results of a reference check which includes criminal record evaluation, child abuse record check, & finger printing.

Of equal importance, however, are personal qualities of warmth, empathy, and the ability to relate positively to others. To compliment their skills and build on the experience they already possess, staff receives additional in-service training hours in early childhood education monthly.

In addition to the regular staff in each classroom, volunteer staff can be used when available. Grandparents and student teachers from local colleges may provide assistance. Volunteers will be supervised by the lead teacher in the classrooms and will not be left alone with the children.

STAFF ORIENTATION

All members of our childcare staff will be required the following training:

- ❖ Certification in Adult and Child and Infant CPR
- ❖ Certification in Child and Adult First Aid
- ❖ Two hours in Iowa's training for mandatory reporting of child abuse
- ❖ One hour training in universal precautions and infectious disease control
- ❖ Twenty contact hours of training in childcare related areas of study
- ❖ Essentials Childcare Preservice Training

Upon employment, staff will be provided with copies of Stepping Stones Learning Center Employee and Parent's Handbooks. Staff will be asked to sign a statement indicating they have read each handbook and are familiar with the contents of each. The signed statement will be made part of the employee's file.

Staff must participate in an orientation where the director will review all the policies and emergency procedures contained in the Employee Handbook with each employee. Emergency plans for fire & tornado will be reviewed and practiced monthly. Staff will be informed of any policy changes. Staff will be required to review the policies set out in the Employee and Parent Handbooks annually.

Staff will receive training through certified training programs, self-study training materials, and in-service training.

STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

Our organization is committed to offering quality childcare and feels staff/child ratios play a vital role in achieving this goal. We meet and exceed the minimum staff/child requirements of the Iowa Department of Human Services.

Front Infant Room – 6 weeks to 10 -12 months – 4 infants to 1 adult

Back Infant Room – 10-12 months to 16-20 months – 4 infants to 1 adult

Younger Toddler Room - 15-20 months to 2yrs. – 4 toddlers to 1 adult

Older Toddlers – 2 years to 3 yrs. – 7 toddlers to 1 adult

2-3 Yr. old Room – 2 ½ - to 3 ½ - 4-year-old – 7 -10 preschoolers to 1 adult

3 Yr. Old Room – 3 years to 4 years old – 10 preschoolers to 1 adult

4-5 Yr. old Room – 3 ½ - 4-year-olds to 5 yr. olds – 12 preschoolers to 1 adult

STAFF HANDWASHING POLICY

Staff will wash their hands at the following times:

- ❖ Upon arrival to the center
- ❖ Immediately before eating, after eating, or participating in food service activities.
- ❖ After diapering a child
- ❖ Before leaving the restroom either with a child or by themselves
- ❖ Before and after administering non-emergency first-aid to a child
- ❖ After nose blowing
- ❖ After removing gloves

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Stepping Stones Learning Center strives to meet the many challenges and changes in the child care community. Current research shows that children enjoy a more enriched learning experience when their parents take an active role in their education. As partners with your child's center, parents are encouraged to:

- ❖ Volunteer in their child's classroom
- ❖ Schedule conferences with the teacher as needed
- ❖ Have lunch with your child
- ❖ Participate in fall and spring events
- ❖ Attend programs
- ❖ Attend Field Trips
- ❖ Participate in center fundraisers

Your participation as stated above will ensure that you are updated on important information and will have a voice in your child's daily learning and development. Stepping Stones Learning Center has an "open door" policy, and we encourage you to drop in whenever you wish. Communication is the key for a happy, positive relationship between you, your child, and the Center. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

PARENTS' PARTICIPATION

Stepping Stones Learning Center is committed to working with families. Parent participation is welcomed. Parents are asked to avoid visits during naptime, usually between the hours of 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Parents are encouraged to arrive with their child (ren) at the center no later than 9:00 a.m. If the child is going to arrive later than 9:00 a.m., parents must call so the lunch count includes their child. It is extremely important to reinforce consistency in each child's schedule. **If the child is not going to attend on a particular day, parents must notify the center thru the ProCare app or call the center phone at 563-264-1871.**

Two no call no shows could result in your child's spot at the daycare being filled.

It is important that a parent/guardian communicate his/her needs and desires openly and honestly to the child's teacher. Parents are encouraged to discuss any developmental concerns and to share any other information that may be appropriate. In the toddler room our program includes assistance in toilet training. Cooperation between parents and staff is needed to accomplish this milestone.

PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

This form is signed by the parents/guardians who acknowledges that he/she received, read, and understands the policies contained in this parent handbook. This parent handbook will be sent to each family thru email, but if you would like a paper copy, please let us know and we will get one for you.

If you have questions/concerns or need anything explained in more detail, please let us know and we will surely go over it with you. If you need a translator due to language, reading, or writing please inform the director and we will get someone to translate anything that you are needing help with.

COMPLAINTS

From time to time there may be concerns or even "differences of opinions". Your child's teacher or the Director will listen to any complaints or concerns that arise. You may phone, e-mail, or set up an appointment for a conference. If an occasion arises where you may not be satisfied or where you cannot come to an agreement with the teacher, we will have a conference with the teacher and Director.

Center Contact Information:

Director: Shawna Martin cell (563) 299-8984
Co-Director: Jacob Martin cell (563) 272-9593
Cook/On-Site Supervisor: Michelle Sebastian cell (563) 554-1847

Center Mailing Address:

Stepping Stones Learning Center
2205 2nd Avenue
Muscatine, Iowa 52761

Center Phone Number:

563-264-1871 or 563-264-8117