





PARENT HANDBOOK

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Every day at Stepping Stones Child Development Centers, a story is waiting to be told.

This handbook is your guide to our program, policies, and operational procedures — a blueprint, if you will, for how we help those stories unfold. We want you to be very pleased and comfortable with your decision of choosing Stepping Stones. If you have **any** questions about the policies in this handbook, or if there's anything we could be doing better, please speak to a Site Director, call **(973) 375-5437 (kids)** or email us at stonesstepping@yahoo.com To receive important alerts of our School Closures, Emergency Alerts or Important Reminders please

 Like & Follow us on  Facebook @ Stepping Stones Child Development Centers and Subscribe to receive text alerts by texting: **STEPPINGSTONES** TO: **833-766-5592**

Please take a few minutes to become familiar with this parent handbook. To complete your registration, we ask you to visit <https://stonesstepping.com/product/enrollment-and-tuition-form/>

We are looking forward to getting to know you and your child and, if there's anything we can do to help, please do not hesitate to inform us.



Welcome Parents/Guardians:

Our entire existence is to encourage, stimulate and enhance students intellectual development and provide for their physical well-being.

Stepping Stones Child Development Centers strive to provide leadership role models that will have a positive impact on the quality of life for themselves, their families and the community as a whole.

We have purposely designed a program that will instigate the importance of continued education for Pre-kindergarten and school age students.

Our children have fallen victims to the proliferation of television, video games and lack of healthy physical activities. Stepping Stones Child Development Centers plan to offer parents and young scholars an environment that is nurturing, enjoyable and enriching.

Thank you for your patronage,

Stepping Stones Management

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

About

The goal of Stepping Stones is to provide a quality program that is safe, fun and affordable. Our programs offer age-appropriate activities under the supervision of a competent, trustworthy, caring and qualified staff that understands and meets the needs of the children in our care.

Activities

To meet the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and recreational needs of young scholars. Our program will:

- Provide students with a safe and secure environment.
- Provide time for homework and assistance if needed.
- Offer fun, enriching, academically oriented and recreational activities that help promote confidence, self-esteem, and responsibility.
- Provide a relaxed, but structured atmosphere where children can socialize and make new friends.

Program Hours

Stepping Stones offer before, after and summer school services at the participating schools below.

Hillside District

Abram P. Morris Early Childhood Center

143 Coe Ave Hillside, NJ 07205

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.– 9:00 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Program Hours (cont.)

Deanna G. Taylor Academy

614 Tillman Street Hillside, NJ 07205

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.– 8:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Ola Edwards Community School

1530 Leslie Street Hillside, NJ 07205

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.– 8:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Hurden Looker Elementary School

1261 Liberty Avenue Hillside, NJ 07205

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.– 8:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Irvington District

Augusta Preschool Academy

97 Augusta Street Irvington, NJ 07111

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:30 a.m.–8:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m. –6:00 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

Program Hours (cont.)

Grove Street Elementary School

602 Grove Street Irvington, NJ 07111

Monday through Friday

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.–8:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m. –6:00 p.m.

Early dismissal days: 12:30 p.m.– 6:30 p.m.

The program begins on the first day of school through the last day of school. We will follow the school district calendar and will be open for scheduled holidays and early release days.

(Reference the district calendar/closure calendar via our website.)

Summer Camp

Stepping Stones summer camp will operate at the following locations listed below. Please visit our website for updated schedules and activity calendar.

Hillside District

Abram P. Morris Early Childhood Center

143 Coe Ave Hillside, NJ 07205

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.–6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Irvington District

Augusta Pre-School Academy

97 Augusta Street Irvington, NJ 07111

Operating hours: 7:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday

Grove Street Elementary School

602 Grove Street Irvington, NJ 07111

Operating hours: 7:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

School Closures

If there is an unscheduled, emergency early closing of the public schools due to weather or other safety reasons, Stepping Stones will also be closed. If the schools have a late start, Stepping Stones will only provide after care services for that day.

If the weather forces us to close early after programming has already begun parents will be contacted via phone or text message notifying them of the closure. Please make sure to include in your Emergency Contacts a person who can pick up your child early if you are unable to do so.

Stepping Stones observes all emergency closings taken by Public School Systems. Please listen and/or monitor local television and radio stations for closing announcements.

Registration

All new and returning students who receive any services in our program must complete an Enrollment Form every new academic year and every new summer session. Enrollment must be done online. During registration, a student may attend as many days as the parent needs, but full tuition will be charged for days the student is registered for. Changes to your student's schedule must be made by emailing changes by 12PM, 2 business days prior to child's start date.

Tuition and Subsidy Programs

- Rate sheets can be viewable on our website. We do offer sibling discounts of \$5 off per child for two (2) or more students. (Excluding Before Care only services) **Please note: Stepping Stones Child Development Centers do not issue refunds or credits for non-attending days. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to plan their child(ren) attendance accordingly.** If a student attends for 2 or fewer days parents should select the "Drop In" options. Services received of 3 days or more requires the full weekly tuition.
- Changes to your child's schedule must be emailed to our office at stonesstepping@yahoo.com no later than 12 PM Monday the week services are rendered.

Tuition and Subsidy Programs(cont.)

- Financial assistance is available for parents that qualify. Stepping Stones is contracted with Community Coordinate Child Care of Union County (4cs) & Programs For Parents. If you are interested in enrolling, please contact us, or inquire within for further information.
- Co-payments are due by the 15th of every month. If the 15th falls on a weekend or closure day, payment must be made by the following business day. A **\$20.00 late fee** will be assessed if payments are received after the 15th of every month.

Please note: Failure to pay co-payment fee to the provider (Stepping Stones Child Development Centers) will result in the “Termination of child care benefits for all of your children” as stated by (4cs) & Programs For Parents.

- If a child enters the program for any period, they are considered present for that day and the responsible parent/guardian will be billed accordingly.
- No allowances, credits, refunds, or make-up days shall be made for absences (i.e., sickness). In accordance to Stepping Stones policies and agreement, tuition is due for child(ren) who attends any part of the week. There is no credits given for any non attending days paid for.
- Tuition is due by 12pm on Thursday prior to the service week that services are rendered.

Payment Procedures

- Payments should be paid no later than 12pm on Thursday prior to the service week that services are rendered. Payments received afterwards will receive a late fee of \$20.00 added to the parent/guardian account. Due to processing time, See the attendance schedule based on when payments are made.

Payments made after 12pm will attend by the following business days listed:

Payment made by 12pm Thursday/Attends Monday.

Payment made by 12pm Friday/Attends Tuesday.

Payment made by 12pm Monday/Attends Wednesday.

Payment made by 12pm Tuesday/Attends Thursday.

Payment made by 12pm Wednesday/Attends Friday.

- Payments can be made by clicking “Pay Tuition” conveniently Online at www.stonesstepping.com or to the Site Supervisor/Director during our operating hours.

We accept cash & money orders. Personal checks will not be accepted. Please make all money orders payable to the Stepping Stones Child Development Centers.

Delinquent Accounts

No one will be allowed to attend or receive any services in our program with an unpaid balance. If a family account is past due, student(s) **will not** be allowed to attend the program until the account has been paid in full. A student will be terminated from the program for failure of payment.

Late Pick-up Fees

All parents/guardians are expected to pick up their children on time. If you are unable to do so, it is your responsibility to notify the Site Supervisor/Director that you will be late or send an alternate to pick up your child. Please advise the individual picking up your child to bring photo identification with them. After the site closes, a staff member will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or emergency contact person by telephone. If a child remains in the program an hour after closing time and all emergency contacts and communication attempts have been exhausted, the local police department will be contacted, and the child will be released into the custody of the appropriate law enforcement official.

A **\$40.00 late fee** will be charged for each child who is picked up late.

Refund Information

Stepping Stones do not issue refunds. It is the parent/guardian responsibility to plan their child(ren) attendance accordingly.

Tax Information

Stepping Stones will provide Year-End Statement summaries by January 31st each year upon request only. Please allow up to 5 business days for processing.

Arrival & Departure Procedures

Due to state childcare licensing regulations a manual signature is required during arrival and dismissal times at all our locations, or we will be penalized. Therefore, you are required to sign your child in and out every day. If you habitually neglect to do so, you will be charged a maximum fee of \$5.00 per missed sign-in or sign-out. Please be advised that your child is not permitted to sign him/herself out.

Each morning during arrival time students will do a quiet activity before staff escort them to their classrooms. After dismissal students in the program will be escorted to their assigned areas with their teachers.

Attendance is done daily, so if your child will not be in attendance for the days they are registered for and/or if they have been picked up early from school, please get in touch with the Site Supervisor/ Director or email us at stonesstepping@yahoo.com.

Due to limited slots, your child must have an active enrollment, as other families need our services. Therefore, if your child has 2 consecutive weeks of absences, they will be dropped from our program. **Please note that if slots are available for your child to begin receiving services again, you will have to complete the registration process by completing the enrollment form.**

Students will not be released to anyone other than a parent/guardian, or person authorized on the child's enrollment form unless the child's parent/guardian notifies the Site Supervisor/ Director prior to pick up time. If a staff member is unfamiliar with any person picking up a student, the staff member will ask to see a picture identification before the child is released and the parent/guardian will be notified. Stepping Stones request that parents refrain from talking on their cell phones while picking up their child, except in the case of an emergency. Not only do the children want to tell you about their day, but often our staff would like to be able to speak with you about any concerns they may have.

Emergency Contact

It is strongly recommended that you provide at least three local emergency contacts. You may update your contacts at any time by email or by speaking to the Site Supervisor/ Director.

Custody Arrangements

We recognize many families have unique custody arrangements. Specific court orders will be necessary in order for Stepping Stones Child Development Centers to deny access to any legal parent. You must notify the Site Supervisor/ Director immediately if there are changes to your pickup list including any documentation related to the changes.

Walking from Program

Students may walk home from school only with written parental permission. This form is available by emailing us at stonesstepping@yahoo.com. This excludes Preschool and Kindergarten students.

Daily Activities

Stepping Stones program offers a variety of experiences and opportunities for children during their time in the program. The Site Supervisor/ Director plans a regular daily routine of activities to provide the security of a predictable day. Upon dismissal from school, all students attending the program will report to their assigned areas and are grouped according to their ages.

Homework assistance, crafts, reading, music, games, and gross motor activities are also provided during the program.

Homework Time/Assistance

Stepping Stones stresses the importance of homework and sets time aside every day for the students to complete their assignments. Staff members are available to supervise the homework area and to assist the children with their work, however, a child who needs individual help with his or her homework must ask. Because of the number of children who require assistance during homework time, the staff members are unable to check each child's homework for accuracy or provide the type of one-on-one homework help that is available from a private tutor. Although we encourage the children to do their homework when it is assigned, using the time set aside to complete homework is the responsibility of the child. Please let us know via email if you prefer to have a child complete his or her homework at home. Children who do not wish to use homework time to complete their homework may use the time to read a book. Please make sure to send your child with all materials they will need to complete their work including paper, pencils, markers, etc. as well as headphones or charging cords needed with use of technology devices.

Please note: Stepping Stones staff are not authorized to go into any students personal belongings, therefore, if a student states they do not have any homework we are not authorized to check there folders/backpacks.

Field Trips

Students will have the opportunity to participate in field trips during summer school. Parents will be informed of any field trips in advance and permission slips will be distributed. Without written permission the student will not be able to participate in any field trips. **Please Note: Any students that do not attend the field trips must find alternate childcare for that day as All Staff will be attending trip. No Credits or refunds will be given for students who do not attend field trips. No Exceptions! Please review the trip schedule and fees before enrolling.**

Children will be transported in buses vended by Shore Vans transportation company.

Photographs

Occasionally Stepping Stones takes pictures or videos of program activities for use on our website, brochures, fliers, etc. Pictures or photos are not used without parental permission as indicated on the enrollment registration form. If you need to modify this release, please email us at stonesstepping@yahoo.com

Meals and Snacks

Students will be provided with a nutritious dinner and a healthy snack during the academic school year. On early dismissals, students are provided lunch and snacks. Breakfast is served by the students attending school. During the summer program students receive breakfast, lunch, and snacks. If your child has a special diet, please make sure to send them a healthy meal and/or snack. Soft drinks, candy and gum are not allowed. Please make sure you have disclosed any known allergies of your child(ren) to make sure staff are aware of any possible allergic reactions.

Personal Belongings

All personal belongings, including jackets, backpacks, electronics, chargers, etc. should be clearly labeled to help avoid loss. Please check the school's lost and found in case your child does lose something. Students may bring electronic games to be used during scheduled times with the permission of their teacher.

Responsibility for the safekeeping of electronic games and other valuable items brought from home remains with the student.

Stepping Stones Child Development Centers program is not responsible for any lost, damaged or stolen belongings. Cell phones are a great way to stay in touch with your students, but it can be very distracting. For this reason, we do not allow the use of cell phones in the program. Students with cell phones should store their device in a location that is not visible to the teacher or other students. In certain situations, students may use the device with teacher approval. If a cell phone is used for any reason without teacher permission, a staff member may confiscate the device. It will be returned to the parent during dismissal. If you need to reach your student during school hours, please call the school.

Health & Safety

We are closely following guidance from the CDC, as well as state and local officials and health authorities, as we take extreme care to maintain our safe and healthy school environment.

Illness

Staff will notify the parent/guardian immediately if their child becomes ill. An adult must pick up the child within 1 hour. Staff will call all emergency contacts on file if they cannot reach the parent/guardian. Staff will isolate the students and provide supervision until they are picked up.

Medication

Stepping Stones will dispense prescription and non-prescription medication only with the written authorization by the child's doctor. All medication administered by staff must be current and, in a pharmacy, labeled container. An adult must bring the medication into the program. Students are not permitted to have medication in their possession to take on their own. Expired medications will be returned to the parent/guardian.

Please note specific documents must be completed for medications to be properly administered. The form can be received by emailing or visiting our website forms tab.

Special Needs

All students with special needs are required to complete an Individualized Needs Assessment Form. This is required to be completed and filled out by your physician. This is to ensure that we can reasonably accommodate students with any doctor prescribed restrictions, allergies, medical conditions, and/or special needs.

Allergies

It is the parent/guardian responsibility to make sure Stepping Stones staff are aware of any known allergies of their students. Please make sure you communicate with staff about any steps to be taken in case of an allergic reaction. Specific documents must be completed for medications to be properly administered. The form can be received by emailing or visiting our website forms tab.

Injuries

A written record will be filed of all injuries and accidents. Parents/guardians will be notified, and a signature will be requested from parents/guardians notifying them of the incident. In the event of an accident or acute illness, every effort will be made to notify the child's parent/guardian and physician prior to treatment. In a life-threatening emergency or urgent situation, staff will call 911 before making any attempt to contact parents.



POLICY ON THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

If a child exhibits any of the following symptoms, the child should not attend the center. If such symptoms occur at the center, the child will be removed from the group, and parents will be called to take the child home.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea
- Episodes of acute vomiting
- Elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Lethargy
- Severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundice skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours
- Swollen joints
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- Skin lesions that are weeping or bleeding
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Stiff neck

Once the child is symptom-free, or has a health care provider's note stating that the child no longer poses a serious health risk to himself/herself or others, the child may return to the center unless contraindicated by local health department or Department of Health.

TABLE OF EXCLUDABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

A child or staff member who contracts an excludable communicable disease may not return to the center without a health care provider's note stating that the child/staff presents no risk to himself/herself or others. These diseases include

| <u>Respiratory Illnesses</u> | <u>Gastrointestinal Illnesses</u> | <u>Contact Illnesses</u> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chicken Pox** | Giardia Lamblia* | Impetigo |
| German Measles | Hepatitis A* | Lice |
| Hemophilus Influenzae* | Salmonella* | Scabies |
| Measles* | Shigella* | |
| Meningococcus* | | |
| Strep Throat | | |
| Tuberculosis* | | |
| Whooping Cough* | | |

Gastrointestinal, and contact illnesses such as Impetigo, Lice, Scabies, and Shingles.

*Reportable diseases that will be reported to the health department by the center.

**Note: If a child has chicken pox, a health care provider's note is not required for re-admitting the child to the center. A note from the parent is required stating either that at least six days has elapsed since the onset of the rash, or that all sores have dried and crusted.

If your child is exposed to any excludable disease at the center, parents will be notified in writing.

Behavior Management Policy

Rules & Expectations

Our student's guidance plan strives to accomplish the following:

1. Maximize the growth and development of each child.
2. Protect the group and the individuals around the child.
3. Set reasonable and positive expectations.
4. Provide opportunities to verbalize feelings.
5. Encourage self-control through self-understanding.
6. Help each child grow in responsibility and self-esteem.

The following rules are in effect, although additional rules may be made from time to time, especially for specific parts of the building, grounds and specific activities:

1. Follow the directions given by the teacher/staff.
2. Be respectful of others, yourself and the property.
3. Always remain with a teacher/staff.
4. Be responsible for your own belongings and respect the property that belongs to others, including the school.
5. Walk inside the building.
6. Talking with "inside" voices should be used inside at all times.
7. Use appropriate language.
8. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

We ask parents to go over these rules with students.

Teachers/staff will conscientiously praise students when they have displayed positive behaviors. When undesirable behavior occurs, the consequences are in effect:

1. Teachers will remind the students of the behavior expected. If further action is necessary:
2. The student will be spoken to apart from others, the incident will be documented, and the teacher/staff will speak with parent/guardian. If further action is necessary:
3. The staff will write a formal incident report. If further action is necessary:
4. After three incident reports, the child will be suspended for one day. If further action is necessary:
5. After five one-day suspensions in one year or three suspensions within two months, the parents will be given one week to find alternate after school care, and the student will be removed from the program.

The Site Director has the authority to immediately suspend/terminate any student from the Stepping Stones Child Development program who exhibit dangerous or repeatedly disruptive behavior at any time.

We hope that all students that come to our program do well. If we are not able to

meet the needs of a student or the behavioral issues are more complex than our staff can handle, we will meet with the family to give notice of termination.

Consequences/Dismissal Procedures

Suspension and termination from the program are last-resort actions, but student's safety is the most important concern of our program. Please see the positive discipline plan for the steps to be taken in the event of a student's misconduct.

A student will be suspended from the program for one day after three written incident reports (two reports, in the summer program). After five one-day suspensions in one year or three suspensions within two months or two during the summer program, the parent/guardian will be given one week to find alternate services and the child will be removed from the program. Verbal abuse of a staff member or another child by a parent/guardian is also cause for immediate termination.



GUIDELINES FOR POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

Positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of the individual child, the group, and the adult.

Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells children what they should **not** do; positive discipline tells children what they **should** do. Punishment teaches fear; positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

You can use positive discipline by planning ahead:

Anticipate and eliminate potential problems. Have a few consistent, clear rules that are explained to children and understood by adults. Have a well-planned daily schedule. Plan for ample elements of fun and humor. Include some group decision-making. Provide time and space for each child to be alone. Make it possible for each child to feel he/she has had some positive impact in the group. Provide the structure and support children need to resolve their differences. Share ownership and responsibility with the children. Talk about our room, our toys.

You can use positive discipline by intervening when necessary:

Re-direct to a new activity to change the focus of a child's behavior. Provide individualized attention to help the child deal with a particular situation. Use time out—by removing a child for a few minutes from the area or activity so that he/she may gain self control. (One minute for each year of the child's age is a good rule of thumb). Divert the child and remove from the area of conflict. Provide alternative activities and acceptable ways to release feelings. Point out natural or logical consequences of children's behavior. Offer a choice only if there are two acceptable options. Criticize the behavior, not the child. Don't say "bad boy" or "bad girl". Instead you might say "That is not allowed here".

You can use positive discipline by showing love and encouragement:

Catch the child being good. Respond to and reinforce positive behavior; acknowledge or praise to let the child know you approve of what he/she is doing. Provide positive reinforcement through rewards for good behavior. Use encouragement rather than competition, comparison or criticism. Overlook small annoyances, and deliberately ignore provocations. Give hugs and caring to every child every day. Appreciate the child's point of view. Be loving, but don't confuse love with license.

Positive discipline takes time, patience, repetition and the willingness to change the way you deal with children. But it's worth it, because positive discipline works.



EXPULSION POLICY

NAME OF CENTER: Stepping Stones Child Development Centers

NAME OF CHILD: _____

SIGNATURE OF PARENT: _____

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center:

IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself. Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members.
Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION

Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records. Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
Verbal abuse to staff.

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
Uncontrollable tantrums/ angry outbursts.
Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
Excessive biting.

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION

If after the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion. An expulsion action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the center. The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period.
The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the center.
The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate child care (approximately one to two weeks' notice depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety).
Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

A CHILD WILL NOT BE EXPELLED

If a child's parent(s):
Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center's alleged violations of the licensing requirements. Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center.
Questioned the center regarding policies and procedures.
Without giving the parent sufficient time to make other child care arrangements.

PROACTIVE ACTIONS THAT CAN BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PREVENT EXPULSION

Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior.
Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriate of activities, supervision. Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children. Staff will praise appropriate behaviors.
Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
Child will be given verbal warnings. Child will be given time to regain control. Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality. Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion. The director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.
The parent will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior and/or recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises. Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team.



Cover Letter for DYFS Information to Parents Document

Dear Parent:

In keeping with New Jersey's child care center licensing requirements, we are obliged to provide you, as the parent of a child enrolled at our center, with this informational statement.

The statement highlights, among other things: your right to visit and observe our center at any time without having to secure prior permission; the center's obligation to be licensed and to comply with licensing standards; and the obligation of all citizens to report suspected child abuse/neglect/exploitation to the State Central Registry Hotline (877) NJ ABUSE/ (877) 652-2873.

Please read this statement carefully and, if you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (973) 371-1133:

.....

Sincerely,

Stepping Stones Management

.....

Please complete and return this portion to the center. (Please print)

Name of Child:

Name of Parent(s):

I have read and received a copy of the Information to Parents statement prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families.

Signature:.....Date:



Daily Walks

CHILD NAME: _____

PARENT NAME: _____

Upon signing this document, I ☐do ☐do not allow Stepping Stones Child Development Centers staff to take my child on/and outside the school for outdoor activities in the playground, daily walks and/or excursions within a safe distance of the school.

You may reach me at the following numbers in case of emergency:

Phone: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



INFORMATION TO PARENTS

Under provisions of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 10:122), every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents this written statement, prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

* * * * *

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website at www.state.nj.us/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/index.html or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are issued after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint investigation, you are also entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review.



INFORMATION TO PARENTS (continued)

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents.

Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities and to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), unsafe children's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at www.cpsc.gov/cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prerel.html. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the State Central Registry Hotline, toll free at (877) NJ ABUSE/ (877) 652-2873. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to www.state.nj.us/dcf/ and select Publications.

Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting the Community Education Office, Division of Youth and Family Services, PO BOX 717, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0717



Electronic Communications/Social Media Policy by Staff and Parents

Date Originally Adopted: 3/31/2018

Revisions:

Related Documents: This document replaces Email Policies & Procedures (originally adopted 3/31/18)

Electronic Communications Policies & Procedures

“Electronic communications,” for the purpose of this policy, means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device including, but not limited to, mobile phones, computers, computer networks, or other electronic devices. Electronic communications include any transmission of data, including but not limited to e-mail, instant message, text messages, or any message made through online forums/chats, social media, or other social networking websites.

While Stepping Stones Child Development Centers respects the right of and encourages employees to use electronic communication, employee conduct, including electronic communication, is held to a higher standard than the general public. Employees must set appropriate boundaries between their public, personal, and professional online activity, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public even without their knowledge or consent. Employees who post or publish images, photographs, or comments on social networking sites, blogs, or other forms of electronic communication shall ensure their use, postings, or publications are professional and appropriate for a school employee. Employees are strongly encouraged to carefully review the privacy settings on their social networking accounts and exercise good judgment when posting or otherwise transmitting electronic communications.

Electronic communications are an efficient, useful method of transmitting information and expediting processes. Electronic communication presents unique challenges, some of which have the potential to create division within our community. The following policies and procedures will aid us in healthy working together.

Confidentiality

Any request for confidentiality is to be honored. In discussion groups, electronic communication within the specified discussion groups should remain within those groups and confidential unless the group agrees to approve the sharing of such communication to external bodies or individuals. Only persons authorized to represent any discussion group to another group should engage in email communications with those groups.

No employee may share, with any other party or parties, the electronic communication of any other employee without the express permission of the employee who authored the communication.

Prohibited content

Employees may not use electronic communications to create and/or distribute of any offensive, or disruptive messages, including messages containing offensive comments about race, gender, age, sexual orientation, pornography, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability.

Employees or Board members who receive any electronic communications with this content should report the matter to the Board President immediately.

Employees may not use electronic communications to disparage, insult, bully, intimidate, accuse, blame, libel, defame or make any negative comments about any other employees. There are proper avenues for grievances, and employees must utilize those grievance procedures rather than electronic communications to other employees or to school parents.

Tone of communication

As people sometimes write that which they might not feel comfortable saying, it is important that people take time to reflect on the content and tone of emails before they are sent. This is particularly important when emotions are high, as it is easy to hit 'Reply' and fire off an immediate response to something another person has written. Sometimes an immediate response doesn't *really* reflect the complexities of the emotions involved.

If a particular piece of writing evokes a powerful, passionate response, it can be helpful to pause and reflect on where that reaction comes from -- is the response particularly influenced by your own thoughts, assumptions, previous experiences, feelings, or beliefs, over and above what the other person has actually written?

Ground Rules

1. **Use "I" statements.** "You" statements are often perceived as an attack.
2. **Express needs and wants rather than judgments or critiques;** we always need solutions to our challenges.
3. **Respect the views of others.**
4. **Speak for oneself,** not for groups unless so authorized, as generalizing can create a false impression.
5. **Use cc: field sparingly.** Do not "cc" others as a way to expose, shame, blame or bully. In general, try not to use the cc: field unless the recipient in the cc: field knows why they are receiving a copy of the message. Using the cc: field can be confusing since the recipients might not know who is supposed to act on the message.
6. **Answer all questions and pre-empt further questions.** An email reply must answer all questions and pre-empt further questions – If you do not answer all the questions in the original email, you will receive further e-mails regarding the unanswered questions, which will not only waste time but also cause considerable frustration.
7. **Do not write in CAPITALS.** IF YOU WRITE IN CAPITALS IT SEEMS AS IF YOU ARE SHOUTING. This can be highly annoying and might trigger an unwanted response in the form of a flame mail. Therefore, try not to send any email text in capitals.
8. **Do not overuse Reply to All.** Only use Reply to All if you really need your message to be seen by each person who received the original message. Reply to All may never be used to expose, shame, blame, bully, or cast negative aspersions on any other employee.

9. **Read the email before you send it.** Reading your email through the eyes of the recipient will help you send a more effective message and avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate comments.

Privacy

Employees have no expectation of privacy when using school technology equipment, the school email system, or public social media sites. The school board and/or administration may monitor and may investigate an employee's electronic communication and use of school-issued devices and school computer network for improper or illegal use. Employees shall be informed of the consequences that may result from inappropriate electronic communications up to and including dismissal from employment.

Violations of Electronic Communication Policies and Procedures

Use of the school's electronic resources is a privilege, not a right. An employee's privileges may be suspended pending an investigation concerning the use of the school's technology resources. Any violations of district policy, regulations or procedures regarding technology usage may result in temporary, long-term, or permanent suspension of employee's privileges. The board and/or administration may use disciplinary measures to enforce school policy, regulations, and procedures. Employees may be disciplined or terminated for violating the school policies, regulations, and procedures.

Any attempted violation of school policy, regulations, or procedures, regardless of the success or failure of the attempt, may result in the same discipline or suspension of privileges as that of an actual violation.

Electronic Communications Between Parents and Staff

Increasingly, parents and teachers are using e-mails and text messages to communicate with each other. Electronic communication is often a convenient and helpful way for parents to communicate with their child's teacher, but parents should follow the same guidelines as for any professional communication.

1. Parents should steer all school-related communications through their child's teacher, rather than directly with each other.
2. Teachers and parents should always be positive, courteous, and diplomatic in their electronic communications.
3. If a parent has a grievance, proper grievance procedures must be followed rather than the distribution of an email, text or other electronic communication airing those grievances to other parents or staff members.

Existing Policies and Procedures

All electronic communications should comply with all Stepping Stones Child Development Centers policies and procedures.



POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, the center shall ensure that:

1. The child is supervised at all times.
2. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
3. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the *24-hour State Central Registry Hotline 1- 877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)* to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick-up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

1. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
2. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
3. If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the *24-hour State Central Registry Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)* to seek assistance in caring for the child.

For school-age childcare programs, no child shall be released from the program unsupervised except upon written instruction from the child's parent(s).