



**STEPPING  
STONES**  
EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

# Parent Handbook

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# Welcome to Stepping Stones!



We would like to welcome you to your new family within the community. Enrollment within a new facility has a tendency of creating mixed emotions. You may be experiencing excitement about the new environment, new friends, and uneasy feelings because the faces are unfamiliar and sometimes ridden with guilt being forced to leave your child on a day to day basis so you can earn a living. We would like this handbook to serve as a peaceful guide for you, the parent, and us, the provider. We love building relationships as partners with our parents. These relationships will become beneficial for everyone as we assist in raising and educating your most precious "gift", your child.

Best regards,

**Lalanii Wilson-Jones, MBA**



# Company Overview

## PROGRAM VISION

The vision of Stepping Stones DFW is to create a highly respected, ever changing rigorous learning environment that inspires and challenges children to comprehend, interact, communicate and prepare themselves for the future.

## PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of Stepping Stones DFW is to respond to the physical, emotional, social and cognitive needs of each individual child and their family. We will provide a comprehensive program that responds to the changing needs of the children we serve. We will stabilize, strengthen and preserve families as well as providing outreach to the community. Research shows that children who enter school "ready" based on a quality preschool program, tend to score higher on achievement tests, are less likely to be placed in special education or retained and are likely to remain in school, graduate and attend college, become productive citizens with a career and better quality of life.

## MISSION

The mission of Stepping Stones DFW is to meet and exceed the educational needs of each student in the areas of academics, health and wellness.



## AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Stepping Stones DFW, LLC  
 81460 E. Glen Blvd., Mesquite, TX 75149  
 Phone: 800-963-9516

## LICENSING INFORMATION

Stepping Stones DFW is licensed through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. We comply with the standards regulated by the T.D.F.P.S. in order to provide a healthy and safe environment for the well being of every child in our care.

The Texas Department of Family Services is located at 8700 N. Stemmons Freeway Suite 104, Dallas, Texas 75247. The Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-252-5400. The website is [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

Stepping Stones DFW is not accredited through Texas Rising Star Provider. We are in the process of meeting the program specification and working with Childcare Group of Dallas.

Stepping Stones DFW is also a member of two of the largest National Child Care Organizations that are recognized within the state of Texas, and across America.



## PROGRAM GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following are the goals and offerings of the Stepping Stones DFW program.

1. Increase vocabulary and word recognition to develop literacy skills.
2. Develop fine motor skills that aid in reading and writing.
3. Promote academic achievement by creating a positive and nurturing environment.
4. Individualize learning by conducting formal assessments and ongoing observations of each child.
5. Plan lessons that cater to each child's emerging skills, promoting further development and understanding.
6. Modify activities to suit individual needs.
7. Ready children for school upon completion of the preschool program.
8. Communicate regularly with parents regarding their child's strengths and areas for improvement.
9. Maintain a safe environment with proper supervision and equipment.
10. Promote good hygiene practices to ensure a healthy environment.
11. Design a physical environment that is age-appropriate and conducive to learning.



## ADMISSION PROCEDURES

The following records must be provided for each child in order to be considered as enrolled within Stepping Stones DFW:

- Admission Information Forms
- Parent Orientation Form
- Statement of the child's health from a professional or parent/guardian
- Immunization Records (Ages 2-4)
- Tuberculin Testing Information (if applicable)
- Hearing and Vision Screening Results (if applicable)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Application
- Required Documents for CACFP
- Photo / Video Release Forms
- Emergency Medical Release Forms
- Discipline and Guidance Policy

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Stepping Stones DFW is open from 5:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. seven days a week unless otherwise noted. Stepping Stones DFW is open from January to December.

## HOLIDAYS

New Year's Eve <b>(1/2 Day)</b>	New Year's Day	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Good Friday	Memorial Day	Juneteenth Day
Independence Day	Labor Day	Thanksgiving Day
Friday After Thanksgiving	Christmas Eve <b>(1/2 Day)</b>	Christmas Day



# PARENT'S RIGHTS & CODE OF CONDUCT

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## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

Under the Child Protective Services Act, any employee is obligated to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Employees of Stepping Stones DFW do not need to discuss their suspicions with parents before reporting to the relevant authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition before making a report. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect can result in criminal liability for mandated reporters under the Act. At Stepping Stones DFW, we take this responsibility seriously and will report all warranted cases to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act exists to safeguard the welfare and best interests of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Stepping Stones DFW cannot be held liable for reports made in "good faith" to Child Protective Services that are later determined to be unfounded.

The following are some of the reasons to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect:

- The presence of unusual marks, cuts, or bruises on the child's body
- Severe verbal scolding or reprimanding
- Inappropriate clothing in terms of size, cleanliness, or season
- Transporting a child without proper restraints, such as a car seat or seatbelt
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Failure to provide appropriate meals
- Leaving a child unattended for any duration
- Inability to cater to the unique requirements of a disabled child
- Sending a sick child to school overmedicated to hide symptoms that would typically require them to stay at home until they subside.
- Children who display behavior that is consistent with an abusive situation.

## ABUSE & NEGLECT

In order to prevent and respond to abuse and neglect of children, Stepping Stones DFW adopts the following policy and protocols that include the following elements:

### Employee and Parent Awareness

Stepping Stones DFW provides regular training sessions, workshops, and seminars for parents and employees to educate them on recognizing signs of abuse and neglect and identifying factors that could put children at risk of harm.

### Warning Signs

Warning signs of child abuse can vary depending on the specific type of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, or neglect), as well as the age and individual circumstances of the child. Some common signs to look out for include:

- Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures.
- Frequent, unexplained absences from school or other regular activities.
- Fear or avoidance of certain people or places.
- Sudden changes in behavior, such as aggression, withdrawal, or depression. Inappropriate sexual behavior or knowledge for their age.
- Fear of going home or reluctance to leave school.
- Lack of personal hygiene or unattended medical or dental needs.
- Begging or stealing food or money.
- Poor academic performance or inability to focus.
- Overly compliant or submissive behavior.

### Risk Factors

Child abuse can have long-lasting negative effects on a child's physical and emotional well-being. Although risk factors do not guarantee child abuse will occur, they do increase its likelihood. Common risk factors include parental stress, substance abuse, history of abuse, lack of support, domestic violence, family structure, low parental education, social isolation, parental mental health, and lack of parenting skills.

### Prevention Techniques

Preventing child abuse and neglect requires several strategies, including education and awareness programs, evidence-based parenting programs, financial assistance and support, strengthening families, mandatory reporting laws, school-based prevention, community involvement, and accessible mental health services. These strategies aim to promote safe environments, teach personal safety skills, identify and report signs of abuse, and address underlying causes of stress.

## PARENT'S RIGHTS

Senate Bill 1098 from the 88th Legislative Regular Session added Section 42.04271 to the Human Resources Code and states that a parent or guardian of a child at a child care facility has the right to:

- Enter and examine the child-care facility during its hours of operation and without advance notice;
- File a complaint against the childcare facility;
- Review the childcare facility's publicly accessible records;
- Review the child-care facility's written records concerning the parent's or guardian's child;
- Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the childcare facility's online compliance history;
- Have the facility comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the child;
- Be given the contact information for the child care facility's local Child Care Regulation office;
- Inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving their child provided that:
  - Video recordings of the alleged incident are available;
  - The parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video depicting a child that is not their own; and
  - The parent or guardian of any other child in the video receives prior notice from the facility;
- Obtain a copy of the facility's policies and procedures handbook;
- Review the facility's staff training records and any in-house training curriculum; and
- Exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the facility.

## Required Notifications

The child care facility must provide written notice to the parent or guardian of any other child captured in a video before allowing a parent to inspect a recording.

The child care facility must provide a parent or guardian with a written copy of the rights no later than the child's first day at the facility.

## PARENT'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE

Stepping Stones DFW is delighted to welcome every new family to our family program. We understand that both parents and children may experience a range of emotions - from excitement to unease - as they navigate a new environment and make new acquaintances. We acknowledge the strain that some parents may feel, being required to leave their child in our care, while they attend work to provide for their families. Our parent handbook is designed to offer a peaceful guide to our parents, and we cherish building relationships as partners with them. Through these relationships, we aim to provide a nurturing and educational environment for our parents' most precious "gift," their child. We value and welcome the role and influence of parents in the growth and development of their child, as long as it aligns with the standards of the law. We maintain an open-door policy when it comes to working with and partnering with our parents. We are excited about the positive impact and influence parents will bring to our program.

## PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Stepping Stones DFW requires the parents of enrolled children at all times, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Stepping Stones DFW is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Stepping Stones DFW but, is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on agency property thereafter. Please refer to the Policy on Parent's Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding dismissal of the child when a parent is prohibited from accessing agency property.

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## USE OF PROFANITY

Inappropriate language, including cursing, is prohibited on agency property at all times, whether in the presence of a child or not. It is suggested to use non-offensive language to express frustration or anger. Staff members should never be subjected to inappropriate language.

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## THREATS TO EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN, OR OTHER PARENTS

Stepping Stones DFW has a strict zero-tolerance policy towards any form of threats. Any such aggression will be promptly reported to the concerned authorities. Parents are expected to maintain responsibility and control over their behavior and resolve any disputes or concerns with the agency or other parents calmly and respectfully. Any confrontational behavior is strictly prohibited.

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## PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT AT DAYCARE CENTER

The child care facility has a strict policy against corporal punishment and verbal abuse of children. Parents are encouraged to seek guidance from teachers in addressing any behavior issues, but cannot discipline other children. Any concerns should be reported to the classroom teacher or Director. It's important to note that privacy rights and confidentiality policies prohibit the Center Director and teachers from discussing the behavior of other children with parents.

**04****SMOKE-FREE ZONE**

Smoking is prohibited on agency property, including inside the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Stepping Stones DFW, for the health of all employees, children, and associates. Parents must dispose of cigarettes before entering the parking lot.

**05****VIOLATIONS OF THE SAFETY POLICY**

Stepping Stones DFW requires parents to follow all safety procedures, designed to protect the welfare and best interest of employees, children, and associates. Entrance procedures are particularly crucial, as unauthorized individuals should not be allowed into the center. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in the organizational chain, and parents should be alert and report any breaches to the Center Director.

**06****VIOLATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

Stepping Stones DFW emphasizes maintaining confidentiality of all individuals associated with the agency, including children, families, and employees. The policy applies to all parties and any breach may be considered a violation.

**07****RIGHT TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS**

At Stepping Stones DFW, parents can access their child without prior notice. Visitors, on the other hand, must schedule an appointment with the Center Director and be accompanied by an employee. In case any enrolled parent is prohibited from entering the premises due to legal reasons, the center will be compelled to dismiss their child.

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## DISMISSALS

Stepping Stones DFW requires a two-week written notice for a child's dismissal or withdrawal from the program, with failure to provide notice resulting in continued fees. If a child is dismissed, unused tuition is not refunded, and any past-due balances must be paid within 30 days. Parents must promptly collect their child's belongings and leave the property respectfully. Disruptive or uncooperative behavior may lead to police involvement. Following a dismissal, parents and children must schedule an appointment with the Center Director to return to the property. Harassment or threats towards anyone affiliated with Stepping Stones DFW will result in legal consequences.

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## WITHDRAWAL

Parents must give two weeks' notice when withdrawing a child; if they do so, they will receive any unused tuition and deposit within thirty days. If no notice is given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks and will not have their deposit refunded. After the last day of enrollment, parents and child cannot re-enter the property without permission from the Center Director. To return to the property, a withdrawn child and their parents must request an appointment with the Center Director. Parents must give two weeks' notice for any changes to their child's enrollment schedule, and the Center Director will notify them in writing if the new schedule is available. If the requested schedule is not available, parents may continue with the current schedule or withdraw their child from the program.

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## COURT ORDERS EFFECTING ENROLLED CHILDREN

Stepping Stones DFW requires a certified copy of any court orders involving enrolled children. The orders will be strictly followed unless a more liberal variation is requested in writing by the custodial parent(s). If both parents have shared/joint custody, both must sign the request. In the absence of a court order, both parents have equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Stepping Stones DFW cannot limit a parent's access without a court order. Conflicting court orders will be resolved by following the most recently dated order. Upon receipt of a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, Stepping Stones DFW is obligated to follow the order and report violations to the court.



## PARENT PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERS

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many different ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the childcare center. Parents may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events; Teachers will have posted in their classrooms any volunteer opportunities available. Parents not interested in volunteering directly in the classroom may donate items, do maintenance work, or assist in the front office. These volunteer opportunities are posted in the main office area on the parent bulletin board.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks and fingerprint checks, as required by our licensing regulations. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions, sex offender convictions and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom, or on field trips.

Parents / Volunteers will not be counted in the staff-child ratio and will therefore have to be under direct supervision of the staff. Parents / Volunteers will be required to attend orientation of the program policies and procedures that cover basic health and safety, child abuse reporting responsibilities, emergency preparedness and child guidance.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted





# OPERATING POLICIES & PROCEDURES

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## ENROLLMENT POLICY

Enrollment is open to children from ages 6 weeks to 12 years old. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability; and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy or disability.

### Application & Fees

To apply for enrollment, parents need to complete the Enrollment Application and pay the Registration Fee. Note that the Registration Fee is non-refundable. The initial enrollment is dependent on the submission of the completed enrollment application, registration fee, tuition fee, and a signed Parent Orientation Form. It's essential to understand that the Enrollment Application and Fee Agreements are not intended to serve as contracts that guarantee service for any duration.

### Enrollment Rejection

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

### Maintaining Enrollment

Enrollment at Stepping Stones DFW is subject to the parent's, emergency contact persons', and child's adherence to the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. This includes, but is not limited to, the prompt payment of all fees and tuition.

### Voluntary Withdrawal

It is mandatory for parents to inform Stepping Stones DFW immediately if any of the information previously provided during enrollment or at any point thereafter changes. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being dismissed from the program.

## TUITION POLICY

Please note that the initial tuition does not cover fees for field trips and extracurricular activities. Notifications regarding these fees will be posted, so keep an eye out. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Director.

The full tuition payment is due every Monday by 6:00pm with no exceptions for holidays. If your child is absent due to illness and/or under a physician's care, a statement will be required to receive a 50% discount. This concession is only available for one week per calendar year. If you have been enrolled in the program for over a year, you will receive two weeks of vacation time, provided that your account is in good standing.

## LATE TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition fees are due on a weekly basis, payable before the scheduled services are rendered. Failure to pay by the second day will incur a \$25.00 fee, followed by a \$5.00 per diem charge thereafter. Please note that scheduled school holidays, child illnesses, or emergency situations will not be credited.

Non-payment of tuition will result in immediate dismissal from the program. Therefore, timely payments are crucial for continued enrollment. However, if you anticipate difficulty in making payments on time, please communicate with the Center Director immediately. You will be notified by the Director if alternative payment arrangements are approved.

Stepping Stones DFW accepts childcare subsidies. Parents of subsidized children are personally responsible for the copayment of tuition if they become ineligible to receive childcare subsidies.

Stepping Stones DFW offers a multiple-child discount for one or more siblings enrolled during the same school year. The youngest sibling will pay the full tuition rate, and each additional sibling will receive a 10% discount on tuition payments. Kindly note that discounts are only applicable when tuition payments are made on time. Late tuition payments will incur the full tuition rate, along with any additional late fees as per the late tuition policy stated above.

## CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

At Stepping Stones DFW, we prioritize safeguarding the privacy of all individuals associated with our organization. We recognize that confidentiality is critical and will only disclose sensitive information to employees who demonstrate a legitimate "need to know" for the proper care of the child. It's our policy not to disclose confidential data relating to faculty members, other parents, or children to other parents.

Our policy covers sensitive information such as names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and health-related data. We will only share this information with external third parties with express written consent from the parent or guardian of the child, unless mandated by the law. Parents will be informed of the information to be shared, who it will be shared with, and the reason for doing so.

Any parent who contravenes this confidentiality policy will be immediately barred from entering Stepping Stones DFW premises. For additional information, please refer to our policy on Parents Right to Immediate Access.

We have disabled children and children who may exhibit inappropriate behavior, such as biting, hitting, or spitting, on our premises. We kindly request that you respect our confidentiality policy by refraining from discussing other children or their behavior while on our premises.

## REFUNDS

Stepping Stones DFW reserves the right not to offer refunds for invoices rendered. If your child attends for more than 6 hours in a day, full tuition is required. If you withdraw your child without providing the program with a 2-week notice, no refund will be given.

## ARRIVAL PROCEDURES

Upon arrival at Stepping Stones DFW, the parent or adult accompanying the child must sign the child into care on the sign-in sheet located on the front counter. The children should be accompanied by an adult to their designated classroom and supervised at all times as required by law while in the child care facility. Parents are expected to assist their children in putting away their belongings and settling in for the day.

It is discouraged for parents to sneak out of the center as some children may exhibit separation anxiety. Stepping Stones DFW recommends that parents inform their child upon arrival that after all of the child's things are put away, the parent will kiss, hug, and say goodbye to the child. This will prepare the child for their departure. The employee present in the classroom will comfort and assist the child through the anxious time. Parents are asked to leave after saying goodbye to their child. The professional employees of Stepping Stones DFW are available to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

At arrival, parents are required to follow the Medication Policy if a child needs medication during the course of the day. Parents must notify the child's teacher or Center Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parent must present the special instructions in the form of a letter and discuss them verbally with either the classroom teacher or Center Director. These special instructions may include early pick-up, alternative pick-up person, health issues over the previous night that need to be observed, and any other general concerns that the child care providers should be aware of.

## WARM BODY CHECK

Upon arrival at the center or in the classroom, we reserve the right to do a warm body check. This check may include but not be limited to assessing the child for bruises or injuries that were not previously known, assessing the child for their tidiness so that any needs may be addressed, as well assessing for any signs and symptoms of allergies, teething and or contagious diseases that were not present during the child's last attendance. These are considered observations and not necessarily a health check.

## MEALS

Stepping Stones DFW provides breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack and dinner to all children. Parents are discouraged from bring outside foods into the facility. Family style meals are provided to encourage social skills.

## NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Parents must notify the center by 8:00 a.m. if their child will not be attending on a scheduled day. This will help the center maintain appropriate staff-to-child ratios and enable the classroom teacher to effectively plan for the day. If a child is absent for five consecutive days without notification, they may be considered disenrolled from Stepping Stones DFW's program.

If a child is ill, parents are requested to inform the Centre Director of the absence and the nature of the illness. This will help the faculty monitor any illnesses that occur at the school. The information will be shared on a "need-to-know" basis only. If a child has a communicable disease, parents are requested to inform the Centre Director so that other parents can be notified. Stepping Stones DFW will take all necessary measures to maintain the confidentiality of the child. Parents are not legally required to share this information, and their continued enrolment in the program will not be based on their decision to share (or not) the reason for their child's absence.

Parents anticipating a late arrival should notify the center by 8:00 a.m. to ensure appropriate staffing and ratios are maintained upon the child's arrival.

## AGENCY'S RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION

Stepping Stones DFW reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause.

Stepping Stones DFW strives to maintain an ample list of substitutes in anticipation of staff absences; however, there are times when substitutes are not available, and classrooms need to be closed to maintain compliance with licensing regulations. Refusal will be based on a "first come first serve" basis when seeking to maintain appropriate staff to child ratios and/or when closing classrooms.

**Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:**

- Lack of staff to maintain appropriate Staff to Child Ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations.
- The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
- Staff deems the child to ill to attend.
- Domestic Situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled at Stepping Stones DFW if the child were to be present at the center.
- Parents' failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
- Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.

**Parents WILL NOT be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.**

## PICK-UP PROCEDURES

Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out sheet located on the front counter. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on agency premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child, and are required to directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

***Parents must take home all papers in the child's cubby, backpack or school bag each day.***

Parents or persons designated to act "in loco parentis" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or other authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent(s) is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

## LATE PICK-UP

There will be a charge of \$1.00 per minute for children who are still on the premises in our care after 7:00 p.m. The late fee will be charged to your account, and will need to be paid with your next regular schedule tuition payment. All measurements of time are to be according to the Stepping Stones DFW clock located in the main front entrance. This is for parents that are on a regular schedule.

A child's services can be terminated should the child be picked up late on three occasions in one school year regardless of the reasons for the late pick-up. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or emergency/alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time.

## INEBRIATED PERSONS AT PICK-UP

Stepping Stones DFW has implemented a policy regarding parents who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. While the agency does not intend to restrict access to a custodial parent, it will delay their access while notifying the other parent, law enforcement, and Child Protective Services. Any visitor who is not authorized and appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be denied access, and the parents, police, and Child Protective Services will be notified of the situation.

## EMERGENCY/ALTERNATE PICK-UP

Stepping Stones DFW requires parents to complete an Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form, including all potential authorized pick-up individuals. In an emergency, parents are contacted first, followed by those listed on the form until someone can be reached. If a parent cannot pick up their child, it is their responsibility to arrange for someone on the form to do so. Parents designate who can discuss confidential information and pick up their child "In Loco Parentis." Those on the form must provide photo identification, and all changes or additions must be made in writing by custodial parents. Stepping Stones DFW reserves the right to refuse/ban anyone listed on the form for violating policies and procedures.

## TRANSPORTATION

For local public elementary schools, Stepping Stones DFW provides transportation to and from the center for children participating in the Before and After School Program. Admission and Emergency Forms must be completed, including authorization for transportation and emergency medical issues. Safety rules for bus transport should be discussed with your child beforehand.

- Children must ride in safety belts or seat belts, and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving.
- Enter or leave the vehicle only if an authorized adult says it's okay.
- Children must remain quiet in order to hear their name being called during the checklist for transporting. The checklist will be done periodically (before boarding, after boarding, after unloading at the designated location, several times during the field trip, before leaving the location, after reboarding the bus before departure to return and upon arrival back to the facility) throughout the field trip to ensure that each child is accounted for.
- Always walk and avoid pushing others.
- Stay with the group and make sure you are always beside a buddy.
- Always look in both directions and get a verbal okay from the authorized adult to cross before crossing a street or driveway.
- Walk only.
- Recognize the danger zone where a driver cannot see a child is present.
- During emergency evacuation procedures including participating in an emergency drill, the child is to follow the same safety rules.

Stepping Stones DFW requests that children arrive by 6:30am to avoid rushing during breakfast and should be notified before 2:00pm if not attending. They are not responsible for children who are not in designated areas after school dismissal and may charge \$10.00 for returning to a school to pick up a child. Parents should inform the Director of any changes and ensure their child is aware of the designated area. Admission Forms must be completed specifying the designated school your child is to attend and signed. This gives us authorization to transport your child.



## EMERGENCY DURING TRANSPORTATION

In the event there is an emergency during transportation, the teacher/driver has clear instructions for handling emergency breakdowns and accidents, including vehicle evacuation procedures. The children are to follow precisely the instructions given by the teacher. The teacher will continue to ensure supervision and safety for all children and contact emergency help. The Director or designee in charge of the child-care facility will further instruct the staff of how to handle the emergency.

The teacher/driver is to call the roll to ensure all children are still accounted for. Regardless to the amount of transitions or locations they must move to. The roll / checklist will be implemented before and after they move.

Parents will receive the same amount of notification time implemented by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. All field trips must be posted within 48 hours of the departure time.

## EMERGENCY CLOSING AND INCLEMENT WEATHER

Emergency and Inclement Weather Policy for Parents

We understand how important it is to have a clear plan in place for emergency situations. In the case of a closure due to inclement weather or other emergencies, parents will be notified via local TV and radio stations. Our policy for opening or closing will align with that of the Dallas Independent School District.

If a closure is necessary during the day, our staff will first attempt to contact the parents to make arrangements for pick up. If the parents are unavailable, the emergency contact persons listed on the form will be called until someone is able to pick the child up. When calling, staff will provide the pickup location in the event of an evacuation. Parents or emergency contacts should go directly to the alternate location to pick up their child.

Please note that tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures during school days. If the closure extends beyond ten school days, tuition will be reduced based on the absence rate of half of your weekly scheduled tuition.

## CURRICULUM

Our educational program at Stepping Stones DFW is carefully crafted to cater to the holistic development of every child. Our teachers assess each child meticulously and plan activities that are tailored to their ever-changing developmental needs. We create an environment that is conducive to your child's growth in all aspects- physical, emotional, intellectual, and social. Our curriculum comprises monthly family projects, weekly projects, and/or daily homework assignments that your child can complete at home.

## DAILY SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Stepping Stones DFW daily schedule is planned to ensure a variety of activities that meets your child's developmental needs. The lesson plan enhances and clarifies for parents and monitors the services Stepping Stones DFW provides. It also serves as a guideline for the teachers to follow in order to provide a fun, yet structured environment on a daily basis.

## CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Stepping Stones DFW strongly advocates for placing children in age-appropriate classrooms. Although developmentally appropriate placement is essential, Stepping Stones DFW retains the authority to reassign children with cause at any point during their enrollment.

## STAFF-TO-CHILD RATIO

At present, Stepping Stones DFW will adhere to the National Accreditation Commission's guidelines for maintaining appropriate staff-to-child ratios. These ratios enable teachers to manage, supervise, and care for a smaller group of children effectively. It's essential that every child has an assigned caregiver who is responsible for understanding their habits, interests, and any specific issues that require attention.

## NAP/REST TIME

At Stepping Stones DFW, children are offered supervised rest periods after their midday meal. Each child is provided with a sanitized mat and permitted to bring select items from a pre-approved supply list. Fitted sheets and small blankets, labeled with the child's name, are also provided and are expected to be taken home by parents for weekly laundering.

## EDUCATIONAL/PERSONAL CARE SUPPLIES

To participate in our program, parents are required to provide their children with a daily supply of essential items. We kindly request that you also equip your child with an extra labeled uniform in case of any accidents. To ensure safety, we advise against the use of plastic bags. Instead, kindly provide the change of clothes in a brown grocery bag that is labeled and sealed with staples. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

## BIRTHDAY/HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Stepping Stones DFW's Recommendations for Birthday Celebrations  
 Birthday parties are a special occasion for children, and we want it to be memorable for everyone involved. If you are planning to provide treats such as cake, cupcakes, or ice cream, we kindly ask that you keep it simple with vanilla/white cakes, as many children have food allergies that can be triggered by peanuts or peanut oil. To ensure safety, we cannot burn candles during the event. Additionally, we respect the religious beliefs of some children who may not celebrate birthdays, and we aim to be sensitive to their needs.

## FIELD TRIPS

Stepping Stones DFW frequently supplements the in-class curriculum with off-premises field trips. Parents are required to give written permission for their child to attend each field trip.

Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance of the trip, with all pertinent trip information including destination, date, time, reason for trip, cost, and mode of transportation. All trip costs must be paid in advance in order for your child to attend. Your child must wear their Stepping Stones DFW T-Shirt, which is purchased by the parent, with closed-toe shoes for their safety.

If parents wish to attend the trip with their child, they should discuss attending with the classroom teacher and Director. Stepping Stones DFW provides all required supervision for all field trips but always invites and welcomes parents to attend. Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, other than their own, on a Stepping Stones DFW sponsored trip.

## WATER ACTIVITIES

Water activities may be included in on and/or off-site activities. The parent must check that his/her child has permission to participate in said activities that may include splash play, sand & water activities and/or swimming pool attendance for school-age children.

## PARENT/TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Stepping Stones DFW places a high value on fostering a strong connection between home and school, as it is critical to creating a positive environment for young children. We want parents to feel comfortable and welcome at all times. To achieve this, we aim to bridge the gap between home experiences and our educational program. While your child is our top priority, we also understand the importance of communication with parents. Informal conversations can take place during drop-offs and pickups. If you require a more formal setting, please schedule a time throughout the school year when the teachers are not engaged in instructional activities. These can be arranged in person during a conference or over the telephone. We provide a formal conference twice a year to discuss your child's progress and development. During these meetings, we will share evaluations that will include artwork, samples of writing skills, and milestones that should be achieved throughout the school year. We welcome parents' input, which is a vital component in achieving the desired outcome for their child. Conferences will be documented with dates and parents' signatures.

We utilize various communication channels to keep parents informed and involved, including orientation, bulletin boards, memos, newsletters, calendars, posted notices, phone calls, conferences, verbal communication, observations, emails, parent meetings, and daily reports for toddlers.

## GRADUATION

Stepping Stones DFW celebrates the end of the school year with a special celebration for children that are a part of the Preschool class. Notices will be distributed to parents regarding details of important information. There is a graduation fee designated for students transitioning into Kindergarten.

## TOYS FROM HOME

To ensure the safety and integrity of our learning environment, we kindly request that children refrain from bringing personal toys to school unless requested by their classroom teacher for educational purposes. It is the responsibility of parents to enforce this policy with their children, and we encourage them to discuss any concerns with their child's teacher.

If a parent repeatedly fails to comply with this policy, the Director will contact them and request that they visit the school to remove the toy. Furthermore, any toys brought in for educational purposes will be subject to inspection by Stepping Stones DFW's staff for appropriateness and safety. Stepping Stones DFW reserves the right to prohibit any toy based on our sole discretion.

## POLICY CHANGES

Stepping Stones DFW maintains the right to modify policies as necessary in response to licensing regulations, or to ensure the provision of exceptional programs. Any policy modifications will be disseminated via memos to all parents, and notices will be prominently displayed in the Stepping Stones DFW front office areas.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

### Benefits of Physical Activity

Physical activity benefits individuals in various ways, including promoting healthy growth, development, and maintenance of muscles, bones, and physical fitness. It also releases endorphins, improving mental well-being, and enhancing cognitive functions such as concentration, memory, problem-solving skills, and creativity. Collaborative physical activities promote teamwork, cooperation, communication, and social interaction, while assisting in regulating emotions, improving self-esteem, and promoting a positive self-image.

### Duration of Physical Activity

1. Infants (0-12 months): At least thirty minutes of outdoor time daily.
2. Toddlers (1-2 years): At least 60 minutes of structured and unstructured physical activities spread throughout the day, incorporating active play and movement.
3. Preschoolers (3-5 years): At least 120 minutes of structured and unstructured physical activities throughout the day, including planned exercise, active play, and outdoor time.
4. Schoolers (5-12 years): At least 120 minutes of structured and unstructured physical activities throughout the day, including planned exercise, active play, and outdoor time.

### Settings for Physical Activity

1. Indoor Activities: Utilize various play areas and equipment within the childcare center, such as open spaces, gyms, and age-appropriate toys and games.
2. Outdoor Activities: Utilize designated outdoor areas that are safe, secure, and developmentally appropriate, such as playgrounds, open fields, or nature trails.

### Recommended Clothing & Footwear

1. Clothing: Loose-fitting, breathable, and flexible clothing that allows easy movement, such as T-shirts, shorts, sweatpants, and leggings.
2. Footwear: Closed-toe shoes with non-slip soles that provide support and protection, such as sneakers or athletic shoes.

### Physical Activities During Extreme Weather

To ensure the safety of children during extreme weather conditions, consider temperature, air quality, and severe weather. Plans for physical activity during these times may include indoor activities, modified outdoor activities, educational physical activities, and teaching resources.

#### Effective Discipline in Child Care Centers

It's crucial to recognize that discipline should always be non-punitive, respectful, and centered around teaching appropriate behavior rather than punishing negative behavior. Physical punishment, humiliation, and verbal abuse are never acceptable. Moreover, caregivers should work hand in hand with parents to ensure consistent approaches to discipline at home and in the child care center. Adopting methods that align with the center's policies and values while prioritizing the emotional and social development of the children is key.

## DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE

### Infants (0-12 months)

Discipline isn't applicable at this age. Caregivers should focus on providing a nurturing and responsive environment. Responding promptly to infants' needs helps build trust and security.

### Toddlers (1-3 years)

1. **Positive Reinforcement:** Praise and reward good behavior, such as sharing or using words instead of crying.
2. **Redirecting:** Distract or guide toddlers away from inappropriate behavior, focusing their attention on something else.
3. **Simple Choices:** Offer limited choices to give toddlers a sense of control and reduce power struggles.

### Preschoolers (3-5 years)

1. **Clear Expectations:** Set clear rules and expectations for behavior in simple language.
2. **Positive Language:** Encourage positive behavior through praise and positive language.
3. **Time-Out:** Use brief time-outs to help children calm down if they're struggling with self-control.
4. **Problem Solving:** Teach problem-solving skills by involving children in finding solutions to conflicts.

### School-Age Children (6-12 years)

1. **Discussion and Reasoning:** Engage children in discussions about their behavior and its consequences.
2. **Logical Consequences:** Allow children to experience the natural consequences of their actions when appropriate.
3. **Encourage Responsibility:** Give children responsibilities that correspond to their age, fostering a sense of accountability.
4. **Conflict Resolution:** Teach communication and conflict resolution skills to help children resolve disagreements.

## SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

In the event that a child exhibits negative behavior or other infractions that hinder program enrichment, they will receive two written warnings or verbal communication with their parents/legal guardians before facing a three to five-day suspension from the center. However, if the behavior persists or constitutes severe misconduct, the child may be suspended or possibly expelled, without prior warning. Continuing to receive suspensions may ultimately lead to expulsion.

#### Effective Discipline in Child Care Centers

It's crucial to recognize that discipline should always be non-punitive, respectful, and centered around teaching appropriate behavior rather than punishing negative behavior. Physical punishment, humiliation, and verbal abuse are never acceptable. Moreover, caregivers should work hand in hand with parents to ensure consistent approaches to discipline at home and in the child care center. Adopting methods that align with the center's policies and values while prioritizing the emotional and social development of the children is key.

## APPLICATION OF INSECT REPELLANT AND SUNSCREEN

### 01

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#### OBTAIN CONSENT

Before applying any products on a child, we require written consent from parents or legal guardians. This consent form may also include information about any allergies or specific needs of the child.

### 02

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#### CHILD-SAFE PRODUCTS

When applying insect repellent and sunscreen to children, ensure that the products are age-appropriate and have child-friendly formulations with lower concentrations of active ingredients. If parents do not provide the formulas, the daycare center may use a maximum SPF formula or repellent based on the child's age.

### 03

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#### FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS

Read and strictly follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer for both the insect repellent and sunscreen products. These instructions will include usage guidelines, application frequency, and any reapplication requirements based on the products' SPF or repellent effectiveness.

### 03

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#### FOLLOW MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for using insect repellent and sunscreen products, including guidelines for usage, frequency, and reapplication based on SPF or repellent effectiveness.

### 03

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#### STAFF TRAINING

Child care providers will receive training on applying insect repellent and sunscreen, handling emergencies, and recognizing signs of adverse reactions or allergies. Regular training sessions can refresh staff knowledge and ensure child safety.

**04**

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**STORAGE AND LABELING**

Smoking is prohibited on agency property, including inside the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Stepping Stones DFW, for the health of all employees, children, and associates. Parents must dispose of cigarettes before entering the parking lot.

**05**

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**COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

Stepping Stones DFW requires parents to follow all safety procedures, designed to protect the welfare and best interest of employees, children, and associates. Entrance procedures are particularly crucial, as unauthorized individuals should not be allowed into the center. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in the organizational chain, and parents should be alert and report any breaches to the Center Director.

**06**

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**CONSISTENT APPLICATION**

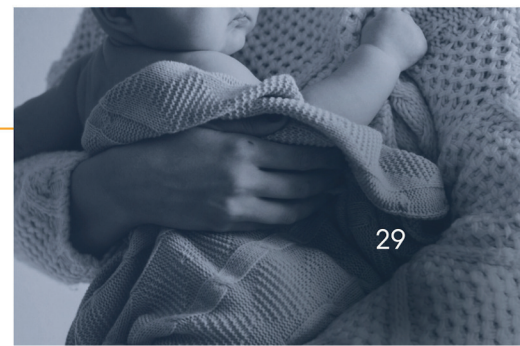
Stepping Stones DFW emphasizes maintaining confidentiality of all individuals associated with the agency, including children, families, and employees. The policy applies to all parties and any breach may be considered a violation.



## Breastfeeding Policy

At Stepping Stones DFW, we are committed to providing a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers and their children. We recognize and respect every mother's right to breastfeed or provide breast milk to her child while they are in our care. To ensure that mothers feel comfortable while breastfeeding, we have implemented the following policy:

- **Comfortable Adult-Sized Seating:** We understand the importance of a comfortable seating arrangement for breastfeeding mothers. Our child care center is equipped with adult-sized seating options in a quiet and private area, specifically designated for breastfeeding. This area will provide adequate privacy and relaxation so that mothers can comfortably nurse their child.
- **Informing Parents of their Rights:** During the enrollment process, we proactively inform parents about our breastfeeding policy. We clearly communicate that mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide expressed breast milk to their child while at our child care center. We emphasize that their decision to breastfeed is respected, supported, and encouraged.
- **Privacy and Respect:** We value privacy and ensure that breastfeeding mothers are able to nurse in a comfortable and undisturbed setting. We maintain a respectful environment by assisting in arranging privacy screens if requested by the mother, and by ensuring staff and other children maintain a quiet and respectful atmosphere in the designated breastfeeding area.
- **Storage and Handling of Expressed Breast Milk:** At our child care center, we understand the importance of proper storage and handling of expressed breast milk. We provide refrigeration facilities to safely store and preserve breast milk brought by parents. We ensure that the breast milk is clearly labeled with the child's name and date of expression.
- **Staff Training and Education:** Our staff members are trained to be knowledgeable and supportive of breastfeeding mothers and their unique needs. We provide training on the benefits of breastfeeding, proper techniques, and guidelines for handling breast milk.
- **Supportive Community:** We encourage an open and supportive community atmosphere where other parents, staff, and caregivers respect and acknowledge the value of breastfeeding. We discourage any negative or derogatory comments or behaviors regarding breastfeeding.





08

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## Inform Parents of their Rights:

During the enrollment process, we proactively inform parents about our breastfeeding policy. We clearly communicate that mothers have the right to breastfeed or provide expressed breast milk to their child while at our child care center. We emphasize that their decision to breastfeed is respected, supported, and encouraged.

09

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## Privacy and Respect

We value privacy and ensure that breastfeeding mothers are able to nurse in a comfortable and undisturbed setting. We maintain a respectful environment by assisting in arranging privacy screens if requested by the mother, and by ensuring staff and other children maintain a quiet and respectful atmosphere in the designated breastfeeding area.

09

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## Storage and Handling of Expressed Breast Milk

At our child care center, we understand the importance of proper storage and handling of expressed breast milk. We provide refrigeration facilities to safely store and preserve breast milk brought by parents. We ensure that the breast milk is clearly labeled with the child's name and date of expression.

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## Staff Training and Education

Our staff members are trained to be knowledgeable and supportive of breastfeeding mothers and their unique needs. We provide training on the benefits of breastfeeding, proper techniques, and guidelines for handling breast milk.

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## Supportive Community

We encourage an open and supportive community atmosphere where other parents, staff, and caregivers respect and acknowledge the value of breastfeeding. We discourage any negative or derogatory comments or behaviors regarding breastfeeding.

If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding our breastfeeding policy, please feel free to reach out to our administrative staff.

## FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

Stepping Stones DFW conducts monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe-zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the director or designee will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the sick child pick-up policy, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the center is in the midst of a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the center is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

## INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORT

Incident/Accident Reports for Children at School

In case your child is involved in an incident or accident during the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. This report will be stapled and placed on the front counter.

Parents or designated guardians must sign any incident/accident reports at pick-up. The classroom teacher will briefly discuss the matter with you at that time. However, should you require a more in-depth discussion or meeting, it is best to schedule it for a later date. The teacher is responsible for supervising other children in the classroom. If necessary, a telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or the following day during nap/rest time.

If someone other than the parent or designated guardian picks up the child, the parent or designated guardian must still sign and return the Incident/Accident Report to the center director within 24 hours. Failure to do so will result in your child's exclusion from the program until the report is signed and returned.

## FOOD PROGRAM

### Stepping Stones DFW's Nutritious Meal Program

Stepping Stones DFW is committed to providing your child with wholesome and nutritious meals during business hours. Breakfast (6:00 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.), morning snack (8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.), lunch (11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.), afternoon snack (2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.), dinner (4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.), and an evening snack (7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.) are served daily. Our weekly menu has a variety of options, which are posted and provided for you to take home.

It's important to note that Stepping Stones DFW participates in the Child Adult Care Food Program. Therefore, we discourage outside foods brought in to feed your child for any meals.

For all age groups, parents are required to provide written notification of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instructions for treatment in case of an allergic reaction. Additionally, parents are required to inform us of any food or dietary restrictions such as lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat-free/gluten-free diets and more. Please refer to our Health and Safety Policies for further information.

At Stepping Stones DFW, we never use food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in breakfast, lunch or snack time for any behavioral reasons. However, teachers may use food as a reward for good behavior and/or classroom lessons. Any food given as a reward (i.e. lollipops, candy) will be placed in the child's cubby/school bag to be enjoyed at home.

All meals are served family-style, with children sitting at tables to promote good manners, healthy eating habits, and socialization skills. Staff will encourage children to eat their main entree first, followed by healthy snacks. Candy and junk food will be reserved for a treat on Fridays during our Store Time.

Our curriculum focuses on developing healthy, well-balanced eating habits, and we provide water for children who wish to have it with each meal.

## LIMITED PEANUT PRODUCTS

### Stepping Stones DFW's Peanut Policy to Ensure Children's Safety

Considering the severity of allergic reactions to peanuts in some children, Stepping Stones DFW has implemented a policy that restricts the inclusion of peanuts and peanut products in certain meals. The danger of these allergies cannot be overstated – exposure to peanuts can result in anaphylactic reactions, which can be life-threatening. Even indirect contact, such as inhaling the smell of peanuts on someone's breath or touching a surface with peanut oil residue, can cause an allergic reaction. Our top priority is ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in our care.

## CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS, AND OPEN DOOR

At Stepping Stones DFW, we strive to create a welcoming environment where every parent feels comfortable. We understand that sometimes there may be breakdowns in communication, so we encourage you to contact the Center Director with any questions or concerns you may have, either in person, via telephone, or email. Additionally, you can schedule an appointment to review any documentation regarding your child's file, and the most recent copy of our organization's inspection report is posted on the parent bulletin board at the front.

If you have any concerns or complaints, please feel free to share them with our staff or the Director of Stepping Stones DFW. We have a suggestion box at the front desk and conduct annual surveys to gather feedback. Rest assured that we will work tirelessly to resolve any issues in a timely and orderly manner, while adhering to all licensing regulations and standards.

You are always welcome to visit us during business hours to observe your child, review our program activities, and check out our facilities and equipment without needing prior approval. Our doors are always open to you.



# DRESS CODE POLICY: PARENTS & CHILDREN

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## JEWELRY POLICY FOR CHILDREN

Stepping Stones DFW prioritizes children's safety and discourages jewelry for this reason. The school is not liable for lost or stolen valuables and asks parents to ensure their child complies with the policy. Violation of this policy may result in dismissal. Parents should consider the safety implications when selecting accessories for their child, and note that the school is not responsible for any loss or damage to personal items.

## JEWELRY POLICY FOR PARENTS

When volunteering in the classroom or any Stepping Stones DFW sponsored event, please note that parents are prohibited from wearing jewelry and/or accessories, as outlined in the children's/staff's dress code policy. Failure to comply with this regulation will result in the parent's inability to participate in volunteering activities.

## DRESS CODE FOR CHILDREN

Throughout the day, children engage in a variety of activities, some of which may be messy or require physical exertion. As a result, it is essential for children to wear comfortable, seasonally appropriate clothing.

Parents are advised not to dress their children in overalls or clothing with complicated closures, as these can pose challenges related to toileting. Additionally, winter-appropriate gear such as coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots must be labeled and provided during colder months. Children are not permitted to wear open-toed or flip-flop shoes, and rubber-soled loafers, sneakers, and tennis shoes are recommended for participation in school activities.

Children aged 3 to 5 years old are required to wear a Stepping Stones uniform, which includes a gold polo-style shirt with the Stepping Stones logo and tan khaki pants, shorts, or dress. On Fridays, children may wear jeans with their shirts. Children under three must have two complete changes of seasonally and size-appropriate clothing at the center at all times. Complete changes include a shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will remind parents to update these changes as the weather changes.

All clothing items must be labeled with the child's first and last name, including coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. Stepping Stones DFW is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing items.

## DRESS CODE FOR PARENTS

Stepping Stones DFW stipulates that parents attending any Stepping Stones DFW-sponsored events or visiting the premises must wear appropriate attire. Clothing deemed inappropriate includes revealing, excessively short, ripped/torn (in inappropriate places), and/or see-through clothing. Any apparel featuring suggestive or vulgar language is strictly prohibited.

Parents wearing high heels, work boots, or shoes with wet/dirty soles should remove their footwear before entering any classroom accommodating children under the age of 2 ½ years. This will reduce the risk of injury to children on the floor and promote a hygienic environment. Parents can leave their shoes outside the classroom door before entering the classroom.



# HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES

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## GANG-FREE ZONE

Stepping Stones DFW prohibits any affiliation, apparel, or other obscene insinuations of gang-related activity or paraphernalia.

### GANG-FREE ZONE INFORMATION

#### **New Requirements Regarding Gang-Free Zones For Child Care Centers**

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This new statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed child care centers. The following is a tip sheet to assist in complying with the new law. This information may be posted at your child care operation or copies may be provided to parents.

#### **What is a gang-free zone?**

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The specific locations include day care centers. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your child care center. For more information about what constitutes a gang-free zone, please consult sections 71.028 and 71.029 of the Texas Penal Code.

#### **How do parents know where the gang-free zone ends?**

The area that falls within a gang-free zone can vary depending on the type of location. The local municipal or county engineer may produce and update maps for the purposes of prosecution. Parents may contact their local municipality or court house for information about obtaining a copy of a map if they choose to do so.

#### **What is the purpose of gang-free zones?**

Similar to the motivation behind establishing drug-free zones, the purpose of gang-free zones is to deter certain types of criminal activity in areas where children gather by enforcing tougher penalties.

#### **What does this mean for my day care center?**

A child care center must inform parents or guardians of children attending the center about the new gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your center is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

#### **When do I have to comply with the new requirements?**

The law is already in effect, so providers should begin sharing information regarding gang-free zones immediately. Licensing staff will offer technical assistance to facilitate compliance until rules are proposed and adopted, which is estimated to occur in March 2010. In the meantime, providers should update their operational policies and procedures to include providing the information mandated by this law to the parents or guardians of the children in care.

*For further information please contact your licensing representative or your local licensing office.  
Child Care Licensing/jr DFPS 8/31/2009*

## FIRIARMS AND WEAPONS

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of Firearm, Ammunitions and/or Weapon on Stepping Stones DFW's property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Law enforcement official who are trained and certified to carry a firearm on duty may have firearms or ammunition on the premises of the center. For all other persons, firearms, hunting knives, bow and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited on the premises of Stepping Stones DFW. Any of these items kept on the premises must remain in a locked cabinet inaccessible to the children during hours of operation. Ammunition must be kept in a separate locked cabinet and inaccessible to the children during hours of operation.



## EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

This Emergency Action Plan outlines procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of children, staff, and visitors at Stepping Stones DFW, 5904 Samuell Blvd., Dallas, TX 75228 in the event of emergencies. It covers various scenarios, including fire, lockdown, severe weather, medical emergencies, and evacuation.

### I. STAFF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Outlined below are the designated roles and responsibilities for Emergency Response:

**Center Director:** holds the primary responsibility for overseeing emergency response and liaising with relevant authorities.

**Assistant Director:** provides support to the Center Director and maintains communication with parents and guardians of the children.

**Classroom Teachers:** responsible for leading children to safety by adhering to established protocols.

**Support Staff:** tasked with facilitating the evacuation process, ensuring all children are accounted for, and maintaining order throughout the emergency.

### II. EVACUATION & RELOCATION

Should the administration of Stepping Stones DFW or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the child care agency to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to Stepping Stones DFW at 8315 Lake June Rd. Dallas, Texas 75217 or Casa Cavazos – Directly in front of center, across parking lot. The children will board our vans and buses to be transported to the alternate safe location. Teachers/drivers will be permitted to use mobile phones as a means of communication for any and all purposes. Once the children are assembled safely there, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call. In case the relocation requires more distance than 1 mile, our relocation will be Stepping Stones DFW 5904 Samuell Blvd Dallas, Texas 75228 or 1460 East Glen, Mesquite, TX 75149.

#### II.I EVACUATING & RELOCATION CHILDREN 24 MONTHS OR YOUNGER

Children under 24 months will be evacuated, depending on the situation, by either van with appropriate car seats, evacuation crib when going to a nearby location, or walked out by staff when necessary. ***Special needs children who are over 24 months will be placed in appropriate car seat and/or walked out by staff.***

### III. REUNIFICATION PROCESS

The following guidelines are to be adhered to during the reunification process: At the start of the process, authorized staff members will engage in identity verification of the parents or guardians. A valid form of identification is mandatory to facilitate a seamless process. After successful verification, parents will be required to sign out their children.

## EMERGENCY CONTACTS

- 911 (Emergency Services)
- Local Fire Department: 911
- Local Police Department: 911
- Medical Facilities:
  - Children's Medical Center (1935 Medical District Drive Dallas, TX 75235)
  - Baylor University Medical Center (3500 Gaston Avenue Dallas, TX 75214)

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES (Non-Medical)

This Emergency Action Plan is intended to ensure a swift and coordinated response to emergencies at Stepping Stones DFW. All staff members are expected to be familiar with this plan and follow its procedures to ensure the safety of children and staff.

### 01

## Center Lockdown

Should an emergency situation arise, it's imperative to take the following measures: activate a lockdown, secure all doors and windows, advise children to remain composed and restrained, and await additional instructions from the relevant authorities.

### 02

## Fire Emergency

In case of an emergency, activate the fire alarm system and follow established evacuation routes to move children and staff to designated assembly points, either in front of the center or at a nearby location (**Casa Cavazos – Directly in front of center, across parking lot**). Ensure all children and staff are accounted for and do not re-enter the building until authorities declare it safe.

### 03

## Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather, it's imperative to remain vigilant to weather alerts and adhere to local safety protocols. Ensure that children and staff are relocated to designated safe zones and refrain from regular activities until the all-clear signal is given.

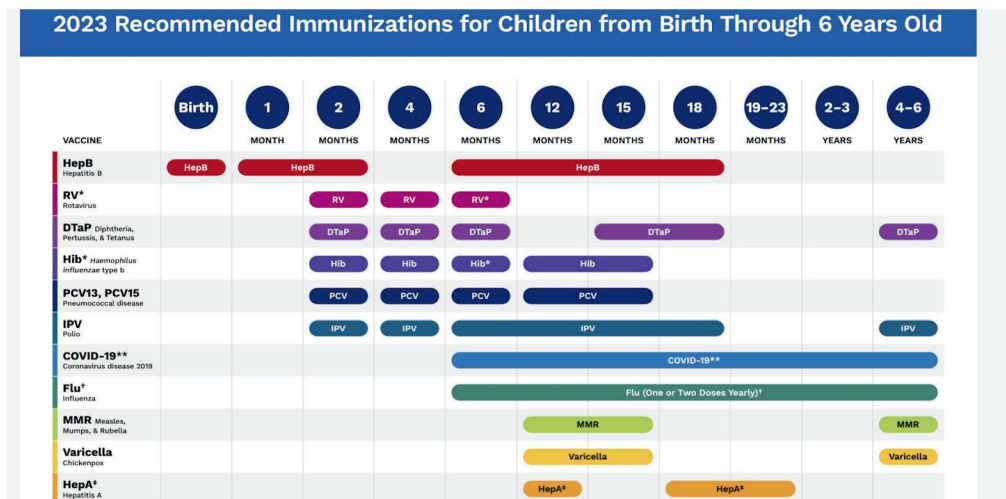
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Center (3500 Gaston  
Avenue Dallas, TX 75214)

# Health and Safety Pre-Enrollment Requirements

Each child is required to complete a pre-enrollment packet of information. This packet is to be returned to the center's office prior to or on the child's first day of attendance. All children are required to have a complete up to date immunization record on file at Stepping Stones DFW. This is per our licensing regulations. If you have chosen not to have your child immunized, please ask the center director for an immunization waiver form. Immunizations may be waived for certain reasons. Please discuss this with the center director to determine whether you have the right to be enrolled and not have your child immunized. Parents are required to have a waiver on file in place of an immunization record, so that the center can maintain compliance with licensing regulations. As required by licensing regulations, your child is to be tested for Tuberculin and Hearing and Vision Screenings.

The following immunizations are required by the State of Texas. For regulatory purposes, we are ensuring that children have the CDC recommended immunizations for birth through 6 years old as follows:



Stepping Stones does require annual flu vaccines for all children and staff. All children are required to have a physical examination form filled out by a licensed medical professional, in order to attend Stepping Stones DFW. The Physical Examination Form, indicating the child's fitness to attend Stepping Stones DFW, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional and returned to the Center Director within the first 30 days of enrollment.



# Hearing Screening Requirements

In addition, the State of Texas requires all children that will be 4 years old by September 1 to be screened for hearing and vision. Please provide the appropriate form to your center within 120 days of enrollment.

Who Must Be Screened	When Screening Must Be Done
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-years-old by September 1</li> <li>• Kindergartners</li> <li>• Any other first-time entrants (4 years* through 12th grade)</li> </ul>	Within 120 days of admission
1st, 3rd, 5th and 7th graders	Anytime within the school year (preferably within first semester)

*Although not required by Chapter 36, Department of Family and Protective Services licensed child care center and licensed child care home are encouraged to screen all children younger than 4 years of age who can reliably respond to the screening tests outlined in the Department of State Health Service's vision and hearing screening protocols.*

## Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the "Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every six months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy. This form can be obtained by request from the staff of Stepping Stones DFW.

Epinephrine Injectors must be supplied by the parent and have a pharmacy label on the outside of the container. The injector must be current. All expired injectors will be returned to the parent for their disposal. Stepping Stones DFW does not administer unassigned epinephrine auto-injectors.+

Please review the State of Texas law governing this at <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/HS/htm/HS.773.htm>.

Parents must also execute a "Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children" form. This form releases Stepping Stones DFW from liability for administering treatment to children with severe allergies and taking other necessary actions set forth in the "Authorization for Emergency Care for Children" form, provided Stepping Stones DFW exercises reasonable care in taking such actions.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

## Illnesses & Communicable Diseases

Stepping Stones DFW follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual. A copy of this manual is on file with the Center Director and is available upon request for review. Additionally, copies can be purchased, for a nominal fee, from the National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC) 1-800-424-2460 or [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached, but can not pick their child up within 45 minutes, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent can not be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. Stepping Stones DFW reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the center director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, he/she is not permitted to return to the program the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of at least 101 degrees Fahrenheit or more as taken under the arm.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur 2 or more times in a 24 hours period of time. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume.

# Dispensing Medication

**PLEASE NOTE:** Stepping Stones DFW will not administer the first dose of any medication due to the possibility of allergic reactions and/or liability purposes.

Stepping Stones DFW will only dispense over-the-counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. Stepping Stones DFW will only give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given.



Parents are required to complete a Medication Form each day that medication is to be dispensed. Medication Forms can be found on the front counter. Medication Forms, doctor's notes and medication are to be turned into the staff of Stepping Stones DFW. You must record the following:

Full name of the child to whom the medication is to be given, name of medication, date, time, and amount of medication given and full name of the employee administering the medication. If a child has a recurring medical problem, the parent or healthcare professional may sign a medication authorization allowing the designated person to administer the medication when symptoms occur for up to a six-month period. The authorization must include information on symptoms to watch for. The parent will be notified immediately (usually via email or telephone) after administering the medication and document this on the child's record.

All medication records are kept for three months after administering the medication.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medication is properly labelled by a pharmacist and replaced prior to the expiration date.

**All medications will be stored as follows:**

Kept out of the reach of children or in locked storage; stored in a manner that does not contaminate food; and refrigerated if refrigeration is required, and kept separate from food.

We will dispose of the medication or return it to the parent when the child withdraws from the child care facility, or when the medication is out-of-date or is no longer required of the child.

We will notify the parent if we choose not to administer medication to children. It will be in writing for the parent and a copy will be placed in the child's file if they choose to continue enrollment.



# EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

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# Staff Employment Policy by Client's Policy

The staff of Stepping Stones DFW is prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Parents seeking assistance for caring not related to working hours may check with the Director.

Employment refers to any relationship outside of the agency's services which involves an employee of Stepping Stones DFW to interact with a current or former client's of Stepping Stones DFW. Such relationships include but are not limited to, baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether or not those services are voluntary or paid.





## Staff Vaccines

Employees of Stepping Stones DFW are required to have the following immunizations annually and/or as recommended by the CDC:

- Influenza
- COVID
- Pneumonia
- Shingles (*if applicable*)

Records of proof of vaccination are maintained in the employee’s personnel file. If an employee is exempt for medical and/or religious reasons, the employee will be required to submit the appropriate documentation

If an employee is exempt from flu vaccines, they should follow certain procedures to ensure their and others' safety. Here are the steps they should take:

<p><b>01</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Learn Company Policy</h3> <p>Understand the company's policy regarding employee exemptions from flu vaccines. This will provide guidelines on what procedures to follow.</p>	<p><b>02</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Meet with Supervisor</h3> <p>Inform their supervisor or HR department about their exemption. They should provide any necessary documentation supporting their exemption, like medical records or religious accommodation requests, as per company guidelines.</p>	<p><b>03</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Preventive Measures</h3> <p>To minimize the spread of the flu, exempt employees should prioritize good personal hygiene and take preventative measures. This includes frequently washing their hands, wearing face masks, using hand sanitizers, and avoiding close contact with sick individuals.</p>
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<p><b>01</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Health &amp; Safety Protocols</h3> <p>Adhere to any additional safety protocols implemented by the company to limit the spread of illnesses, such as social distancing, working from home, or using specific entrances/ exits.</p>	<p><b>02</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Stay Informed</h3> <p>Stay updated on flu-related news, guidance, and recommendations from health authorities. This will help them make informed decisions and take necessary precautions.</p>	<p><b>03</b></p> <hr/> <h3>Flexible Work</h3> <p>If possible, explore the option of telecommuting or flexible work hours to minimize exposure to potential flu carriers, especially during flu seasons.</p>
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Stepping Stones DFW does not discriminate or retaliate against exempt employees but may ask them to wear PPE.

Non-compliant employees are subject to termination.



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Stepping Stones DFW has an orientation plan for new families. This plan allows parents and children to become acclimated to our program with less anxiety and frustration. The new environment can be intimidating, but our goal is to make a smooth transition for you and your child.

- Tour of the facility
- Introduction of the classroom instructors
- Parent has an opportunity to meet and speak with the classroom instructor
- Overview of the Parent Handbook
- Discuss expectations of the family and the needs of the child
- Overview of any resources the family may require for support and just activities
- Opportunity to observe the classroom instructor and students to allow the new child and parent to become comfortable with the new environment.

If an interpreter is needed, we will make every effort to locate and make one available.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION

Stepping Stones Early Child Development Center, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Lalanii Wilson-Jones, CEO  
 12660 Coit Road, Ste 200  
 Dallas, TX 75251  
 469-608-5444  
 info@steppingstonesdfw.com

For further information on notice of non-discrimination, visit [www.steppingstonesdfw.com/policies](http://www.steppingstonesdfw.com/policies) for the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-963-9156.

# Employee Acknowledgment

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have had the opportunity to read, reviewed, ask question(s), understand the above information and know that I must comply and adhere to all policies, procedures, standards and the law within this child care facility - Stepping Stones DFW.

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lalanii Wilson-Jones  
CEO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of  
Parent/Guardian



# Get in touch

-  81460 E. Glen Blvd., Mesquite, TX 75149
-  (800) 963-9156
-  [info@steppingstonesdfw.com](mailto:info@steppingstonesdfw.com)
-  [www.steppingstonesdfw.com](http://www.steppingstonesdfw.com)