



2010 PARENT HANDBOOK

Visit our new website:
www.steppingstones-childcare.org

Dear Parents,

In March 1987, the directors of The Infant and Toddler Centers, located in the Meadowbrook Apartments, decided to get out of the day care business and close down. After a momentary panic, the parents, whose children were attending the centers, and I, the supervisor of the infant program, joined together to literally “save” the centers. We became **Stepping Stones, Inc.**, a nonprofit corporation, which operates with a parent Board of Directors. We took over the Infant and Toddler Centers and began searching for a place to relocate and expand.

On September 20, 1988, after almost 1 ½ years of dedication, prayers, and hard work, Stepping Stones, Inc. finally opened the doors of our new facility at 1410 Kasold Drive in the Orchards Corners Shopping Center. This was a temporary move. We continued to look for a location to build our own free-standing building. Three years later, in the Fall of 1991, we moved to our permanent home at 1100 Wakarusa. This new facility offers us room to grow, more parking and playground and the option of one day purchasing the building, which we did in 2006. Without the commitment and support of the parents and staff, this dream could never have come true!

I would like to welcome and introduce you to Stepping Stones. I am confident that we can provide the best loving and learning environment for your child. Please read this handbook carefully. I hope it will answer most of your questions and convince you that Stepping Stones, with its devoted parents and staff, is where you want your child to be!

Sincerely,

ShellyPlatz-Davidson, Director
(785) 843-5919 (center)
(785) 749-0762 (home)

General Information

HOURS

Stepping Stones is open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. In 1997, we decided we would only offer full-time care. It did not make sense for us to have part-time “holes” in our enrollment that we could not fill when we had such a long waiting list for full-time care. Although parents pay for full-time care, they can come and go on their own schedule. We ask that you call if your child will be in after 10:00 or won't be in at all so that we can plan for the day.

ABSENCES

If your child will not be coming to the center on a particular day because of illness, vacation or just to spend the day with you, please tell your child's teacher or phone the center as soon as possible so that our staff can make plans for the day and adjust staff.

HOLIDAYS

We will be closed for the following holidays. Please inform us if your child will be gone for longer periods of time.

Labor Day: September 6, 2010

Thanksgiving: November 25–26, 2010

Winter Break: December 24–31, 2010

Memorial Day: May 31, 2010

Independence Day: July 5, 2010

COLD WEATHER CLOSINGS

In the event of bad weather, the center may close in order to assure the safety of the staff and children. We will close when the Lawrence Public Schools (USD 497) close due to icy/snow/cold conditions. Please listen to local radio station KLWN 1320AM whenever the weather looks bad.

MONTHLY FEES

Stepping Stones, Inc. is a nonprofit organization. Fees are set to cover our monthly expenses for rent, utilities, payroll, toys, equipment and all other operating costs. Fees are figured on an average monthly basis and are the same each month. Because our costs do not vary with individual absences, we do not make individual adjustments in fees for the time you miss. Any savings to us for closing the center during holidays will be spread over the entire year to keep your fees as low as possible.

If fees do have to be increased to meet expenses, you will be given at least one month's notice. Current fees as of August 1, 2010 are:

Infants: \$990 per month

Toddlers: \$835 per month

Preschool I: \$725 per month

Preschool II: \$700 per month

Part-time care for Kindergartners (w/transportation): \$485 per month

After school Care: \$295 per month

Summer Camp I & II (elementary age): \$665 per month

Fees are always due on the first of each month, for that month. We ask that you pay your fees directly to the office as soon as possible. Parents whose fees have not been paid by the 10th of the month will be charged an additional \$10.00. If fees still haven't been paid by the 15th of the month, you will be charged an additional \$15. If not paid by the 20th, your child will not be able to attend the center and someone from the waiting list will be contacted to fill the vacancy. There will be a \$20.00 charge for any returned checks. We encourage parents to sign up to have fees taken directly out of their checking account. Ask about paperwork to make ACH payments.

Families who have two children enrolled fulltime will receive a \$50 a month fee discount. Those with three children enrolled fulltime will receive a \$75 discount. (Fulltime care is care from 7:00 am–6:00 pm five days/wk.)

EARLY & LATE CHARGES

The center is open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm. Staff are not scheduled to care for children before 7:00 am or after 6:00 pm. If you cannot pick up your child by 6:00 pm, please call as early as possible so that arrangements can be made for the care of your child. Any time you come later than 6:00 pm, you will be charged an additional \$1.00 a minute for each minute after 6:00pm—with a minimum late fee of \$10. Please let us know if there is an emergency and be considerate of our staff and your child.

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

If you are interested in enrolling your child, please call our director, Shelly Platz-Davidson, at 843-5919 to make an appointment to tour our center. If there is an opening, a deposit and enrollment forms must be submitted to reserve your child's space. If there is not an opening, there is a \$30.00 nonrefundable fee to place your child's name on the waiting list.

Children are enrolled on a "first come, first served" basis according to the location of your child's name on our waiting list and the age of your child. Preference will be given to siblings of children presently or previously enrolled in our program. Please let us know if you have made other arrangements so that we can withdraw your child's name from our list. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or gender. You will be contacted when there is a vacancy available for your child. An enrollment form and the following enrollment deposit must be paid to **guarantee** your child's space.

As soon as the enrollment deposit has been paid, the director will answer any questions you may have, explain what your responsibilities are and give you some additional forms to fill out. **These forms must be filled out and returned to the center on or before your child's first day.** This is a Health Department requirement and will also give our staff the information needed to get to know your child.

DEPOSIT

A \$200 deposit is required to guarantee your child's space in the program. It is nonrefundable unless notice is given 30 days prior to:

- disenrollment for a child in attendance or
- the scheduled beginning date for a new child

EQUIPMENT AND INSURANCE FEES

Fees to cover equipment and insurance are charged upon enrollment and as children advance to new classrooms.

The fees are:

Enrollment in Infant, Toddler, Preschool I, Preschool II: \$100.00

Children graduating into next class (Toddler, Preschool I, Preschool II): \$100.00

Enrollment in School-age programs: \$50.00

If a child is in a classroom for less than 6 months before they move to the next classroom, the next room's \$100 equipment fee is waived.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Stepping Stones, Inc., we believe that learning should be fun, exciting and challenging. A relaxed, child-centered environment invites children to creatively explore their surroundings. This, with the gentle guidance of experienced teachers, helps children grow to their fullest potential.

It is important that our children develop into well-rounded individuals. We will provide opportunities to facilitate the social, emotional, physical, intellectual and creative growth of each child.

A child must feel loved and valued as a person. Through our expressions of acceptance, love and praise, each child will develop a positive self-image which will allow him or her to succeed and acquire the joy of learning.

OUR PROGRAM

We care for 111 children at the center. 17 infants (2 weeks to 15 months) are divided into a younger and older group. The toddlers are divided into 2 groups of 10 toddlers (15 months to 2 ½ years) and there are 20 preschoolers (2 ½ to 4 years), 24 preschoolers (4 to 6 years), 14 kindergarten school-age children (5 to 7 years), and 16 school-age children (7 to 10 years). Because of the age of the children, each room has unique characteristics.

THE INFANT ROOM

The infant room is divided into 2 units of nine children on Side 1 and eight infants on Side 2. The unit at the north end of the building (Side 1) is for younger babies who do not crawl or are beginning to crawl. The other unit (Side 2) is for babies who are experienced crawlers and walkers. Our staff/child ratio is 1:3 and maintained at all times.

When you arrive at the center, you will be greeted by the lead teacher. After you remove your child's outdoor clothing at our dressing area and say good-bye, she will take your child into the play area. Meanwhile, you will put away your child's clothes and empty your child's diaper bag into the appropriate bins. You will also partially fill out a daily report form and can use this time to briefly discuss anything that will help us provide better care for your child. Babies grow and change quickly. It is important for us to maintain good communication to be sure each child's needs are being met.

Whenever your child is not eating, sleeping or being changed, they will be in the play area. This is an exciting place to be. Babies learn new skills so quickly. Different small motor, large motor, social, language, and individual developmental activities are conducted each half hour throughout the day. A wide variety of toys are available and our staff are constantly devising new and stimulating play experiences for your child. Because most toys go directly into a baby's mouth, those toys that were out are picked up, washed and disinfected at the end of each half hour.

Your child will be fed (between 8:30 and 5:00) according to a schedule you discuss with us. You should feed your child a good breakfast before bringing him or her to the center. You are responsible for bringing the kinds and amount of bottles and baby food your child will need during the day. Nursing mothers are welcome to nurse their child in our staff lounge. Children will be held during bottle feedings unless they choose to independently hold their own. Please work on using a bottle before starting at the center so eating isn't difficult for them.

As your baby gets older, we encourage you to introduce them to finger foods and using a cup. Between 10 and 12 months, we will provide two snacks and a lunch from our menu and start taking them off the bottle during the day to prepare for the toddler room. At this time, you will no longer need to provide food from home unless there are substitutions you would like to make or if your child is still drinking a bottle.

Your child will also be put down for naps according to their individual schedules. We encourage children who are one year old or older to take one nap after lunch in preparation for the toddler room. Each child will have his or

her own bed, mat and a blanket from home. We will launder the mats and blankets as they are soiled (at least once a week). We will rock or pat your child to sleep. Please let us know what works best. A child will never be left awake in a bed and toys are never placed in beds.

Each child's diaper will be checked and changed (if necessary) at least once an hour. You are responsible for bringing a supply of disposable diapers with you each day. Cloth diapers will not be used because of Health Department regulations. You must also supply any powder, lotion or ointment you would like us to apply.

When the weather is good, the babies will spend some time outdoors playing on the playground, going on stroller rides, or sitting on a blanket. Please be sure to bring the proper jackets, hats, coats and shoes depending on the weather.

Throughout the day, your child will receive many hugs, kisses, cuddles and smiles. We understand their need for love and affection. When you return for your child, you will receive your daily report telling you about your child's schedule and activities for the day. Our staff will also share something special about your child's day and answer your questions.

THE TODDLER ROOM

The toddler room is divided into two units of ten children. Placement in the toddler room depends on your child's readiness and availability. They must be walking well, only taking one nap a day, no longer drinking from a bottle and feeding themselves. This is generally around the age of fifteen months. A 1:5 staff/child ratio is maintained at all times.

You will be greeted at the door by the lead teacher each day. After saying good-bye, your child will join his or her friends in the play area. You will need to complete part of the daily report form and explain any special needs your child has that day. Your child's coat will be put in their cubby in the hall and you will give diapers etc. to the teacher.

For most of the day, your child will be engaged in stimulating small motor, large motor, dramatic play, social, language and self-help activities. These activities are conducted in small group, large group and free play situations. Interesting art and science activities, geared at short attention spans, will also be a part of the daily routine.

Our teachers are constantly trying out new games and activities for the children. They want to provide each child with interesting ways to explore their surroundings and increase their awareness of the world around them.

At this age, many children are seeking a little independence. Although most activities are conducted with the teacher's gentle guidance, there is enough room for independence so that a child can experience a sense of accomplishment. Self-help skills are also worked on throughout all daily activities to encourage children to do simple tasks by themselves (washing hands, pulling up pants, putting up their plate, etc.)

The center serves two snacks and a lunch each day using menus that are nutritious and enjoyed by children. We have four weekly menus that are rotated and posted each week. Our cook makes a special effort to minimize the sugar, salt and other additives in our recipes. Please feed your child a good breakfast or lunch before coming to the center. You must provide any substitutions you wish to make due to allergies, illness or other preferences. Children will brush their teeth after lunch daily.

Naptime is after lunch (about 12:00 until 2:30 pm). Each child has their own mat, sheet and blanket which we clean at least weekly. Those who tend to sleep longest are put down first. As children wake up, quiet activities (story time, etc.) are conducted until everyone is awake. All children here in the afternoon will be put down for naps.

Learning to use the potty is one of the many important things toddlers do. We have regular potty training procedures with all children. Our staff are trained to work with these procedures in a gentle and positive way. It is easiest to introduce this idea to your child before they reach the power struggle stage of the “terrible twos.” We want potty training to be a fun and exciting event to catch their interest. Children may use the potty anytime during the day and are changed every 1 ½ hours (unless it is needed more often). For purposes of potty training, we divide the children into four groups or stages of training, depending on their age and developmental level:

Stage 1: The younger toddlers wear diapers and are encouraged to sit on the potty if they are dry or request to do so.

Stage 2: Children wear diapers and are sat on the potty each time they are changed.

Stage 3: At the age of 2, we require that all toddlers move to Stage 3. This means that they wear training pants with plastic pants over them (not pull-ups). They sit on the potty each time they come in to be changed. They are encouraged to keep their big boy/girl pants dry. Self-help skills are also worked on (pulling up their pants, etc.)

Stage 4: Children wear training pants only and use the potty when needed. At the end of this stage, we hope the children will be able to come into potty on their own.

During each of these stages, the toddlers are given a goldfish cracker if they successfully potty in the potty. They are encouraged to sit on the potties, but are never forced to do so against their will.

At the end of each day, you will receive a record of your child’s potty activities so you can keep track of their progress. We recommend that you buy a potty chair right away so that your child can get used to it. Offer them a chance to sit on it once in awhile.

When your child starts wearing training pants, you will have lots of laundry to do. You don’t have to use training pants at home right away. You may want to wait until they have been fairly successful here at the center. We also would like you to work with us and take one day at a time. This is a learning experience. If you approach it in a relaxed, positive way, your child will too!

Unless it is extremely hot, cold or raining, the children play outside each morning and afternoon. Running, climbing, digging in the sandbox, splashing in the wading pool and other large motor activities are conducted daily. Please be sure to send the proper clothing for your child including a jacket or coat, snow pants, a hat, shoes or boots and/or mittens.

Our staff is expected to model appropriate behaviors and manners for the children. This, along with verbal praises, hugs and smiles for those who are behaving nicely, helps to promote and maintain good behavior. Other techniques are used to avoid problems. Redirection or moving a child before an undesirable situation occurs are often all that is needed. Throughout the day, we offer children many choices and follow-up with logical consequences whenever possible. For example: “We do not hit people with blocks. You can build nicely with the blocks or play somewhere else.” The children are told what the inappropriate behavior is, what is appropriate and praised for following our rules. Because they are not very verbal, toddlers often become physical to express themselves (hit, bite, push). We work hard teaching them to “use their words.” Discipline is viewed as a learning opportunity not a punishment. Our procedures are used consistently and handled in a calm and gentle manner. If they are ineffective with a particular child or behavior, the teacher will discuss the situation with the director and the child’s parents. Corporal punishment is **NEVER** used in the center and is grounds for termination of staff.

At the end of the day, our staff is happy to share any of your child’s accomplishments with you and answer any questions you may have. Talk to them about their day. They tell great stories!

THE PRESCHOOL I AND PRESCHOOL II ROOMS

There are 20 children in our Preschool I room. A child should be potty trained and about 2 ½ years old when they enter. The minimum staff/child ratio is 1:10 and is maintained at all times. The Preschool II room has 24 children

who start when they are about 4 years old. They maintain the minimum staff/child ratio of 1:12. In both of our preschools, we have added an additional staff from 9-12:30 and 3-6 pm daily to allow more individualized care for the children.

Our preschool programs are set up with a theme for each week. These themes include topics such as seasons, holidays, numbers, animals, health and safety, etc. Throughout each day of the week, activities will be planned using emotional, physical, social and cognitive skills. The use of a theme will aid the children in tying the activities of the week together. You will receive a weekly letter noting our themes and some of the activities your child will be doing.

Although we do have preacademic activities throughout the day, academic achievement is not pushed in our classrooms. We want learning to occur naturally as the children explore and experience the environment around them. There will be many spontaneous learning situations which will arouse the children's many interests. During the day, many skills that are prerequisites to academics are worked on. These skills include:

Communication skills—Verbalizing emotions and experiences, articulation, labeling, asking questions and describing.

Attending skills—Looking, listening, remembering and completing an activity.

Social skills—Taking turns, sharing and working together.

Problem solving—Following instructions.

Self-help skills—Dressing, tying shoes, serving food, etc.

Motor skills—large motor and fine motor.

The lead teacher will plan a daily schedule of activities, but is flexible and will take advantage of learning opportunities as they occur. The daily schedule includes the following routines:

Freeplay—The children can choose from three or four different areas: dramatic play, manipulatives (small motor), large motor, computer, reading and sensory table activities.

Calendar—The days of the week, month and year are discussed as well as plans for the day, the theme and new skills, concepts and activities available at the learning centers.

Learning Centers—The following skills are worked on:

1. Prewriting: pencil grasp, tracing, copying and writing letters and names.
2. Prereading: listening, reading comprehension, naming, colors & letters, sorting, sequencing, phonic sounds and sight words.
3. Premath: rote counting, classification, seriation, numeral recognition, object counting and matching numerals with quantities.
4. Science: Exploration, critical thinking, discovery, cause and effect and answering why questions.
5. Art: Painting, cutting, pasting, coloring, drawing, sculpting and creative expression.

Large group/Circle time—Stories, songs, finger plays and other activities are conducted as a group and are usually theme related.

The children will be able to learn and work at their own individual pace. They will be given activities that are at their level of development. We want each child to be academically and behaviorally prepared for kindergarten. We want them to be challenged and to experience success. When they leave Stepping Stones, they will have a positive self image, secure foundation for learning and a motivation to increase their knowledge.

Specific daily report forms will not be used for our preschoolers. Please pay attention to our lesson plans, notes and newsletters that are posted and sent home so that you know what is happening in your child's classroom. Let our teachers know about anything that will affect your child's day and feel free to participate in anyway you can. The center will serve delicious and nutritious snacks and a lunch each day. We serve food in the preschool rooms "family style." The children pass food, serve themselves and pour their own drinks. Table manners are also something we work on. All weekly menus will be posted. You must bring any substitutions that are required due to allergies, illness or personal preferences. This is the age of the "picky eater." We will ask children to take a "no thank you" bite of each food so they are sure to taste everything. Children will brush their teeth after lunch daily.

There will be a rest period after lunch. The Preschool I children will be encouraged to nap for an hour and a half or two. Those in Preschool II will have a quiet resting period for about an hour. Those who are not asleep can then get up and do quiet activities while those who need a nap can sleep longer. Each child will have his or her own mat and a blanket from home.

Children will be allowed to use the bathroom whenever they ask to do so. Assistance will be given to those who need it. Extra changes of clothing should be brought for all Preschool I children in case accidents do occur.

Weather permitting, there will be outside time each morning and afternoon. We generally go outside when the temp is above 32 and below 95 degrees. Large motor activities as well as walks around the neighborhood will be planned for your child. Please be sure to bring the appropriate outdoor clothing. We will also plan field trips throughout the year. We hope to visit a farm, the pumpkin patch, the zoo, the museum and swimming pool as well as many other exciting places. Permission slips must be signed for each child and car seats must be brought for all children under the age of four. Those who are 4 must weigh 40lbs or use a car seat. We will ask for parent volunteers to help drive and escort the children.

Our staff are expected to model appropriate behaviors and manners for the children. This, along with verbal praises, hugs and smiles for those who are behaving nicely, helps to promote and maintain good behavior. Other techniques are used to avoid problems. Redirection or moving a child before an undesirable situation occurs are often all that is needed. Throughout the day, we offer children many choices and follow-up with logical consequences whenever possible. For example: "We do not hit people with blocks. You may choose to build nicely with the blocks on the floor or choose to find another area to play in." The children are told what the inappropriate behavior is, what is appropriate and praised for following our rules. Discipline is viewed as a learning opportunity not a punishment. Our procedures are used consistently and handled in a calm and gentle manner. If they are ineffective with a particular child or behavior, the teacher will discuss the situation with the director and the child's parents. Corporal punishment is **NEVER** used in the center and is grounds for termination of staff.

At the end of each day, our staff will share your child's accomplishments with you and answer any questions you may have. Please pay attention to all your child brings home to share.

THE SCHOOL-AGE AND SUMMER CAMP PROGRAMS

In September 1991, we added the after school program for 16 children age 6 to 10 years. This was something new for us that we took one step at a time. By Spring, the program was in full swing. We didn't have a van for transportation to public schools this first school year so we did a lot of walking! Luckily, after several months of fund raising, we purchased a 15 passenger van at the end of May. In June 1993, we added a second School-age room. The children are divided into these rooms by age. During the school year there is a minimum of a 1:16 ratio and 1:8 ratio during most of the day for summer camp. Transportation will be provided to and from several public schools. Each year we will reassess our needs and see what schools our van/bus route can include. We also started an after school program at Quail Run Elementary School in the Fall of 1999, have offered a summer program there in the past and added a before school care in the Fall 2005. These programs at Quail Run ended after the 2008-09 school year when they were replaced by the Boys and Girls Club.

Our philosophy for the after school program is that the children have been at school all day and now need a chance to unwind, relax and play! They will have a snack, play organized games, go outside, do arts and crafts, play board games, build with manipulatives, read stories and listen to tapes. Although the teacher will plan specific activities and games, each will be offered in a somewhat unstructured environment and the children will be able to choose what they do.

Full day care will be offered for children in our after school program on days when the public schools are closed. Two snacks will be provided by the center but the children must bring their own sack lunches (we will provide beverages). A sign-up sheet will be posted for these days so we know how many children will be present. You will be charged an additional fee per day (dependant on which program your child is enrolled in).

During the summer, we will have a summer camp program. A wide variety of fun activities will be planned for the children to do. Arts and crafts, outside games, board games, manipulatives, reading, and music will be available daily as well as field trips to the park, swimming pool, movie theater, library, putt-putt etc. Additional fees will be charged for swimming lessons and big field trips and sack lunches will need to be brought daily. This is an exciting program with many fun things to do!

Each year we will re-enroll children for the after school and summer camp programs. Priority will be given to those families with children currently enrolled who have been at Stepping Stones the longest.

WHAT TO BRING

INFANT ROOM

On your first day in the infant room, you need to bring the following items and leave them here at the center:

- a light weight blanket
- a box of small plastic bags(for soiled clothing)
- A&D or Desitin ointment or something else for diaper rash
- a pacifier (if used)

On a daily basis these items should be brought in a medium size diaper bag:

- 10 disposable diapers
- 2 changes of clothing
- powder (if you want us to use it)
- a day's supply of bottles and/or baby food (We prefer that you send formula premeasured in each bottle. We can add warm water if it is powdered. Breast milk can be frozen or brought daily).

All items should be labeled with your child's name or initials. This includes bottles, caps, containers, socks, etc. (anything that could be misplaced). All medications must be taken out of your diaper bag for health and safety requirements.

TODDLER ROOM

On your child's first day in the toddler room, you need to bring the following:

- a light weight blanket
- a change of clothing
- 8 disposable diapers or training pants
- a box of small trash bags (for soiled clothing)
- A&D or Desitin ointment and powder (if you want us to use it)

All of these items will be kept at the center. Bring the appropriate number of diapers each day (no diaper bag). All children should wear shoes and have the appropriate outdoor clothing. All coats, hats, shoes and socks must be labeled.

THE PRESCHOOL ROOMS

The following items need to be left at the center for each preschooler:

- a light weight blanket
- a change of clothes (Preschool I)

We have an abundance of toys at the center. To avoid lost and broken toys, we request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home without permission from their teacher.

OUR STAFF

At Stepping Stones, Inc., we hire staff who truly love children. A natural, loving dedication to children is necessary to become an effective teacher and caregiver. We work together as a team to ensure that your child is receiving the best care available.

At the beginning of employment, all staff receive specific job descriptions and personnel policies. Training is conducted in the classroom and an evaluation is made at the end of training. These evaluations are continued throughout employment. Staff are also checked by the K.B.I. and S.R.S. for previous abuse/criminal records, turn in a physical and TB test results, receive first aid training and ten hours of in-service training annually. TB tests are renewed every two years.

Staff positions and responsibilities are below. Staff pictures are posted so you can match names with faces. Each year we'll compile a list so you can get to know your child's teachers.

Director— The director must have an HDFL (Human Development and Family Life) degree and at least two years experience working with children in a group setting. He/She is responsible to the Board of Directors. The overall operation of the center is his/her responsibility. Some of these duties include program planning, hiring, training and evaluating staff, administrative and bookkeeping duties, maintenance, enrollment, public relations and addressing parental concerns.

Assistant Director— The AD will assist the director in most all aspects of operating the center. Some of these duties include answering the phone, keeping files up to date, answering parent questions, staff management and assisting in the classrooms.

Lead teachers— Each room will have at least one full time lead teacher. It is preferred that he or she have a degree in a child related field and required that they have experience working with children in a group setting. The lead teacher's responsibilities include planning and implementing the daily program for their classroom, caring for the children, communicating with parents, and evaluating teacher's aides. They work from 7am to 3pm each day. A "departer" (usually a senior staff member) takes over for them at the end of the day and talks to the parents when they pick-up their children.

Teacher's Aides— Most teachers' aides work part-time. It is preferred but not required that they have previous experience. Aides are responsible for assisting the lead teacher in implementing the daily schedule.

Cook— The cook is responsible for the safe preparation and storage of all food items. This includes menu planning, grocery shopping and preparing the snacks and lunch each day.

GENERAL POLICIES

Accreditation: The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, which is a division of NAEYC, the nation's largest organization of early childhood educators offers a voluntary, professional accreditation system that recognizes high quality care. We have completed the self-study of this process, abide by most of their standards and have chosen not to seek accreditation at this time.

Adjustment: It usually takes a child a week or two to adjust to new surroundings. Even moving to a new room down the hall can be enough to upset a child. If you are enrolling a toddler or preschooler, visit the center with your child before the first day. As your child is getting ready to "graduate" to a new room, we will take them to visit periodically two weeks before they move. Parents will also meet with their child's current and new teachers to discuss upcoming changes. Talk to your child about all of the exciting new things they'll do at school.

On the first day, calmly say good-bye and that you'll return at the end of the day. We feel that it is easier on the child to make this a quick departure. If your child cries, it usually lasts only a few minutes. Our staff is used to comforting new children and getting them involved with something fun. Feel free to call later and see how things are going. Quite often this adjustment period is harder on the parent than it is on the child!

Birthdays: We will plan special activities to help celebrate your child's special day. If you would like to be a part of this, we would love to have you. Please let your child's teacher know your plans ahead of time. Here are some suggestions:

- * Bring yourself—Come and spend time at the center playing and watching your child and his or her friends. Cameras are welcome.
- * Donate a favorite toy—We never have as much money in our toy budget as we would like to. Bring something that your child especially likes or ask the teachers what is on their wish list.
- * Bring a small treat for each child—cupcakes, stickers, raisins, balloons, etc.

Board of Directors: Stepping Stones is a private, nonprofit corporation that operates with an advisory Board of Directors composed of seven parents who have children at the center. These parents serve a two-year term and meet monthly with fulltime staff to go over the operation of the center and plan events.

Clothing: Play is hard work and we guarantee that kids will get messy here. Although bibs and smocks are used, they are sure to find the mud puddles and finger paints. Please do not send your child in special clothing you don't want to get dirty.

Conferences: Formal conferences will be conducted twice a year (usually in Nov/Dec and May/June). At this time we complete an informal developmental checklist on each child. Parents are encouraged to make individual arrangements with their child's teacher or the director at any time.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is very important in our family oriented center. Discussion of sensitive issues concerning other children, families and staff members with other families or staff should be avoided.

Current Events: Please check bulletin boards, doors and notes sent home with your child to stay up to date on what is happening at the center in your child's classroom. Child related articles will also be posted for your information.

Differences: Our developmentally appropriate program is based on what we believe is the best early childhood program we can offer for your child. We understand that some parents may not agree with our philosophy and respect a parent's right to choose the early childhood care and education their child receives. We would be happy to discuss our views with you if you are unhappy with the program we are offering and understand that we may not be able to meet the needs of every family.

Field Trips: We hope to plan fun and educational field trips for our preschoolers and school-age children throughout the year. You will be informed of any plans we have. Please let us know, if you have any ideas or would like to help drive.

Fund raising: We will continue to organize fundraising events year round. These funds will be used to supplement our toy and equipment budget or purchase a big item. Please get involved! Fundraising events can be fun and give parents and staff a chance to get to know each other better.

Graduation: Children "graduate" into the Toddler room when they are about 15 months old, to the Preschool I room about age 2 ½ and to the Preschool II room around age 4. This graduation date is determined by your child's individual development and when vacancies are available. Your child's current teacher and new teacher will meet with you a month or two before they move up to discuss the transition and what you can do to help prepare your child. Moving into a new room brings on a lot of changes. Ask lots of questions and express any concerns you may have with your child's lead teacher or the director. We want to make these transitions as easy as possible for everyone.

Grievances: If at any time you are unhappy with the care your child is receiving, please discuss this with your child's lead teacher or the director in a professional manner. We want you to feel free to come to us with your concerns. Your input as parents helps to maintain and improve our high standards of child care. If you are not satisfied with the way your complaint is handled, you can address these issues to our Board of Directors.

Health and Safety: At the beginning of each day, as you drop off, your child will be given a health check. Any symptoms, bumps, bruises, etc., will be noted. We are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse. If a staff member were accused of abuse, they would be immediately put on leave of absence until a not guilty ruling on their case had been made. You will be informed of any accidents that occur at the center.

We do not have the staff or facilities to care for sick children. Your child and the others will be sick less often if everyone follows our policies consistently. Please do not put our staff in the position of having to turn you away at the door. We require that you do not bring your child to the center if he or she: (1) has a temperature of 101 degrees or higher for infants and toddlers, 100 degrees for preschoolers, (2) has frequent diarrhea—three or more times a day or (3) is vomiting. It is also our policy that a sick child does not return until symptoms have gone for 24 hours. A child must be maintaining a lowered temperature without taking fever-reducing medication.

Of course, children must also be kept at home if they have any contagious disease or virus. This includes conjunctivitis (pink eye), strep throat, etc. In most cases, this is only 24-48 hours after treatment begins. Please follow your doctor's recommendations.

Any time your child becomes ill during the day, the lead teacher or director will call you. You will often be asked to come for your child. Please do this as promptly as possible. If you cannot be reached, we will call one of the two names you have listed to contact in case of emergencies.

You might expect your child to be sick a lot when in such close contact with other children. This depends on each individual child. We follow strict sanitary procedures and do our best to keep the passing of germs to a minimum. Children often develop immunity to germs after being at the center for a while. Health Department regulations require that your child have a current physical on file and that all immunizations are kept up to date. Please let us know when additional immunizations are received so we can update your child's file.

With your written and signed instructions, your child's lead teacher will give your child medication at lunchtime. Please do not ask us to give your child medication more than once a day. Please give as much medication as possible at home. The center cannot give any medication or apply ointment (even Desitin!) without your signed authorization nor do we keep medication on hand. Please remove all medication from your child's diaper bag and give it to our staff to lock up each day.

Our staff receives regular first aid and CPR training annually so they can act quickly and accurately in an emergency. Your child's physician's name and phone number are kept near the phone, and he or she will be called immediately if your child requires professional medical care.

In case of severe weather watches, the center staff will listen for directions from local radio broadcasters. If directed to take cover, all children will be taken to shelter in the basement. Please do not come for your child until the weather has cleared.

In the event of a fire, our staff are also trained in procedures for quick and safe evacuation of the center. These emergency procedures are reviewed and practiced often.

Holidays: Stepping Stones strives to recognize and respect diverse cultural traditions. Although art projects and decorations at the center generally reflect the dominant cultural celebrations of our community, we hope to expose children to as many traditions and customs as possible. In addition to our own efforts to represent such diversity, we encourage parents to help us with this endeavor.

Home Changes: Whenever there is a change at home, please let us know. A new baby, visitors, death in the family or separation can explain your child's behavior. This knowledge will enable us to give your child any extra attention or comfort they may need.

Insurance: Our center has an insurance policy for our staff and children as required by the Health Department.

Labeling: Please label your child's coat, shoes, socks, hat and mittens. This makes things easier on us and fewer items will be misplaced.

Licensing: We are licensed by the Health Department and strive to maintain if not surpass their standards. Annual licensing evaluations will be made for license renewal. Drop-in visits also occur from time to time.

Observations: Our center will be made available for HDFL students and others in the field for observation of child care practices. Parents are also welcome to observe our daily routines at anytime.

Parent Participation: Stepping Stones would not exist without parental support and participation. You are responsible for your child's well-being and should have an input on the care they are receiving. Please volunteer your time and talents in anyway possible. Be on our Board of Directors or other committees, help at fundraising events, attend our winter open house, spring picnic and conferences throughout the year. Feel free to share a snack with us or read a story. Anything you can do will be greatly appreciated!

Parent Sponsors: When new families start at the center, they receive a special care-package and are also assigned a board member to be their parent sponsor. This parent will contact the new family after a week or two to welcome them, see how things are going and answer any questions they may have.

Parking: Our parking lot is especially busy during drop-off and pick-up times. Please keep a close eye on your child as well as other children. Do not leave your car running in the parking lot (even if locked). This is illegal and dangerous for many reasons.

Photos: Our staff would like to periodically take pictures of your child for our scrapbooks. These pictures will be shared with you too. If you do not want your child photographed, just let us know. They won't be put on the internet without your permission.

Safety: Please use a car seat and/or seatbelt when transporting your child. Watch them carefully as you are going to and from your car in the parking lot each day.

Security: Generally, the director and/or the assistant director are by the front door to screen people as they enter the building. The back door is locked whenever there are no children in the classroom downstairs and the side doors are also kept locked. Staff are careful to check identification if someone else comes to pick up a child.

Smoking: Smoking will not be permitted in any areas of the building or playground.

Termination of Enrollment: We will do everything in our power to work with families and difficult situations as they arise. Disenrolling a child is a last resort that will only occur if our staff and Board of Directors agree that it is necessary for the protection of the other children and is in the best interest of the center as a whole.

Toys From Home: Toys and other personal belongings should not be brought to the center. If your child has something they wish to share with the other children, it should be discussed with the teacher first. Preschoolers have "Show & Share" each Friday. These items brought from home should correspond with that week's theme. No toy guns or other weapon toys are allowed!

Visits: Parents are welcome to drop in to visit at anytime. Other friends or relatives should check in at the office. No friends or relatives will be allowed to pick up a child without parental permission. Their names should be on your child's medical authorization form. They will also be asked for identification.

Weapons: No weapons (including pocket knives) are allowed at Stepping Stones. If a weapon is brought to the center, it will be confiscated by staff and the child's parents will be notified. If an item is used in a malicious or threatening way or involves a firearm, law enforcement officials may be contacted and further action may be taken.

Website: Visit our website www.steppingstones-childcare.org. Upon enrollment, you will sign a permission slip so that pictures of our center and the children may be placed on our website (without names).