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# **Stepping Stones Discovery & Development Center Mission Statement**

Stepping Stones learning philosophy is based upon the Connecticut Curriculum Framework for Preschool and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our program strives to develop positive learning outcomes for all children, regardless of their backgrounds and experiences. The curriculum capitalizes on children's natural sense of wonder with a variety of child-initiated and teacher-initiated activities. The program also provides families with information they need to support children's learning and development and encourages a foundation for solid school, parent and community connections.

## **Program Goals and Objectives**

Stepping Stones program development uses the Connecticut Curriculum Framework for Preschool to guide curriculum decisions. Kindergarten teachers are reporting the most important skills for school readiness are those in the Personal and Social Development domain. Our program teaches all domains using pro-social teaching strategies so that children are prepared academically and socially. All students are evaluated using portfolios that include student art, teacher's notes, student photos and videos, and progress charts. Information from student progress is used to inform instructional needs.

By the end of preschool, students at Stepping Stones will;

### **Personal and Social Development**

- Demonstrate a sense of self as a learner;
- Demonstrate a sense of responsibility to oneself and others; and
- Demonstrate effective functioning, individually and as a member of a group.

### **Creative Expression/Aesthetic Development**

- Use different art forms for creative expression and representation; and
- Develop an appreciation of the arts.

### **Physical Development**

- Demonstrate control, balance, strength and coordination in gross-motor tasks;
- Demonstrate coordination and strength in fine-motor tasks;
- Participate in healthy physical activity; and
- Practice appropriate eating habits, hygiene and self-help skills.

### **Cognitive Development**

- Demonstrate the ability to think, reason, question, and remember;
- Engage in problem solving;
- Use language to communicate, convey and interpret meaning; and
- Establish social contacts as they begin to understand the physical and social world.

## **Program Evaluation**

Stepping Stones will conduct annual program evaluations. These evaluations consist of parent questionnaires, staff questionnaires, and administrative review. The tool for program evaluation is the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS) for Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten and Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS) for Infant & Toddler programs. Program evaluations will guide improvements throughout the center.

## **Differences in a childcare (daycare) versus Early Childhood Learning Center**

Stepping Stones is an early childhood learning center. There are many aspects of an early childhood learning center that are similar to daycare. The basic differences are highlighted to clarify expectations for all students enrolled in our program.

Some families are seeking to have childcare needs met due to work or other responsibilities. There are many choices such as daycare (home-based or center-based), family care, and early learning centers. Daycares serve to provide a nurturing environment for children in a social setting. Daycares also provide valuable information to parents and create learning opportunities for children. The learning opportunities may or may not be based on developmentally appropriate practices. The qualifications that daycares seek in their staff do not require the same level of education for their staff. Their approach is to seek loving and caring individuals who may or may not have the benefit of Early Childhood Education. In addition, daycares may or may not require parents to participate in learning goals.

Early childhood learning centers seek to use knowledge about child development to inform all actions and activities. Best practices from the field of Early Childhood Education are sought after and utilized to insure that the early learning capabilities are capitalized upon. An early childhood learning center is intentional nurturing. In addition, early childhood learning centers require staff with Early Childhood Education backgrounds in order to insure developmentally appropriate practices. An early childhood learning center will require parent input and assistance in the child's development and progress.

## Admission Policy

Stepping Stones Discovery & Development Center is a full day childcare learning program enrolling children ages 6 weeks to 12 years old. We also offer a preschool program for children 3-5 years old. Once enrollment is accepted, all families will have a meeting with the program director to discuss the program's goals and an orientation to familiarize parents/guardians and their child with the building and teaching staff. A family questionnaire will help teachers transition the child into the current program.

The Parent Handbook is available on our website [www.ssddc.com](http://www.ssddc.com) along with all the required forms. Forms must be completed prior to the child attending the program. The forms will include, but are not limited to:

- Registration Form
- Tuition Policy Form
- Parent/ Guardian Agreement Form
- Emergency/Release Authorization Form

Emergency authorization is for individuals permitted to be contacted in case of extreme circumstances such as evacuation or medical emergency.

Release authorization is for permitting individuals to pick up your child. Individuals listed on the Emergency release are not assumed to be authorized individuals for release of your child.

- Child's Health Assessment Record
- Photo/Video Permission
- Potassium Iodide Medication Authorization

This is unique to our area since Stepping Stones Discovery and Development Centers are within a 10 mile radius of a nuclear facility. Please speak to your physician regarding KI and its potential risks.

- Prescription & Non-prescription medication approval forms
- Family questionnaire
- Tuition Express Form (direct withdrawal from checking or credit card)
- Income Eligibility Form (Required for USDA reimbursements)
- Stepping Stones Release Authorization (used for Public school contact)
- Ages & Stages Questionnaire

A \$75.00, non-refundable, registration fee will be assessed when a child is enrolled into the program. The \$75.00 registration fee must be paid as a money order or cash. Payment for the first and last week of enrollment is required in addition to the registration fee. Tuition will be due on Monday for the next week's care.

All families at Stepping Stones will be placed on a 30 school day provisional period upon enrollment to be sure all policies are followed and the program is appropriate for the individual child. Children will be screened through parent input using Ages and Stages.

Annually parents will be required to update the following forms:

1. Emergency & Release Authorization Form
2. Medical Form
3. Registration Form



# **Tuition Policy**

## **Tuition schedule**

First and last week's tuition and a \$75.00, non-refundable, registration fee are due prior to a child attending the program. Following initial enrollment, tuition is due on Mondays by 5:30pm for the following week of care.

Research in the Early Childhood Education shows children attending more than 45 hours per week demonstrate more aggressive behaviors and have greater difficulty in school. Children attending Stepping Stones full time will be limited to 47.5 hours per week. The following daily time limit has been placed for part time families:

- 1 day a week = 10 hours max
- 2 days a week = 20 hours max
- 3 days a week = 28.5 hours max
- 4 days a week = 38 hours max

## **Late Payments**

Any tuition payments not made by 5:30 pm on Monday, must include a \$10.00 late fee. If more than five late fees are charged, the late fee will increase to \$20.00 each instance. If the account has an overdue balance above the weekly tuition rate the child will not be allowed to return to the program until all of the tuition payments have been brought current. Balances that are below the weekly tuition rate must be paid by the end of the current week, with late fee included.

## **Child Absence and Center Closings**

Weekly tuition payments **DO NOT** change during weeks that contain holiday closings or the absence of a child. The tuition rates are based on the need to support personnel throughout the year. Although your child may be absent due to illness or family vacation, we are still required to provide pay and benefits to the staff in your child's program. Our rates are based on this need.

## **Payment Procedure**

Payments can be made in cash, check or money order. Checks and money orders may be made payable to Stepping Stones. All payments can be dropped in the tuition box located by the front door. If payments are made in cash, please be sure to write the child's name and the payment amount on the outside of the envelope. Receipts for all payments will be placed in the child's cubbies. There is a \$15.00 charge for all checks returned to us for insufficient funds. If two checks are returned, all future payments must be made in cash or money order. All parents will be given monthly statements will state payment and fee history.

Stepping Stones does not permit non-payment of tuition. Non-payment is cause for dis-enrollment. Families will be notified verbally and in writing that their enrollment must be discontinued until services provided are paid for. Exceptions to this policy can not be made. In addition military family enrollments that are not kept current will be reported to the appropriate legal office.

## **Care 4 Kids and other DSS funding**

Stepping Stones accepts payments through Department of Social Services (DSS). It is our aim to support DSS efforts to provide affordable care. Clients that have applied for Care 4 Kids must receive a Certificate of Approval in order to qualify for the reduced family fee. Stepping Stones

will not reduce tuition without the Certificate of Approval. Until the certificate is received, parents are responsible for the full tuition cost. If Care 4 Kids back dates their payments, the difference will be refunded.

### **Schedule Changes**

Two week written notice is required for permanent changes to a child's schedule. This will allow time to schedule staff members to maintain proper teacher/child ratios. Short-term schedule changes can be accommodated with the verbal approval of a Director.

### **Before / After School Program**

The rates posted for the School Age Program – after school rates are based on how the child is transported to the center. Any child (*regardless of age*) that is transported by a vehicle (such as a school bus or other transportation service) requiring staff members to retrieve the child outside of the classroom is considered School Age – After school rate.

Enrollment in the Before and After school programs **does not** guarantee care during public school vacation periods. Space is available on a case by case basis. Stepping Stones will do their best to accommodate as many families as possible during public school vacations.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

It is the policy of Stepping Stones to protect the confidentiality of its families and staff. Any information gathered on enrollment forms will be confidential. A "Release of Information" form must be completed and signed to authorize any exchange of information, pertinent records, or tests results related to an indicated individual. This authorization will expire one year from the original signed date, unless authorization is withdrawn at an earlier date.

### **Withdrawal Procedure**

Stepping Stones understands that not every situation is appropriate for every child. If, for any reason, our program is not satisfactory for a particular child, we will discuss the situation with the family and try to work together and find a resolution. If a resolution cannot be reached, a family may choose to terminate enrollment in the program. We request, in writing, a two (2) week notice stating the child's last day of enrollment in the program. All families at Stepping Stones will be placed on a 30 school day provisional period upon enrollment to be sure that all policies are followed and the program is appropriate for the individual child. All necessary tuition payments must be made before the child's last day of attendance.

Stepping Stones reserves the right to terminate an enrollment in the program if we do not feel that our program is meeting all of the family's needs. Some other reasons that may result in withdrawal from the program are as follows:

1. Incomplete or lack of an updated physical/immunization record
2. Tuition policies are not being followed and/or payments are not being made
3. Family's failure to abide by all policies as listed in the Parent Handbook
4. Abusive behaviors, harassment, or verbal threats by parents or children toward staff members or other children/families (See Aggressive Behavior Policy for students for more detailed information)
5. Parents disciplining, in any way, children (other than their own) while at the program



6. If a child exhibits special needs or needs related to a serious illness that is unable to be met by the program. In this instance, staff will make every effort to assist parents in finding a program that is better able to accommodate the individual child's needs, prior to withdrawal
7. Failure to cooperate with Stepping Stones staff to resolve differences or to meet your child's needs through parent meetings/conferences
8. Consistently late pick-up

## Absence Credit Options

In lieu of tuition free week for vacations family caregivers will be offered child absence credits for parent education credits, parent volunteer credits, and parent exchange credits.

### Parent Education Credit

We offer several at the center and publish options in the community routinely. Programs self-selected are accepted but subject to Director's approval. The chart below describes how the credit will be offered.

Enrollment Hours	Absence credit per seminar hr	# of parent sessions needed
35-47.5	4 absence credit hours per seminar attended	4 programs per year
20-35	3 absence credit hours per seminar attended	6 programs per year
Less than 20	2.5 absence credit hour per seminar hour attended	8 programs per year

The Parent Education Credit is in place as an alternative to a tuition free week. It is not a requirement. Each absence credit can be banked or used upon each program attendance. Only one week can be earned per child enrolled per year. Only families with multiple children enrolled

### Parent Volunteer Credit

Parents and Families are encouraged to volunteer. Parents that volunteer in the classroom receive credit toward a free tuition week during a child vacation. Parent support and involvement is a proven factor in quality early learning programs.

### Parent Exchange Credit

Teachers will post needed items in the classroom. Each Item will have an absence credit hours assigned to them. Families can donate items in exchange for these absence credit hours.

## Parent Communication

Daily contact between parent/guardian and teacher is a vital part of Stepping Stones. Children are able to benefit from open lines of communication between family and school. We have an open door policy for parents to come and visit with their children during the school day. Other forms of communication include:

- Daily Arrival and Departure Greetings** All parents/guardians will be acknowledged at arrival and departure. This allows for continuity between the child's days and nights.
- Monthly Newsletter** A monthly newsletter containing information such as monthly themes or special visitors will be distributed to families. This will serve as a main part of our communication with families.
- Conferences** Conferences are scheduled twice during the school year. This is an opportunity to share our observations with the parents regarding the child's development and gain important feedback from the family.
- Family Information Bulletin Board** A family bulletin board will have general information posted. Information such as parent meetings and special events in the community will be posted here.
- Telephone and Written Communication** Staff will make every attempt to notify parents either by phone or a written note when they feel a situation arises that a parent/guardian should know of. We also request that families should keep staff informed of any concerns or changes at home.
- Email** Parents can contact the Director via email to express concerns, ask general questions, or provide program feedback. Email addresses is [kcurran@ssddc.com](mailto:kcurran@ssddc.com). Example: Jennifer Sim is [jsim@ssddc.com](mailto:jsim@ssddc.com)  
Website: [www.steppingstonesearlylearning.org](http://www.steppingstonesearlylearning.org)

### Open Door Policy

Stepping Stones encourages all families to participate in the education of their children. Parents/guardians may stop in and visit or volunteer in the classroom at any time. We do request that you do not bring other individuals with you as this may cause disruption in the daily program for the other children.

Parents/guardians are also encouraged to come into the program and share activities. If a parent/guardian wishes to come in and read stories, play a musical instruments or plan another activity, he/she may speak with the Head Teacher and work out an appropriate time for the activity.

## **Arrival and Departure Policy**

An individual, at least sixteen (16) years of age, must accompany all children arriving and departing the program. All children are assigned an ID number to track the child's attendance in a computerized attendance system. Children will be signed into the computer daily. Any special comments pertaining to the child, such as changes in who is picking up and when, should be relayed to the staff member on duty.

At arrival, a staff member will greet all children and families. Parents or the authorized drop-off adult must enter the classroom with the child. Children may put their belongings in their designated space. Children are then encouraged to join in a self-directed activity. Lunches may be stored in the children's cubbies with an ice pack.

A staff member will greet each individual at departure time and give a brief overview of his/her day. Children will be signed out daily on the computer. Parents should try and be punctual when picking up a child from the program. It is important to notify the center if the pick-up will be past the scheduled time as soon as possible. The child will be comforted and appropriate staff ratios will be maintained.

- **Children not picked within their scheduled time limit will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute. This fee is automatic and dependent upon parent sign in and out times. Continuous late pick up could lead to cancellation of enrollment.**
  
- **No child will be released to an individual that does not have written authorization by a parent to pick up that child. Verbal permission will not be permitted. No exceptions will be made so please be sure to keep release authorization current.**

## Daily Closing Time Policy

Stepping Stones has a specific closing time of 5:30pm. All enrolled families will be expected to comply with the hours of operation. If an emergency arises and you are going to be delayed, we ask that you please call us at **860-446-0441** and let us know of the situation before closing time. Any family who arrives after 5:30pm will be charged a fee of \$1.00 per minute.

In the event that a child is still at the facility fifteen (15) minutes after closing time and we have not been notified of an emergency situation, we will do as follows:

- Step 1:** Attempt to reach the parent/guardian at home or work
- Step 2:** Call the individuals listed on the Emergency/Release Form as filled out during enrollment and request that this authorized individual come and pick up the child
- Step 3:** Call the City of Groton Police Department and the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families Services
- Step 4:** If a child is picked up or removed from the facility by someone other than a parent/guardian, a note will be left on the entrance of the facility stating the following:
  - The name of the individual who picked up or removed the child from the facility
  - The time that the child left the facility
  - The name of the staff members who were with the child

In the event of this happening, the Director(s) will request a meeting with the child's parent/guardian to discuss the situation and try to develop a solution so that it does not occur again.

**A staff of two people will be maintained at all times until the child has been picked up or removed from the facility by a parent, authorized person, state child and family services worker, or the police.**

## **Incident/Accident Reports**

Incident/Accident Reports are used to record and report a variety of situations that can occur in the early learning setting. They include but are not limited to:

- Injury from play, accident, or aggression from another child
- Aggression to another child or staff member
- Inappropriate statements to another child or staff member
- Inappropriate physical contact to or from another child or staff member
- Exclusion due to illness (See Health Policy)
- Unusual behavior that causes teacher concern (see note below)

Incident reports will note information about the reason, the time of day that the incident occurred, and the teacher's response to the situation.

Privacy prevents us from stating any other child but yours. Do not ask staff members who other children were if more than one child is involved in the incident. Staff members are not permitted to release this information under any circumstance.

### **Reporting of Child Behaviors**

There are times when unusual statements, actions of the child, or appearance of the child lead the teacher to have concern for the child's well-being. There are many innocent reasons why these things occur. However, without background knowledge, teachers may feel that there is some issue of neglect. Teachers are not permitted to decide if neglect has or has not occurred. However, if they feel there is a problem, by law, the teachers are required to report this information to Department of Child & Family (DCF) Services. Please give teachers background knowledge that will help them and prepare them for unusual behaviors. Some innocent examples include:

Your child is visibly dirty over a period of a few days.

A typical reason could be that your child is resisting baths and you are working on how to correct the problem. Let the teacher know so that the teacher can support you during the class day.

Your child pretends to point guns

A typical reason is that your child has been watching television that models this behavior or has an older sibling that models this behavior.

A single occurrence is not cause for alarm. However, teachers do record multiple incidents to determine if a pattern is occurring. You will be notified that the behaviors your child has exhibited could be cause for DCF reporting. But keep in mind, the teacher does not have permission to judge the situations as innocent occurrences or negligence. They must report any situation that they believe presents a possibility of neglect occurring.

***The single best approach to prevent this misunderstanding is to keep your teachers informed of your child's changes and or challenges.***

## Health Policy

We are required by the State of Connecticut to have on file, a statement signed and dated by a physician, physician assistant or an advanced practice registered nurse stating that the child is current with immunizations or has a scheduled appointment that will keep the child's immunizations current within the past year. We will also require an annual physical examination while the child is attending Stepping Stones.

Children in good health benefit more from their school day. We ask that you not bring your child to the Center if he/she will be unable to fully participate with peers in the indoor and outdoor activities of the day. Children who have colds that are not accompanied by fever or fatigue may attend the Center.

For the health and safety of other children and the staff, please refer to the following:

Symptom	Center policy
Vomiting and/or Diarrhea	Children may return to the Center 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.
Runny nose with green/yellow discharge	Any discharge, other than clear, may be a sign of an infection.
Fever of 100 degrees or above	Child may return after being fever free for 24 hours without Tylenol or other such product.
Conjunctivitis or Pink Eye	Children with red, itchy or crusty eyes may have conjunctivitis. Children may return to the Center 24 hours after antibiotics have been started.
Rashes or skin conditions	A physician should examine any unusual rashes. Children may return with a note from the physician stating that the rash is not contagious.
Chicken Pox	Children with chicken pox may exhibit symptoms such as a low-grade fever, rash, blisters or scabs. Children may return to the Center after all sores are crusted over and dried (approximately 6 days after rash onset).
Lice/Hair Infestations	Children may return to the Center after completing the first treatment and all signs of eggs are gone.
Impetigo	Children may not return to the Center until sores are healed or can be covered with bandages, or until the child has been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours.

If a child becomes ill while at school, we will make the child comfortable, place the child in a designated "quiet corner" where the child can be seen and heard by staff members, but separate from the group to reduce the risk of spreading the illness. We will then contact the parent/guardian to have the child be picked up as soon as possible. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, we will contact an authorized individual from the Emergency/Release Form. Children will be sent home with a Health Exclusion Form stating what the child's symptoms are, whether the child needs a physician's note to return, and when the child will be able to return to the program. Both a staff member and parent shall sign the form and a copy will remain in the child's file. ***Please note that the nurse consultant may reverse a physician's note if the staff member believes it is in the best interest of the health of the entire class group that the child is excluded.***

## Medication Administration Policy

Stepping Stones Discovery & Development Center will administer prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, non-prescription topical medications and oral medications and inhalants to children in our child care program. For the safety of all involved, certain requirements must be fulfilled. If any of the items listed below are not met, we will be unable to administer the medication.

### **Non-prescription topical or oral medication requirements** (Sunscreen, Diaper cream, Teething ointments, etc.)

We require a parent/guardian authorization form completed and signed by the parent/guardian in order to administer the medication

All medications must be in the original container

Medications labels must contain the following:

- Name of the medication
- Strength of the medication
- Dosage of the medication
- Frequency of the medication

Medications must be labeled with the child's name

Over-the-counter-medications must be in the original container.

### **Prescription medication requirements**

We require a parent/guardian authorization form containing the following:

- Child's name, address and date of birth
- Name of the medication
- Schedule of medication administration
- Staff signature receiving medication and completed form
- Name, address, telephone number, signature and relationship to the child of the parent/guardian signing the form
- Date and time the medication was started and ended
- Signature, address and phone number of the physician/dentist

The prescription must be in the original pharmacy container labeled with the child's name, name of medication, medication strength, medication dosage, frequency, physician/dentist name, and date of the original prescription.

## Parent/Guardian Medication Administration Responsibilities

Parent/guardians must supply the Center with any instruments with which to administer medications (i.e. measuring cup, spoon, etc.). Parent/guardians are responsible to provide all necessary forms completed with signatures when providing staff with medications. It is the parent/guardian responsibility to provide medications needed for their child.

### **Staff Medication Responsibilities**

Only staff members who have “been trained by a physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse in the methods of administration of medication” shall be allowed to administer/receive medication for a child enrolled at Stepping Stones Discovery & Development Center. Any staff member certified to administer medication will have on file a copy of his/her certificate as well as an outline of the class.

Any medication administration certified staff member that dispenses medication, shall document it on the medication administration record for that child.

Staff members will be required to make sure that all medications are securely locked in a medication box at all times. Children that have been given medication are monitored for any side effects. Staff members will be required to document any medication errors or absence of medication administration by the child on the medication administration record.

### **Storage of Medications**

All medications will be stored out of reach of children

Any medications requiring refrigeration will be stored in a locked box within the refrigerator located in the office

All other medications will be stored in a locked box in the office

All medications will be clearly labeled with the child’s full name, stored in a child resistant container with the name of the medication and clear directions for administration

All prescription medications shall have the original label from the pharmacy on it

**All medications and proper documentation must be handed directly to a staff member.**

**Please DO NOT LEAVE medications in your child’s bag or lunch box.**

**We reserve the right to deny any medication if it is not in compliance with our Health Policy.**



## **Discipline Policy**

Here at Stepping Stones, we promote self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation by using positive guidance. In essence, positive guidance uses mistaken behavior as a teaching opportunity rather than a moment for punishment. All families will be given a basic guideline sheet for positive guidance so that our practices can be supported at home. Please see the list of resources at the end of the Parent Handbook for more complete information. We ask that families follow this policy while on the premises of Stepping Stones. Some of the techniques we will incorporate to achieve the above goals are as follows:

### **Prevention**

Having a classroom that is well designed to meet the developmental needs of the children served helps in preventing children from feeling unsettled and frustrated. It offers them an environment with more independence, ample playtime and few transitions.

### **Positive Redirection**

Positive redirection is redirecting an unacceptable behavior into an acceptable behavior. By praising the group for their positive behavior we are encouraging the child to exhibit even more positive behavior. We try to encourage children into seeing the good in a situation as opposed to focusing on the negative behavior. Children are less frustrated when they have positive interactions with peers or teachers.

### **Modeling**

Children learn from what they see and hear around them. We strive to provide an environment in which children and teachers can learn to care and feel respect for one another. Teachers' model behaviors that they wish to see in the children of the program.

### **Limit Setting**

In order to provide a positive learning environment for all children enrolled in the program, we have a few guidelines for classroom operation. The following may vary based on developmental levels:

1. Speak softly, directly, clearly and in a positive tone when addressing a child's actions
2. Post visible rules (with pictures if possible) clearly throughout the room for children, parents and staff to read
3. Clearly explain the rules of the classroom and be consistent in applying them
4. If conflict arises, always get down on the child's level. Staff will verbalize what he/she saw, how he/she feels about the situation and suggest a positive behavior for the child

### **Conflict Resolution**

We encourage children to use their growing intellectual and moral reasoning to solve their own conflicts. Teachers help children articulate their needs and feelings. Children are encouraged to "use your words" with their peers. Staff is there to assist the children in developing their own resolutions with their peers.

### **Managing Behavior**

If a child has a physical or emotional outburst, we provide a comfortable place for that child to settle down and verbalize his/her emotions. A quiet corner will only be used as a last resort when a child does not exhibit a change in their behavior pattern. A quiet corner is used to help the child regain his/her composure and feel safe within the environment. When the child feels in control again, he/she will be free to return to the activity at hand. The quiet corner will not

exceed more than 5 minutes. Parents will be informed wither verbally or in written form of their child's behavior issues.

### **Physical Restraint**

Physical restraint is used only as a last resort when the child's behavior/actions present a clear danger either to the child themselves or to any member of the class. Physical restraint is not a means of discipline. The method used is a basket hold or also known as a bear hug. The teacher in this method stands from behind the student crossing the child's arms in front of the child. The teacher then sits the child in their lap with legs crossed over the child if necessary. The teacher may also need to hold their head to the side of the child to prevent the child from injuring the teacher. In most instances, children placed in the bear hug will regain self-control in a quick manner (usually not more than 2 or 3 minutes). Any time a physical restraint is needed, an additional teacher is notified to insure proper technique is used. In addition, parents are informed through the incident/accident report.

### **Prohibited Actions**

Children will not be subjected to any form of corporal punishment including, but not limited to:

- Rough handling or shoving
- Hair or ear pulling
- Slapping, kicking, pinching, hitting or spanking

Children will not be subjected to any form of emotional abuse including, but not limited to:

- Name calling
- Shaming
- Using language that threatens, humiliates or frightens children
- Making derogatory remarks about a child or his/her family

Toileting habits, or lack of, will not be cause for punishment

Toileting habits, or lack of, will not be cause for discipline.

### **Food & Physical Activity**

Children will not be withheld from their snack or lunch as a means for redirection. Additionally, food or candy will not be given as a reward for praise.

Withholding outdoor physical activity or medical care will not be used as means for discipline at any times at Stepping Stones.

### **Biting Policy**

The news that your child has bitten or been bitten can be stressful. Biting can occur in the best of families, and within the best child care programs. Biting can occur anytime a group of children are together.

Young children can be quite self-centered. They know what they want and the need it immediatly. Biting generally occurs during a child's toddler years, and two year olds. The child can not yet fully express what it is they want, need, or feel. Due to the frustration a child often resorts to biting.

At this age children often become educated by copying. A bite can happen just simply because a child saw another friend bite. Biting also occurs in phases. It is the adult's responsibility to intervene so the child will know that biting is not an okay thing to do.

Several methods we try to prevent biting from occurring. Modeling kindness, caring and gentleness are demonstrated so these behaviors will be repeated by the children. Eventually we will learn the sequence of events prior to the biting, which will help in trying to prevent a bite from occurring. The day is designed so children will have an opportunity to participate in stress relieving activities such as outdoor play, sensory play, music and art.

Even with all the preventive measures a bite can still happen. The child that has been injured will be taking care of first. The injured child will receive a large amount of TLC. We make it abundantly clear to the biter that biting hurts and biting is not acceptable behavior.

When a child has been bite or has bitten an incident report will be filed. It is a center policy to keep the names of the children involved in the incident confidential.

If biting becomes a common occurrence, staff may ask the child's parents to set up an action plan to help address the biting behavior. A toddler **will not** be expelled for biting.

## Aggressive Behavior Policy

Aggressive behavior is defined as using physical or verbal abuse towards peers and/or teachers. Depending on the age group, aggressive behavior is usually a response to a child's inability to express frustrations to their individual needs. Aggression is a learned response. Our goal is to teach children to use safe and alternative ways to express their frustrations. There may be times when, despite our best efforts, a child is not responding to frustrations in a manner that is safe for their peers or their teachers. A child's inability to learn appropriate responses to frustration may be a result of a developmental delay that our program can not adequately address. This policy is designed to address children that may need more support or are unable to learn appropriate methods for dealing with their daily frustrations through typical means.

Level	Child Behavior	Stepping Stones Response
One	Child has multiple incident reports describing acts of aggression toward their peers	Notify parent(s) that the pattern of aggressive behavior is a concern. Reissue <i>Aggressive Behavior Policy</i> as a reminder. Provide support suggestions for home.
Two	Child continues with multiple incident reports describing acts of aggression toward their peers.	Parents are required to attend a parent conference with the primary teacher to develop an action plan.  Teachers and Director meet to discuss possible classroom modifications
Three	Aggression caused by child creates a climate where other staff members or families fear for their personal safety or the personal safety of their children.	Parents are required to notify appropriate child agency (Toddler – Birth to Three; Preschool-School District Early Childhood Testing Team) as well as a pediatrician within two weeks of Level Three notification. If available, a Mental Health Consultant will be required. After outside consultation has been

		met, the parent is notified that the child's behavior must improve within thirty days of using recommended practices from outside consultants. A statement of improvement goals needed will be used to determine progress.
Four	Aggressive behavior continues and/or parents do not follow through with program evaluations recommended within the given timeline.	Child is no longer enrolled with Stepping Stones. Alternative programs are recommended as well as other options for support.

# **Abuse & Neglect Policy**

## **Definitions**

Whenever appearing in this policy statement, the term “abuse” and “neglect” shall have the meaning given those terms by the State of Connecticut for application to activity regulated by the Connecticut General statutes, Section 46b-120:

**Abuse:** Means that a child has had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him other than by accidental means, or has injuries which are at variance with the history given of them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, deprivation of necessities, maltreatment or cruel punishment

**Neglect:** Means a child who has been abandoned or is being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, emotionally or morally or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well being, or has been abused

## **General Discipline and Guidance for Children**

All children will be treated with love and respect at all times. At the same time staff will set clear limits for the children. If a behavior is unacceptable, the teacher will attempt to redirect attention away from the negative behavior and, with the older children, rationalized the correct responses and positive attitudes. As a last resort, the child will be removed from the group for a short “thinking time” where the child will be in both eye and ear shot of a staff member at all times. This will be a time away from the other children during which the teacher will try to assist the child in learning how to redirect his or her feelings in a positive manner. This period of time will be brief (no longer than 5 minutes) and in accordance with the child’s developmental age, but “thinking times” will not be used for children under the age of 3.

Attention from teachers for negative behavior will be given only if the child has done something to harm someone else or himself. Otherwise, a positive approach will be taken with praise for appropriate behavior.

In cases of more serious discipline problems, the Center will refer the parents to an outside agency and suggest alternative programs for the child. No child will be allowed to continually harm himself or other children. Prior to a request for removal from the Center, the Director(s) of the center will meet with the parents to discuss possible alternatives and appropriate referrals will be made. However, the Center will reserve the right to have a child removed from the program if the child is injuring himself or others.

## **Recognizing, Handling, and Preventing Child Abuse or Neglect**

All staff shall learn, as part of training, the ability to recognize abusive, neglectful, corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment and to understand that such behavior shall not be tolerated by the Center under any circumstances. Prevention, as well as corrective intervention, is therefore a key focus of the Center.

## **Preventive Actions to be Taken by Center Staff/Management**

The following internal disciplinary procedures shall be followed at the Center in response to observed inappropriate behavior:

### **Recognizing Inappropriate Behavior**

Staff shall be trained and instructed to identify any inappropriate behavior by other staff in the course of interacting with children enrolled at the Center. Staff will report directly to the Director(s) any actions they have witnessed that may be detrimental to any child at the Center.

### **Remedial Action**

Depending on the nature of the inappropriate behavior noted by a staff member, the Director(s) may place the staff member in question on probation; or remove the staff member from the Center until the issue is resolved; or provide additional training or counseling; or suspend or discharge the staff member or a combination of these measures. All employment at the Center is on an at will basis and may be terminated by the Director(s) for any or no reason.

### **Medical Care**

If it becomes apparent to staff members that a child is in need of immediate medical attention, the Center staff shall contact the Center's medical consultant and/or call 911 for emergency attention if necessary.

### **Governmental and Other Reporting**

If any staff member suspects that actual abuse or neglect is occurring or has already occurred, the situation will be reported to **Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-842-2288**. All childcare workers in Connecticut are mandated reporters and must report any suspected abuse.

### **Making a Report**

1. Oral reporting within 12 hours of suspecting or believing that a child has been abused or neglected by telephone or in person to DCF or a law enforcement agency. (DCF is required to tape all reports to the Hotline)
2. Within 48 hours of making the report, the mandated reporter must submit a written report (DCF-136 form) to DCF.
3. Mandated reporters who believe that a child has been abused or neglected by a staff member of a public or private institution or facility that provides care for such a child, or a public or private school, must report directly to DCF or the police and also notify the person in charge of the school or facility that a report has been made.
4. After making a report, mandated reporters who are members of the staff of a public or private institution or facility which cares for children, or a public or private school must also submit a copy of the written report to the head of the facility
  - In the case of a report concerning an employee of a facility or institution that provides care for a child that is licensed by the State, a copy of the written report must also be sent to the executive head of the State Licensing Agency
  - **Keep a copy of all documents and reporting assistance from DCF in the child's file**
5. Police must report to DCF immediately upon receipt of any oral report of abuse or neglect

6. DCF reports to the police within 24 hours upon receipt of a report alleging sexual abuse or serious physical abuse or serious neglect

### **Immunity & Penalty**

- **Immunity from civil or criminal liability is granted to people who make required reports in good faith**
- Anyone who knowingly makes a false report of child abuse or neglect may be fined up to \$2,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both. The identity of any such person shall be disclosed to the appropriate law enforcement agency and to the perpetrator of the alleged abuse
- Employers may not discharge, discriminate or retaliate against an employee for making a good faith report or testifying in an abuse or neglect proceeding. The Attorney General can bring a court action against any employer who violates this provision and the court can assess a civil penalty of up to \$2,500 plus other equitable relief

### **Investigation of Abuse & Neglect**

- DCF is responsible for immediately evaluating and classifying all reports of suspected abuse and neglect. This includes reports in which a school employee is the alleged perpetrator; previously these reports were investigated by school superintendents
- If the report contains sufficient information to warrant an investigation, DCF must make its best effort to begin an investigation within two (2) hours if there is an imminent risk of physical harm to a child or another emergency; and within three (3) days for all other reports
- In all cases, DCF must complete the investigation in 30 calendar days
- When conducting a child abuse or neglect investigation, DCF or a law enforcement agency must coordinate activities to minimize interviews with any child
- DCF must obtain consent of the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child's care for any interview, unless DCF has reason to believe such person or a member of the child's household is the alleged perpetrator

When such consent is not required, the interview must be conducted in the presence of a "disinterested adult" (typically, a person who is impartial and has no self-interest in the case). If a disinterested adult is not available after reasonable search and immediate access is necessary to protect the child from imminent risk of physical harm, DCF or a law enforcement agency will still interview the child.

- If, after the investigation has been completed, serious physical abuse or sexual abuse is substantiated, DCF must notify the local police and either the Chief State's Attorney/designee or a State's Attorney in the judicial district in which the child resides or in which the abuse occurred. A copy of the investigation report must also be sent.

## **Parent Notification of DCF Reporting**

Parents will be notified when a report to DCF has been made in most cases. The only exception will be when DCF instructs the staff not to report the information to the parents.

Stepping Stones staff will follow all instructions given by DCF. For example, in some cases DCF will not permit the Stepping Stones staff to release the child to the parent or parents until the case worker has evaluated the report.

The enrollment form identified as Parent / Guardian Agreement is the parent's acknowledgement that the parent(s) have been notified of Stepping Stones Abuse and Neglect Policies and Procedures.

## **Abuse or Neglect by a Staff Member**

Stepping Stones will not tolerate abuse or neglect by staff members. Should any claim that a staff member abused or neglected a child under the DCF guidelines be substantiated, the employee will be immediately terminated. Parents will be informed of the incident and offered counseling services through our Social Services Consultant.



## **Emergency Plan – Weather**

In the event of severe weather, the Center will follow the **Groton Public School System Schedule** for closings, delayed openings and early dismissals as a guideline. The center will remain open as long as it is not a safety concern for the staff or families to attend. The Groton Public School System is usually a good indicator for road safety. There will be times when the center will remain open regardless of Groton Public Schools closings or dismissals. That determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. Decisions will always be made with safety in mind.

In the event of an early closing, parents/guardians will be contacted by phone and informed of the closing. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, staff will try and contact an authorized individual to pick up the child.

Families are encouraged to contact the Center at 860-446-0441, email the director, or watch WFSB or your email for closing/delay information.

## **Operating Hours and Scheduled Closings**

Stepping Stones will be in operation January to December from 7:00 am until 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Our schedule of closings will be as follows:

New Year's Day	4 <sup>th</sup> of July
Memorial Day	Christmas Day
Labor Day	Christmas Eve close early (3:00pm)
Thanksgiving and Friday after	

**Families will be notified of any changes in our closing schedule**  
**Low enrollment the week between Christmas and New Year's may lead to the closing of the Center with no tuition charge**

## **Emergency Plan – Evacuation**

In the event of an evacuation emergency, Stepping Stones will keep children and staff safe and in a group. Evacuation procedures, recommended by the State of Connecticut, will be implemented. If time allows it, parents/guardians will be notified by phone about the situation and will be asked to pick-up their child in a timely manner.

If there is not enough time contact parents, staff will assist children in gathering all their belongings while keeping them calm. Staff will also take all emergency supplies, a First Aid Kit, and all emergency information for both children and staff with them. Children and staff will walk to the local evacuation site. When time allows it, parents will be contacted and told of their child's whereabouts and when and where they may pick up their children. A sign will be posted on the building as to the location of students and staff.

At all times, a member of Stepping Stones staff will monitor radio broadcasts so that staff may be kept informed of the situation.

### **Evacuation Location**

**Girard Mitsubishi  
421 Route 12  
Groton, CT 06340  
860-449-1242**

## **Emergency Plan – Millstone Station**

As stated in the Emergency Planning Handbook for Millstone Station, all children should be evacuated to:

**Kelly Middle School  
25 Mahan Dr.  
Norwich, CT 06360  
Phone: (860) 823-4211**

We do not have the transportation capabilities to bring your child to the Evacuation Host Communities. Local authorities will be contacted of our transportation needs. Evacuation officials have stated that there is enough time for families to pick up their child. An effort will be made to contact each emergency contact number. Transportation will be arranged via local emergency management and/or local staff should parents or staff not be able to evacuate their child.

Potassium Iodide pills have been provided to Stepping Stones in the event of radiation release to the atmosphere. Each parent must have the Potassium Iodide Medication Authorization on file. The pills will be administered only upon the recommendation from local emergency response authorities. No staff member will be permitted to provide medication without local authority authorization of a declared nuclear emergency.

## **Emergency Plan – Lock Down**

In the event of a threat to the building in which the safety precautions require children and staff to remain in the building, the following lock down procedures will be followed:

1. All children and parents will report to the closet classroom with the teachers.
2. The teacher will lock all doors and turn off lights.
3. All staff, children, and parents will be directed away from view of windows to the greatest extent possible.
4. A teacher will phone the appropriate authorities for notification and further directions.
5. No one will be permitted to leave or enter the building until an “all clear” has been determined by local authorities.

## Food Program

Breakfast, Lunch, and Afternoon Snack will be provided for children by Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones follows the USDA food guidelines and the NEYAC food service guidelines. We will make every effort to work with families that have children with allergies or other food related issues.

If necessary you may bring in a breakfast for your child to eat at the center. However, we require that you use the nutrition guidelines provided so that we can continue to model best eating practices within child's day at the center. Breakfast items that **will not** be permitted within the center include:

1. Happy Meals or similar fast food meals
2. Doughnuts
3. Candy
4. Soda
5. Any other high sugar or high fat content meal

### Scheduled Times for food

**Breakfast 8:00-8:30 school-age 8:30-9:00 Infant, Toddler, and Preschool**

**Lunch 11:30-12:00 Infant and Toddler 12:00-12:30 Preschool**

**Snack 2:30-3:30 Infant, Toddler, and Preschool 3:30-4:00 school-age**

Monthly menus will be created and posted on our website as well as in classrooms. Any changes that may occur will be noted on the posted menu. **Parents/Guardians must notify staff members of any known food allergies that a child may have.**

Snacks for the children will be prepared within the classroom and served to the children in the classroom. Children and staff will wash their hands before any snack or meal preparation, as well as eating times. One sink is available for hand washing within the classroom and 2 more within the children's bathroom.

### Family Style

Our facility participates in family style eating. Children serve out their own portion size for meals and drinks with guidance and assistance from teachers as needed. This encourages fine motor skills, self-help skills, and nutrition education.

### Birthday Parties or Other Occasions

Stepping Stones acknowledges that special occasions are indeed special. In order to model good nutrition we offer the following suggestions for celebration:

- A fun fruit plate
- Mini muffins
- Low fat / low sugar ice cream cups
- Frozen yogurt pops or Frozen Banana pops

A fun center activity is preferred over food treats. Please see your teacher for age appropriate suggestions.

### **Physical Activity**

As an Eat Smart Grow Healthy Site, Stepping Stones promotes healthy physical activity. Children in this program are expected to have 60 to 90 minutes a day of physical activity that will increase their heart rate. Limitations due to age and physical ability are accepted as exclusions. If you have any concerns regarding our physical activity policy please list them on your child's medical information form.

### **Dental Health**

Stepping Stones believes in the importance of developing healthy dental habits. Teachers will provide opportunities for the children to learn about good dental hygiene.

### **Rest Time Policy**

Stepping Stones Discovery & Development Center will provide a rest time for children from 12:40 pm until 2:30 pm daily. During this time, children will remain on their cots. Around 2:00 pm children who are awake will be given the opportunity to read a book or do a puzzle quietly on their cot. At approximately 2:30 pm, children who are awake may play with quiet tabletop toys. At around 3:00 pm children who are still sleeping will be woken up and will be encouraged to join in play with their peers.

Please be sure to provide your child with a blanket or sheet and a small sized pillow, if desired. Place nap items in a pillowcase with your child's name for identification. Children are also welcome to bring a stuffed animal to rest with.

### **Fundraising Events**

Stepping Stones will periodically participate in different fundraisers. Money made from fundraisers will be used to purchase new equipment for the Center, lower the costs of field trips for families, as well as allows us to bring special guests to our Center. All families will be encouraged to participate in these fundraising events.

Any items purchases with funds from fundraisers will be donated to non-profit organizations when Stepping Stones no longer has use for the items.

### **Parent's Night Out**

Stepping Stones provides an opportunity for parents to have a night to themselves while their children experience a fun slumber party environment. Dinner and fun group and individual activities provide you with peace of mind while you have a night to yourselves. A fee is charged for the service. However, the proceeds from Parent's Night Out go directly to the staff. The Center does not profit. It is a service that we organize to favor parents and staff.

Notices will be posted for upcoming Parent's Night Out. There are limited slots available. When a parent signs up for Parent's Night Out you are committing to the fee. Cancellations must be made 48 hours prior to the scheduled event to avoid being responsible for the fee.

During the Holiday season, we also conduct a Parent's Day Out. The rules for Parent's Night Out apply to this event as well.

*We look forward to serving your family and watching your child learn and grow.  
Thank You for choosing Stepping Stones.*