

Stepping Stone

Learning Center



Every Step Counts

*Physical Self Intelectual
Development Esteen Growth*

Parent Handbook

PREFACE

We have prepared this Handbook to provide you with information about our policies, rules, and procedures. Please set aside some time to become familiar with this Handbook. It will be very helpful in answering many questions that may arise. We recognize, however, that no Handbook can answer every question. If you do not find an answer to your particular question in this Handbook, or if you would like a particular policy or procedure clarified, please feel free to ask the Director. We will be glad to help you answer every question.

**Please note that, there will be changes to Stepping Stone Learning Center policies and procedures. These changes will be communicated immediately to parents via email from the centre. The parent handbook will be updated yearly to reflect any changes to policies and procedures.*

Table of Contents

Welcome.....	4
Vision	4
Mission	4
Standard of Excellence	4
Philosophy	5
Whole Child	5
Brain-Based Learning.....	5
Intrest Based Planning.....	6
Allowing Children to Make Choices.....	6
Code of Ethics	6
Staff & Volunteers	7
Admission and Registration Policy	8
Open Door Policy	8
Parent Orientation.....	8
Child Custody Policy	8
Subsidy.....	9
Tuition and Fees	9
Families are required to bring:	10
Arrival & Dismissal Policy	10
FOIP Policy	11
Importance of Signing Your Child In & Out	11
Daily Routine	12
Family Involvement Policy.....	12
Family Orientation Policy	12
Communication Policy.....	13
Nutrition Policy.....	13
Health & Safety In The Centre	14
Outdoor Play Space/Playground Safety Policies and Procedures	14
Health Care Policy.....	15
Illness Policy.....	15
Hand Washing	16

DIAPERING POLICY..... 16

Accident/Incident/Illness Reporting..... 16

Administration of First Aid 17

Emergency Medical Services Personnel (911)..... 17

Administration of Medication 17

Fire Drill, Emergency Evacuation, and Centre Lock Down Procedures 18

Emergency and safety contacts..... 18

Inclusion and Valuing Diversity Policy 19

Behaviour Guidance Policy 19

Withdrawal & Termination of Care 20

Community Walks & Outings 21

Field Trips & Special Guests..... 21

Photos, Creative Arts & Social Media 21

Media Release 22

Procedures Outlining Volunteer Responsibilities 22

Use of Technology 22

Welcome

A warm welcome to Stepping Stone Learning Center. Stepping Stone welcomes children of any race, creed and national origin. We hope that your association with us will be a positive experience.

The intention of the Parent Handbook is to provide parents and guardians with the information they will require to have a successful working relationship with the Stepping Stone Learning Center team.

All new families will have the opportunity to review the Parent Handbook online or by booking an appointment with the Director. Amendments, additions, or deletions to this handbook will be provided to families currently attending the centre by way of memo or other centre posting, or through the newsletter, and to new families through periodic updates to this manual throughout the year as required.

Families are encouraged to provide feedback on policies and procedures that affect them through the use of the comment and suggestion box, or through discussion or emails with the Director at any time during the year. Families are encouraged to provide their feedback in writing so we have a record of when the feedback was provided as well as the details.

Vision

The ultimate vision we have for our facility is twofold, and rooted in both the present and the future.

For the present, our goal is for parents to feel good about their childcare choice, and that the children are safe, engaged, educated, and smiling. We encourage a foundation for a well-rounded, creative, structured and enthusiastic global-minded individual. And for the future, we want these children to warmly look back at their experience with us, and see it as a cherished part of their childhood.

Mission

Our mission is to provide early childhood learning by offering a model program designed around the latest in brain research so each daily experience builds the child's foundation for future learning along with a safe, stimulating, and caring environment for children. Our focus is to provide an encouraging learning experience, promoting social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Committed to the families we serve, we strive to give parents complete peace of mind, while being seen as a shining example of what a quality childcare center should be. Ensuring that each student fosters creativity and builds imagination, while developing intellectual curiosity, and becoming a responsible global citizen.

Standard of Excellence

Children who experience a higher quality early learning program are more likely to have greater academic success; enhanced self-esteem and increased self-control. The program is aligned to build both spheres of the brain using experienced early childhood staff. Stepping Stone will be accredited by The Alberta Association for Accreditation and Early Learning and Care Services (www.aelcs.ca). This objective is captured in Stepping Stone's ability to meet Alberta accreditation and adhere to quality guidelines. Stepping Stone has annual self-evaluations for its programs and maintains a three year Quality Enhancement Plan for continual improvement.

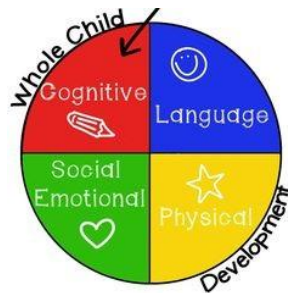
Philosophy

Stepping Stone strive to provide nurturing and stimulating program through experienced personnel, current educational programs and an appealing surrounding. Our unique curriculum offers loving childcare while delivering an enriching and outstanding education program.

Our primary objective is for Children to feel safe and secure. We believe that a learning environment, which fosters respect for cultural diversity and utilizes a diverse approach, allows for optimal growth and development of young children. As we live in a multicultural world and our children will live in even more diverse world, we encourage our students to learn and experience different cultures by enjoying multicultural activities and a multicultural event every month. When there is a conflict, students are encouraged to solve conflicts peacefully by talking at a peace table. Our students learn to live happily with others in harmony. Young children's developmental tasks are to build trust, learn social skills, begin mastery of academic skills and develop positive self-esteem. In order to best support these tasks, our program strives to provide developmentally appropriate activities, well trained and consistent staff, a safe and healthy learning environment, and continuity of care. Also, throughout the whole learning process we believe parents are their child's first teacher; thus, we work to support parents in their efforts to guide their child's development as well.

Whole Child

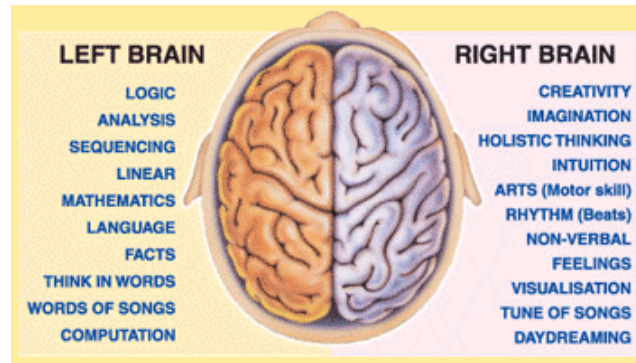
Our Brain-Based learning program is designed to develop the whole child. The following diagram describes the domains of development:



Brain-Based Learning

Stepping Stone offers an innovative approach to early childhood development. The essence is to create and enhance your child's functions that control self-regulation. Before the age of six, these functions make learning become more natural, entering new environments become more comfortable and social abilities become stronger and easier.

We use this approach to independently develop both sides of the brain, the left (logical, structured, and analytical) and right (creative, intuitive, and imaginative) functions of the brain.



Intrest Based Planning

Stepping Stone recognizes that all children are individuals, and acknowledges that children will grow and develop at distinctive and varying paces. Developmentally appropriate activities are used to grow your child's skills and abilities. Play will always be the main medium with which children learn and develop new skills in the program. Planned activities for children in the program will be open ended and the children will be allowed to complete the activity in ways that express and encourage their individuality.

Allowing Children to Make Choices

Stepping Stone strives to assist children in developing strong independence skills, encouraging children to be responsible for their choices and the inevitable outcome of these choices. The cause/effect relationship of choices/outcomes will be stressed with all children in the program.

Code of Ethics

Stepping Stone respects childhood as "an essential foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability".

Stepping Stone recognizes that play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.

Stepping Stone acknowledges each individual child as a competent learner, and build active communities of engagement and exploration by respecting their uniqueness, dignity, worth, and ability.

Stepping Stone works in partnership with parents, acknowledging parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.

Stepping Stone is a receptive listener and offer encouragement and support by responding appropriately to the ideas, concerns and needs of children and families.

Stepping Stone assures that children are not discriminated against on the basis of gender, age, ability, economic status, family structure, lifestyle, ethnicity, religious belief, language, culture, or national origin.

Stepping Stone acknowledges and respects diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.

Stepping Stone provides opportunities for young children to experience nature, and to understand their relationship to their natural environment and to the world.

Stepping Stone protects and promotes safety, welfare and well-being of all children in all early childhood environments.

Staff & Volunteers

Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the health, nutrition, and safety policies as outlined in this manual as well as the Staff Handbook provided to them upon hiring.

Specific information on the certain staff and volunteers is posted on our website or is provided on the 'Meet Our Staff' bulletin board.

Staff

All staff persons employed by Stepping Stone must:

1. Provide a criminal record check, including vulnerable sectors search, dated within six months of their commencement date with the company. The criminal record check and vulnerable sectors search is renewed, at minimum, every three years thereafter in order for the employee to continue being employed by the centre.
2. Be childcare first aid certified and for this certification to remain current for the duration of their employment.
3. Provide Child Care Certification issued by the Government of Alberta. Within the first six months of employment. The Government of Alberta issues certification levels or standings based on employee's education backgrounds. The three levels of certifications available are Assistant, Worker, and Supervisor.

Volunteers

Volunteers are required to submit the criminal record check, including vulnerable sectors search, prior to their first day of service with the centre. We strongly encourage all volunteers to be first aid certified.

Hours of Operation

Our hours of operation are Monday to Friday 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.

We will be closed on all Statutory Holidays and other designated days.

Early Dismissal and Closure Dates

A full listing of centre closure dates is provided on the main bulletin board when entering the facility and is updated on an annual basis. **Please note there are no 'make up days' for days that children miss due to school closures, illness or vacation times.

Holidays

Labor Day	Good Friday
Thanksgiving Day	Easter Monday
PD Day	Victoria Day
Remembrance Day	Canada Day
Christmas & New Year Break	Heritage Day
Family Day	

Admission and Registration Policy

Admission is open to any child between the ages of 0 months and 12 years old. Who's individual and family needs can be met through our programs;

Spaces are filled on a first come first served basis and in accordance with our space availability. If the centre is filled to capacity, subsequent spaces will be filled with children chosen from a waiting list of eligible children. Children are allocated spaces in such a way as to maintain our age groupings.

If you wish to reserve a spot for your child, we will require a \$100 non-refundable registration fee and a \$100 deposit. This deposit will go towards your first month's fees if your child attends the centre. Spaces are not saved for children who are leaving the centre during the summer months or for extended periods of time during the year. If you wish to save your child's spot upon your return, you must provide the centre with a \$200.00 non-refundable deposit which will be put towards the first month fees upon your return.

A **one-month** written notice is required when you withdraw your child from the center. We reserve the right to refuse care of your child. This includes any reason the Director and or license holder deems necessary. This includes late fees, not meeting your child's needs, illness, etc... In such case you will be given a termination notice from the Center.

Open Door Policy

Stepping Stone exercises an open door policy in the centre, meaning that parents and guardians are encouraged to visit or check in on their children while at the centre at any time.

The centre strives to ensure children and their parents or guardians are comfortable at all times while under the centre's care.

Parent Orientation

Once you have been accepted into our program and have returned the required documentation, you will receive a Welcome Letter and current Policy and Procedure Manual emailed to your family. The welcome letter will inform you on where to find information regarding your child's day and our program, confirm start date, drop off and pick up times, as well as, invite you and your family to set a date to visit our center. We always recommend coming in to visit your child's room, meet some students and the staff, at least once prior to your child's start date. This will also give you a chance to ask any questions that you may have. We would like to make the transition into our center as smooth as possible for your child and family.

Child Custody Policy

While it is preferable to avoid becoming involved in an access dispute, the protection and best interests of the child will be our first priority.

Stepping Stone has no legal authority to refuse the release of a child to either parent EXCEPT in the case of legally served court orders. A copy of a signed court order stating custodial assignment must be in a child's file to refuse release to a parent. Any additional information or questions regarding this should be addressed with the Director.

Subsidy

We support the use of Alberta subsidized child care for families who qualify. Once accepted, parents are eligible to apply for subsidy. This can be done by visiting our website and clicking the “Apply for Subsidy” button on the top right corner. We recommend all parents apply and see if they qualify.

The online application takes less than an hour and the results are instant. **Please forward the conditional approval letter prior to your enrolment date.**

If subsidy is established for the family, they are responsible for paying the difference between the program fee and the approved subsidy coverage amount as provided by the child care subsidy office.

If your child does not attend for the required number of hours as dictated by your subsidy agreement, you are responsible for the difference in fees.

It is the family’s responsibility to ensure subsidy applications are completed and maintained in an up to date status at all times. The centre will not provide partial fees while waiting for a subsidy application to be processed. Families must be diligent in monitoring their subsidy file status as the centre will charge families full fees for services provided as soon as subsidy lapses or discontinues for any reason.

Tuition and Fees

Fees are calculated on a monthly basis. Although the number of days in each month varies depending on the number of recognized holidays or closure dates, there is NO change in monthly fees.

Parents may complete a Pre-Authorized Debit (PAD) Form prior to their children’s first day at the center. The Electronic Fund Transfer is processed on the first day of the month. Parents are responsible for having the adequate funds in their account at this time. If your payment is NSF, you will need to pay the monthly tuition by cheque in person; plus a \$ 35 NFS Fee. If we do not receive your payment before the 5th of the month, there will also be a late fee of \$50. Fees can be paid by Cheque/Debit and Cash.

If childcare services are terminated due to non-payment of fees, families will still be responsible for ensuring the outstanding fees are paid to the centre. Stepping Stone will forward any outstanding accounts to an outside collection agency to ensure proper closure of the account and monies owed are recovered.

Any fee for this will also be borne by the family involved.

Please note: Field Trips are NOT extracurricular activities as they are not mandatory to attend. Field trips are also NOT included in fees and may require an additional cost depending on the destination.

Late Pick Up Fee

Like you and your family, our staff value and enjoy having quality family time in the evenings following a long and full day’s work. As such, if you are going to be late, we appreciate receiving a phone call as soon as you are aware of the situation.

Late childcare fees are charged at the rate of \$1.00 per child per minute and begin at 6pm Late pick up fees are payable to the Director or Supervisor.

Issuance of Receipts

Stepping Stone issues receipts at the end of each fiscal year for the previous year's fees. Receipts will not be issued on a monthly basis. Yearly receipts will be emailed to families by the last business day of February of each year. Families no longer attending the centre will need to ensure they provide up to date information for their files in order to ensure their receipts can be emailed out to them. Anyone who has an outstanding balance, you will not be given a receipt.

Families are required to bring:

Families will need to ensure ALL items brought to the centre are marked with the child's first name and last initial, including food items indoor & outdoor shoes, clothing, prepared bottles, soothers, etc.

PRESCHOOL

- Bag pack
- Indoor shoes
- Appropriate outdoor attire for all seasons, including comfortable footwear and sunscreen during the summer months and boots, waterproof mittens, hats/toques, snow pants and jackets for the winter months.
- Personal water bottle
- Full change of clothing to be left on-site
- Snacks or food items (optional)

TODDLERS

In addition to the items mentioned above:

- Diapering consumables
- Prepared formula if child is not consuming dairy milk

Families are asked to ensure no additional items are brought from home under any circumstance as the centre cannot be responsible for lost, stolen, or broken personal items brought into the centre. i.e. Toys, stuffed toys, etc. If the teacher requests your child to bring supplies or object, the parents will be notified. Personal cubbies are provided for children to keep their belongings and class materials. ALL personal items are required to be marked with the child's first name and last initial to assist staff and children in locating their belongings, and also to help ensure mix-ups do not occur between families.

Arrival & Dismissal Policy

NEVER DROP OFF OR PICKUP A CHILD WITHOUT STAFF KNOWLEDGE

ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL

1. Our center opens at 7:00 am and closes at 6:00pm. All families must arrive at the centre no later than 5:45 pm to pick up the child(ren). This ensures enough time to gather belongings and talk to staff members.
2. Children may attend for a maximum of 10 hours per day unless individual arrangements are made with the director

3. There may be an additional charge for additional staffing if children are attending over the maximum hours per day. We will be closed on all Statutory Holidays and other designated days.
4. Please bring your child into the centre and help prepare them for their day. Helping them remove outdoor clothing, and unpack their bags. We believe this will start them off in a positive manner.
5. If your child will not be attending the center, please call and let the Director know by 9:30 am.
6. If your child needs medication administered please let staff know so that you may complete the appropriate forms. Also this is the time to let staff know of any changes for that day, alternate person for pickup, different number to be reached at for the day and any other relevant information the staff should know.
7. There is a late fee of \$1.00 per minute after 6:00 pm. This fee is paid to the staff present at the centre.
8. If a parent is consistently late picking their child up the centre has the right to terminate care, unless arrangements have been made.
9. We are required by Social Services to call the Child Welfare Department if your child has not been picked up by 6:15 pm., and you have not contacted the Centre and/or we have not been able to reach you or your emergency contact.
10. If childcare services have been suspended for any reason, you are not to drop your child off at the centre until services have been restored. If a child is dropped off during a suspension period, staff will phone parents or emergency contacts to pick the child up. If neither can be reached Children's Services will be called.
11. Fees are to be paid by the 5th of each month. There will be a late fee charged after that date. Consistent late payment may result in termination of your spot.

Child Release Policy

1. Children are to only be released to authorized persons or a special person upon notice from parents.
2. Authorized persons are found on the registration form. If for some reason someone other than the authorized person is picking up your child it is parental responsibility to let the centre know. Staff will ask for ID upon pick up. If someone shows up without notice given to centre, staff will immediately phone parents, or take appropriate action.
3. Children will not be released if staff has not received consent or proper identification.

FOIP Policy

Information provided during enrollment on your child's registration form will be confidential and shared in accordance with the Alberta Government daycare licensing requirements and accreditation policies.

Importance of Signing Your Child In & Out

We require children to be signed in to the program when they arrive and signed out when they leave. We ensure the attendance by using sign in sheets at the centre. Parents are responsible for signing in their child to the appropriate classrooms. At the end of the day, the parent is responsible for signing the children out. **It is the parent's responsibility to ensure this is completed accurately and as it occurs on the sign in sheet. Stepping Stone respectfully asks all parents and guardians to be diligent in ensuring these records are maintained accurately.**

Daily Routine

Our daily routines are a general overview of how the children's days are structured. Each group has an established a routine that is flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the children. Daily routines are posted in each room. A variety of activities and items are provided for the children's use throughout the day including push toys, books, art and craft items, manipulative toys, and water and sand tables. Children play outside at least once per day, weather permitting.

Family Involvement Policy

Parents and guardians are encouraged to be involved in the centre's activities as much as their schedules allow. Comments and suggestions are welcomed by the centre and its management. Parents are encouraged to use the Comment box.

Additionally, parents will receive ongoing updates on their child's progress and interactions while at the centre. You can also add feedback, ask questions and give suggestions regarding your child. Daily feedback will be available and parents are encouraged to provide similar feedback to staff when dropping children off in the morning as staff will use this information to provide the highest level of care to the child throughout their day at the centre. Parents may arrange meetings with director at any time.

Parents and other family members are encouraged to participate in offsite field trips in order to enhance the ratios and levels of supervision of children while away from the program.

Specific information relating to the field trip will be provided to families prior to the scheduled field trip and appropriate consent forms will be required to be completed in order for children to participate in the field trip.

Parents or other family members volunteering their time for these trips will be required to submit a clear criminal record check, including vulnerable sectors search, to the centre's Program Coordinator prior to the field trip date as they are recognized as centre volunteers and are bound by the same requirements under licensing.

Cultural heritage is an integral part of our program. We invite children and families to share their cultural tradition and celebrations at all times.

Family Orientation Policy

Stepping Stone will ensure that new families are welcomed to the centre and provided with an overview of the centre Policies and Procedures.

When welcoming a new family to the centre

- Director will meet with the family and give a tour of the centre.
- Director will review the centre's program and various policies with the family and answer any questions the family may have.
- When a family is ready to enroll their child in our centre, Parents will be asked to complete our Registration Package.
- Parents and Director will review and sign the centre's contract, located inside the Registration Package.
- Parents will be provided a copy of the Parent Handbook and will be asked to review the same and sign the Parent Handbook acknowledging receipt and review of the contents.

- Prior to the child starting at our centre, Parents are welcome to arrange for their child to visit the centre with their child to help the child's transition into our facility.
- There is an orientation checklist for families to sign off that they have been given an introduction to the program.

Communication Policy

Communication is an integral part of any successful endeavour. Our policy states that we communicate with everyone involved including staff, children, families, school and community.

Stepping Stone publishes a quarterly newsletter. Newsletters contain information relevant to families attending, Stepping Stone and its operations. Quarterly updates on each room in the centre will be provided along with other points of interest.

There are three places for information: The main entrance for licences and policies and government regulations, then upon entering the parent reception, the information board has community events, community programs and notices the staff feel are relevant to share such as program closure dates, or services provided. Last but not least, our website has updated menus, parent information and program guides. In the centre's entrance, it is continually updated

A communication book to communicate amongst staff with regards to phone messages or general messages

Regular meetings with the children to get their ideas for field trip, weekly programming and any news that the staff need to share.

Nutrition Policy

Stepping Stone believes in encouraging children to make healthy lifestyle choices from as early an age as possible. In order to support this, the centre follows the recommendations as outlined by Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide, as well as the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth. Stepping Stone provides meals and snacks to all children attending the centre in accordance with the above-mentioned guides as reference, and in sufficient quantity and time intervals to meet the individual needs of the child. A four-week rotating schedule will be posted for families to review on the main bulletin board. Parents will be required to ensure allergy, food intolerance, and special nutritional considerations are kept up to date in order to ensure their child's safety. Stepping Stone will make every effort to accommodate basic allergies (specific to simple foods). In addition, there WILL NOT be any financial compensation in lieu of meals not provided.

Stepping Stone menus do not use artificial sweeteners of any kind. Emphasis will be placed on providing meals and snacks that provide children with a variety of food tastes and textures. Diversity of ingredients and recipe heritages will be observed as is reasonable in order to provide children with a variety of food experiences. Children will be encouraged to try new foods on a regular basis.

All meals and snacks will be prepared onsite by the centre's cook. The centre will ensure that the staff has completed the required Provincial Food Safe Certification.

The centre maintains a nut-free facility at all times. Items containing or having the possibility of containing, nuts of any kind will never be served and/or allowed.

Children will be encouraged to remain seated at the tables until they have finished their meal, snack or drink.

Health & Safety In The Centre

General Health & Safety Concerns

Stepping Stone will not use aerosols for any reason within the presence of children attending the centre at any time. The use of pesticides shall not occur in the presence of children attending the centre. Additionally, when the centre is made aware of a public application of pesticides (i.e. on the public park adjacent to the centre), children attending the centre shall not be allowed to use these areas until the risk of exposure has passed.

Stepping Stone accesses and uses both public pathway systems as well as public parks in the community on a regular basis. The use of any public park shall be subject to a safety inspection to be completed by centre staff prior to allowing children to use the structure. Any hazard or potential hazard that cannot be safely removed or corrected by staff shall deem the site as inappropriate for use by the children. The same discretion will be used by staff when accessing public pathway systems. Should a staff member become aware of a safety risk, either potential or imminent, the children shall be immediately removed from the area and redirected to a more suitable area.

Art and craft materials used by Stepping Stone shall be of the non-toxic variety at all times. Although the centre encourages reuse of certain materials in order to promote recycling efforts, considerations for health and safety shall at all times be of top priority. Also, items which pose a risk to children's health or safety shall not be

The use of glass bottles for infant-aged children shall be accommodated by the centre, however it will be the responsibility of the family to ensure all glass bottles are provided with an impact reducing/resistant cover to minimize chances of bottles breaking. These covers are usually silicon in nature and can be found in most stores, which sell glass bottles.

Under licensing regulation, children cannot be put to sleep with the use of bottles or training cups. Soothers are considered acceptable in their place at this time.

Outdoor Play Space/Playground Safety Policies and Procedures

Our outdoor play space and playground is located at the back of our centre and children do not need to leave the centre to enjoy the outdoors and get some fresh air. To ensure the safety of the children, the playground is securely enclosed at all times and the gate is locked during centre closure hours. When children are playing outside, staff will position themselves strategically throughout the playground to supervise children.

The play space provides a choice of age appropriate activities that reflect the children's needs and interests. Staff closely supervises the climbing structures located in the playground.

Playground Safety is maintained through the following steps and precautions:

- Prior to the children going into the playground, one staff member will step out to inspect the playground for any broken bottles or glass thrown over the fence. Any broken toys or equipment will also be removed.
- The outdoor play space will be checked for safety hazards and any garbage found in the playground will be properly disposed of prior to the children entering the playground.
- The outdoor play space is enclosed with a fence, with two gates that are locked on each end of the play space. The gate is unlocked during operating hours, but is closed at all times.
- Outdoor play structures comply with the Canadian Standards Association.
- No toxic plants or weeds are permitted to grow in the outdoor play space.

A playground safety checklist is used to guide staff through the safety measures and precautions prior to allowing children into the outdoor play space.

Health Care Policy

Stepping Stone can only allow the administration of medication to children within their care under the following conditions:

- The parents or guardians have provided written consent for the administration of the medication through the completion of the centre's appropriate paperwork
- If the health care provided is in the nature of First Aid

Illness Policy

Stepping Stone believes in promoting the health and safety of all persons involved with the centre, from clients to staff. In order to meet this goal, the centre observes the recommendations for controlling communicable diseases as outlined by the Alberta Health Services.

Children exhibiting any of the following symptoms or conditions may not attend the childcare centre:

- Fever 100F(24 hours from last fever reading)
- Vomiting (24 hours from last incident)
- Diarrhea (24 hours from last incident)
- Continuous green or yellow nasal discharge (indicates infection)
- Discharge from eyes (indicates infection)
- Head lice (until first treatment has been applied)
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) (until 24 hours from beginning of treatment)
-

Any other communicable disease (until medical note can be provided to indicate safe return to centre)

Children who develop any of the above symptoms or conditions will be separated from their respective room while parents, guardians, or emergency contacts are notified of the immediate need for the child's departure. It is then the parent's responsibility to arrange for immediate pickup of the sick child. Additionally, any child who is known to be, or suspected to be, suffering from any condition listed on Schedule 1 of the Communicable Diseases Regulation will not be able to attend care at Stepping Stone until such a time as the communicable disease has passed.

In rare circumstance, certain other conditions which may pose a threat to the health and safety of other clients or centre staff may also warrant the required removal of a child from the centre, at the discretion of the Director or Program Supervisor.

Hand Washing

Regular and ongoing hand washing routines are in place within the centre and promoted to all children by the centre's staff. Staff will ensure children practice thorough hand washing on a regular and ongoing basis and that it:

- Includes the use of warm water and soap, and is completed:
- Before and after eating food
- Before and after food preparation and handling
- After diapering and toileting
- After playing in sand, water, or other sensory tables
- After wiping noses
- After sneezing or coughing, and
- Whenever hands are soiled

The centre observes the guidelines as set forth by the Alberta Health Services for the daily maintenance and sanitation of various areas in the centre. Proper hand washing, diapering, and food preparation methods are posted and observed by all staff at all times. Dilute bleach solutions are used by centre staff as per the recommended mixing concentrations provided by the health region.

In the event of centre contamination with a communicable disease, a full sanitation of the affected areas will occur as soon as is reasonably safe to do so (i.e. vomit will be immediately cleaned and sanitized with a 1:9 bleach to water solution, whereas an identified case of pink eye will result in high risk areas being immediately sanitized and full room sanitation occurring at the end of the day when all clients are removed from the area).

DIAPERING POLICY

1. Wash hands.
2. Wipe changing surface with disinfectant.
3. Dirty diapers are wrapped tightly in a plastic bag and then put into closed garbage containers. These garbage bags are disposed of twice daily.
4. Disinfect changing mat.
5. Wash children and staff hands thoroughly.

Accident/Incident/Illness Reporting

Should a child be injured while in the care of the centre, an accident/incident or illness report will be completed by the staff person who witnessed the event. This report will detail what the event was, how it occurred, who witnessed it, whether first aid or other medical intervention was required and what was completed, and any other relevant information (such as corrective action).

These reports must be signed by the child's parent or guardian, with the original form remaining in the centre. Parents and guardians are welcome to request a copy for their records if they so desire.

Administration of First Aid

Before the first day of service can be provided, families must consent in writing to the administration of emergency first aid to their child by centre staff. The centre ensures all staff has current first aid training in order to ensure the quickest time in the event of the need for the administration of first aid to a child. Should a child require additional medical attention beyond the scope of emergency first aid treatment that can be provided by centre staff, Stepping Stone will, depending on the severity of the incident, attempt to reach:

- The parent(s) or guardian(s) listed on the child's emergency contact form
- The emergency contacts listed on the child's emergency contact form

Emergency Medical Services Personnel (911)

Parents/Guardians are immediately notified in the case of a medical emergency which include any suspected head related injuries or broken bones.

If the need arises for EMS to attend the centre to provide medical assistance to any of the centre's clients, any costs associated with this will be borne by the client and the client's family. Stepping Stone will make every effort to act in the best interest of the health and safety of the child involved in the incident in addition to calling the parents or emergency contacts immediately.

Administration of Medication

Stepping Stone can only allow the administration of medication to children within their care under the following conditions:

- The parents or guardians have provided written consent for the administration of the medication through the completion of the centre's appropriate paperwork
- The medication is in the original labelled container and indicates:
 - ❖ The name of the medication
 - ❖ The first and last name of the child
 - ❖ The dosage of the medication to be administered
 - ❖ The frequency of administration of the medication
 - ❖ The length of time over which the medication is to be administered (i.e. two weeks, until finished, etc.)
- For emergency medications (i.e. asthma inhaler, Epipen, etc.), under what conditions the medication is to be administered (i.e. physical signs that will be present indicating the need for the medication)
- The medication is prescribed by a physician and bears a prescription label, or a physician's note indicating all fields required above can be provided for the child's file

In all cases of administration of medication, only persons with a valid first aid certificate will be allowed to administer medication to children in the centre's care. For ongoing medications, a new consent form for the administration of the medication will need to be completed every month.

Completed medication forms remain at the centre.

Following administration of medication, staff will ensure children are observed to ensure no sign of adverse reaction presents itself. Staff will ensure the appropriate paperwork is completed following the administration of any medication, and that the following information is documented:

- The name of the medication
- The time of administration
- The amount administered
- The initials of the person who administered the medication

All medications while in the centre will be made inaccessible to children. Emergency medications in the centre will be placed in a marked container, out of reach of children, but readily accessible to staff. Non-emergency medications will be stored in a locked container, and made inaccessible to children.

In addition to the conditions outlined above, parents and guardians are also required to disclose to the centre if their child has had medication administered prior to arriving in the care of the centre.

The centre's administration of medication form will be required to be filled out by the parent or guardian each time this occurs.

Note: your emergency contact person cannot authorize the use of medication or treatment.

To keep a record of those children that are ill or receive an injury, an 'Incident Log Sheet' from Alberta Health Services is kept in each room.

Fire Drill, Emergency Evacuation, and Centre Lock Down Procedures

Stepping Stone observes monthly, unannounced fire drill practice. Additionally, emergency evacuation and centre lock down practices will occur throughout the year to ensure all staff and centre clients are comfortable with the procedure in the case that a real need for any of these should arise.

Evacuation routes are posted in each room in the centre to ensure clarity for all persons in the centre at the time of the drills. All staffs have been provided with a complete outline of the procedures required for each type of drill, and copy of this is additionally provided to them in the emergency contacts binders kept with the first aid kit in each room in the centre. Emergency contact information and first aid kits are removed from the centre and kept with staff during any and all emergency evacuations, fire drills, or centre lock downs.

Should the daycare need to remain evacuated due to the imminent danger present to the centre or its clients, parents and guardians of children will be contacted from the evacuation site by telephone and email, and will be advised of the situation and where their children can be picked up from. In the event that parents or guardians cannot be reached, emergency contacts will then be notified of the situation.

Emergency and safety contacts

Following telephone numbers are posted on the program premises and are readily accessible:

Emergency medical service, Ambulance service, Fire department, Police service,
Poison control centre, nearest hospital or emergency medical facility, Child abuse hotline.

Telephone number for an after-hours emergency program contact is posted in a place that is visible from the outside of the program premises.

Inclusion and Valuing Diversity Policy

We will ensure that our service is fully inclusive in meeting the needs of all children. We encourage children to discuss and share different aspects of culture, race, religion, abilities, life style and background. We aim to make inclusion a thread that runs through all of the activities of the setting. We welcome the diversity of family lifestyles and work with all families. We encourage children to contribute stories of their everyday life to the setting. Staff is responsive to children's abilities and needs for assistance.

Behaviour Guidance Policy

Children look to adults for guidance. Stepping Stone strives to provide children with an environment that encourages exploration, interaction, decision making, and fosters self-control. When adult guidance is needed, the individual needs and behaviours of each child will be taken into consideration. This is also true with discipline. The goal of discipline is not to influence behaviour through fear of punishment, but to support the development of self-control and problem solving skills.

“Developing self-control and learning appropriate social behaviours are essential to children’s social development. By encouraging children’s self-respect for others, primary staff members can help children develop self-control and sensitivity in their positive interactions with others. Proper child guidance is the process by which children are guided and encouraged to learn in positive ways. Our centre prohibits the use of corporal and/or abusive verbal punishment. Preventative strategies, positive guidance and proper role modeling are methods we use to achieve the desired behavior. “

Purpose of This Policy

This policy is the guideline that Stepping Stone will follow to assist children in developing self-control, self-confidence, and sensitivity when interacting with others. Guidance is required to prevent injury and ensure a child’s activities are not infringing on the rights of others.

Guidance Strategies

It is important that staff create a positive atmosphere with maximum opportunities for desirable behaviour and problem solving. This will be done by:

- 1) Exploring with the children what behaviours are acceptable and discuss the reason for limits, and doing so in a positive way.
- 2) Focusing on the child’s behaviour rather than on the child
- 3) Allowing the children time to respond to the expectations
- 4) Reinforcing appropriate behaviour
- 5) Being willing to listen and respond in a fair and supportive manner
- 6) Observing children in order to anticipate potential challenges and assist in problem solving.

Intervention Strategies

One or more of the following strategies will be used to help create a positive climate and minimize problems in a supportive rather than punitive way:

1. By establishing eye contact and communicating in a respectful manner at all times
2. Having the children involved in making plans and rules within the program
3. Children will be reminded of limits, taking their feelings into consideration
4. Verbal assistance will be shown by modeling problem solving if a child is discouraged or frustrated

5. Children will be offered choices in a non-threatening and non-punitive way to assist them in meeting expectations
6. We will clarify the inevitable or unavoidable outcome/consequence of specific behaviour to the child
7. If the child is unable to resolve a problem or take responsibility for their actions, they will be redirected to another activity, or in special circumstance, be limited in the use of a piece of equipment

Practices Which Are Unacceptable

Stepping Stone considers the following practices unacceptable and will not tolerate their use:

- Any form of physical punishment
- Any form of verbal or physical degradation
- Any form of emotional deprivation
- Deprivation or threatened deprivation of any basic necessity
- Any form of physical restraint, confinement, or isolation

Any disciplinary action taken must be reasonable for the circumstances of the situation being addressed.

Problem Solving & Conflict Resolution Model

Stepping Stone will practice, model, and share the following problem solving and conflict resolving idea with all children and staff within the program:

S – T – O – R – E

Stop – Have everyone involved in the conflict stop to regain self-control so they can discuss the situation

Talk – Encourage children to talk about why they are upset and ask questions to identify the problem

Opinions Count – Give everyone a chance to brainstorm possible solutions, encouraging children to be as creative as they can, and accepting all ideas

Reconsider – Consider all the ideas that were generated. Have children think about whether an idea would work, is fair, and what might happen if they tried it. Have children agree to try one of the ideas.

Execute – Discuss how to carry out the decision

Please note that Stepping Stone Learning Center has a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY** with respect to violent behaviour. Kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, etc. are not allowed and will result in immediate removal from the group or activity. Continued violent behaviour will result in dismissal from the centre after a discussion with the child's parents.

Withdrawal & Termination of Care

We assume that parents and guardians have put time and consideration into choosing Stepping Stone for their childcare needs, and we strive to make the child's experience with us a positive one. **If a family must withdraw from the program, one month's written notice from the 1st of the month is required.** Parents and guardians are expected to pay for partial month's services as a full month's requirements. No prorating of fees will be provided.

Termination of care may be initiated by the centre under various circumstances, including but not limited to:

- Failure to keep program fees up to date
- Failure of families to adhere to centre policies and procedures as outline in this manual and any future updates provided

- If a child puts staff or other children's safety at risk
- If a child is exhibiting destructive behaviour which does not improve with intervention

In the event of a centre initiated termination, written notice of such will be provided to the family. It is the intention of the centre to pursue as many avenues of assistance and intervention in assisting with meeting the needs of all the families enrolled in the centre as possible, however this cannot be at the expense of providing quality service to other clients.

Written observations of children behaviours, interactions, development, interests, etc. will be kept on file in an effort to attempt to assist with any challenges the child may be experiencing. Additionally, written documentation of incidents and the strategies used while handling these incidents will also be recorded by the centre's staff and maintained on file.

There will be no refund of remaining fees for the month of termination.

Community Walks & Outings

Stepping Stone believes in the importance of daily physical activity, including outdoor time at least once per day when weather permits. From time to time, children may be taken on community walks or outings in close proximity to the centre. These activities are separate from regularly scheduled field trips and may be spontaneously initiated by children's interests. Children will leave the centre with the regular room staff that will bring with them the room's first aid kit, emergency contact information binder, and a cell phone in order to maintain communication with site management at all times.

Field Trips & Special Guests

In order to enhance the programming offered to the families attending the centre, Stepping Stone will attempt to schedule either field trips or special guests, or both, on a regular basis.

When field trips are scheduled, parents and guardians will be provided with a consent form outlining the specifics of the field trip including:

- The location of the field trip (name and address)
- The time of departure from the centre and estimated return time to the centre
- The method of transportation being used
- The number of volunteers required to assist in enhancing the ratio and supervision of children while on the offsite activity

Photos, Creative Arts & Social Media

In order to enhance the child care environment and allow children to feel as though they are actively involved in the centre, staff of Stepping Stone may take photos of the children attending the centre for postings within the centre, social media, and on our website for parents, families and friends. Photos may include individual photos of the children, photos of children involved in various activities throughout the centre, photos taken to document a series of events to reach a learning goal or objective identified by centre staff, or for similar reasons.

Additionally, as children complete various art experiences with the centre, these may be posted in the rooms to enhance the visual space as well as promote a sense of accomplishment and inclusion of children in the centre.

Media Release

Photos and/ or video may be taken of children or their artwork while they participate in Stepping Stone program activities. Media images or reproductions of original art and writing involving the children may be used in newsletters, childcare sector workshops, Stepping Stone social media sites, Stepping Stone websites or by community media outlets.

Media Release forms are provided at the time of registration and give parents the opportunity to provide or withhold consent for the situations described above.

Procedures Outlining Volunteer Responsibilities

Families may be asked to volunteer on field trips as their schedules allow. Safety rules will be reviewed with both the children and the field trip chaperons prior to the field trip.

Stepping Stone does not transport children requiring safety seats in vehicles to offsite activities. The use of public transit, chartered buses, or community walks are the only approved methods of transportation used by the centre at the time of this manual's publication/revision.

Parents and guardians will be required to consent in writing to their child participating in the outlined field trip in order for their child to be included. **Parents or guardians not providing this consent will be required to secure alternative child care arrangements for their children on the field trip day.**

Emergency contact information and first aid kits are taken from the daycare and remain with staff and children for all off site activities and outings.

Special guests may include all sorts of persons who can enhance the learning objectives of the centre. They may include individuals from: the Fort Saskatchewan Public Library, the RCMP, the Fort Saskatchewan Fire Department or Emergency Medical Services, veterinarians, cultural visitors, chefs, or many others. Families who wish to participate as special guests to share specific skills or experiences to enhance children's programming can discuss this option with the director to determine how this can best be accomplished.

Use of Technology

Stepping Stone believes in the use of practical and traditional play materials in most of the experiences it provides to the children and families in the centre. However, Stepping Stone also believes that electronic or computer devices enhance a child's preschool experience. Should this be used, it will be done so with proper supervision and child appropriate materials.

The centre does not promote the use of televisions and TV except for Movie Days or when special videos are presented around children's interests.

Stepping Stone Learning Center

THIS LAST PAGE NEEDS TO BE RETURNED TO THE PROGRAM UPON READING THE FAMILY HANDBOOK

We need parents/families/guardians to carefully read and sign the family handbook, which is yours to keep.

I have carefully read the Family Handbook. I fully understand that if I have any questions about the handbook, I will talk to the Director of the centre before I sign this to clear up any issues or concerns I may have about any policy or procedure.

I hereby agree and am bound by the terms stated in these policies and procedures.

Child(ren) Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Director Signature: _____

Any comments you would like to make, please write below.