



Parent Handbook

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This Handbook is reviewed and updated at the very least once per year. In the event it is updated parents will be informed through the monthly newsletter and it will always be available on the First Steps website (www.firststepsrochester.com).

Reviewed by: ____ Cassie Fenstra _____ Date: _____ 8/31/15 _____

Reviewed by: ____ Cassie Fenstra _____ Date: _____ 7/20/16 _____

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Reviewed by: ____ Cassie Fenstra _____ Date: _____ 1/18/17 _____

Reviewed by: ____ Cassie Fenstra _____ Date: _____ 12/4/17 _____

Welcome to First Steps Academy. My name is Cassie Fenstra, I am the Executive Director and Founder of this wonderful educational facility. I am overjoyed you have chosen to partner with us in your precious child's care and education. I invite you to read our policies and procedures so that all parties may have an outstanding experience. Directors of First Steps welcome any questions you may have about these policies at any time.

Our Mission: To provide a safe, nurturing, home-like classroom meeting each and every child and child's families individual needs. To never miss an opportunity to educate and spark interest, curiosity and wonder every chance we get. To use open communication with all parents to provide the best quality of care possible. Create an environment where your children are learning through play.

Our Philosophy: You can teach a child a lesson for a day, but if you teach by creating curiosity, they continue the learning process as long as they live.

All of the following policies and procedures are in accordance to the Minnesota state law under the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division for childcare centers. The expectations and accompanying contracts become effective upon acceptance by the parent and First Steps Child Care and Preschool.

First Step's Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday 6am-6:30pm

Licensing Capacity:

Little Steps Campus-

Fragile Fawns: 8 infants
Darling Ducklings: 8 infants
Bouncing Bunnies: 8 infants
Kuddly Kittens: 8 infants
Little Lambs: 10 infants
Outgoing Owls: 4 infants or 5 toddlers
Playful Puppies: 11 toddlers
Carefee Cubs: 6 toddlers
Learning Ladybugs: 13 toddlers
Goofy Groundhogs: 10 early preschoolers

Big Steps Campus-

Curious Caterpillars: 14 toddlers
Precious Piglets: 16 early preschoolers
Mischievous Monkeys: 18 preschoolers
Eager Eagles: 15 preschoolers
Determined Dinosaurs: 17 preschoolers
Courageous Cougars 13 preschoolers

Infant classrooms have 1 staff member per every 4 infants, toddler classrooms 1 per every 6, preschool classrooms 1 per every 10. The first and last staff member on duty is a Lead or Assistant qualified teacher as approved by The Department of Human Service, Licensing Division. The second staff member on duty is a teaching aide. Teaching Aides must complete CPR, First Aid and Basic Child Development courses. The third staff member on duty is at least Assistant qualified. These qualifications range from college courses to Early Childhood degrees, a more in-depth overview can be accessed on The Department of Human Services, Licensing Division website.

Children are to be supervised at all times, while keeping appropriate child-adult ratios. For children to be properly supervised staff will be within sight and sound at all times of all children in care. We try to keep a tight schedule at First Steps because we know children strive for excellence when they know what to expect next and know their boundaries but activities will be influenced by the developmental levels of the children in care. The idea behind the concept that children learn and play in different ways depends on their experience, interests, ages and special needs. We provide many chances for children to make real choices and explore ideas or objects on their own. We help them do what they are interested in, assist in a way that helps them help themselves. Curious, confident children will continue to be eager learners and cooperative children. Children need structured and unstructured learning and experimenting activities. Staff have ongoing training and may need to request permission to observe, document and discuss your child developmental but will always do so after getting permission.

First Steps does take field trips in the summer, we will get signed parental permission first.

Conferences will be offered after six months in care. Conferences are provided the month's of February and August. Conference will be based on Assessments with Teaching Strategies Gold. Ongoing assessments throughout the year will assist teachers in lesson planning, forming to their student's needs and interests. Conferences will be offered to only direct parents of students at scheduled times, make ups will not be permitted.

Our programs are outlined here...

Each program plan will be developed and evaluated in writing annually by a staff person qualified as a teacher. This plan will be available for parents to view on request.

Infant (6 weeks- 16 months) program-

Parents and teachers, together, will meet to develop an appropriate schedule, teachers give advice and parents get to express their individual needs and wants. Continuous communication between the staff and parents ensures your child's first transition away from home will be successful. We use "Daily Connect" to record each infant's feeding and napping schedule, along with their activities and developments for that day. Our teacher's priority is to make your new born feel safe, comfortable and happy while mommy and daddy are away at work. Loving teachers respond to your infant's needs and wants with warm smiles and gentle words assuring your infant is receiving the best care and attention, laying a foundation for trusting relationships, improving their social and emotional development.

Our "Safe Sleep" guidelines meet those of the American Academy of Pediatrics including having infants closely monitored during their rest times.

Teachers prepare bottles according to parents written instructions and procedures are certified by a health consultant. Parents must provide enough breast milk bottles for the day plus one extra. If breast milk is provided, it must be thawed and in bottles labeled by child's first and last name and date it was thawed. Any leftover milk from the day will be sent home at pick up time or thrown out. First Steps does provide formula but if you choose to provide it, it needs to be in the original can labeled with child's first and last name. Once it is opened First Steps staff will write the date on the can and will throw it away one month after opening it.

In addition to our safe nurturing "home away from home" your infant will be given endless opportunities to explore and make new discoveries in our infant-age focused classroom.

Teacher-child interactions and communication through verbal and non-verbal gestures boost curiosity, socialization and self-esteem. Baby sign language is taught to parent's as well so needs, wants and observations can be expressed at home too. Teachers sing songs, read and show picture books to build association between sounds, objects and words building language and literacy development.

Teachers help improve your infants mobility and coordination by supporting him or her when learning to roll over, crawl, stand and walk. We have age-appropriate materials and equipment to support growth and gross motor development. Teachers help your infant explore using sensory play, cause and effect and trial and error every day, we provide a variety of materials of different colors, sizes, textures, and shapes and encourage the use of all five senses to make new discoveries. They plan for experiences that set the stage for exploration instead of strict lesson plans that teaches only one skill at a time, building optimum cognitive development. Teachers use age-appropriate art activities and encourage self-expression through movement and music to promote creative development.

Toddler/Early Preschool (16 months- 3 years) program-

Children thrive when given boundaries and structure, upon entering the Toddler classroom, the children have seen a little bit of a schedule from their previous classroom but we step it up a notch here. All meal times, potty breaks, stations, outside time, choice play, and group times will be on a schedule, giving the children a good sense of what to expect each and every day.

The teachers will split up and take one fourth of the class to the station they are working in whether it be Art, Sensory, Music/Movement or Manipulatives.

Teachers also will ask you when and how you would like to start potty training in this classroom, we respect whatever your choice is but will give you our professional opinion.

Preschool (3-4 years) program-

This classroom is taking another step closer to what Kindergarten will feel like because we add in a longer "Group Time." Group time gives children a chance to learn more language and social development. Children will learn to raise their hands, answer questions, communicate in a dialogue, take turns, and listen/relate to their peers. We use group time to talk about the changing seasons, weather, calendar, and themes of the week.

Teachers will now start to incorporate stations for playtime getting them ready for Kindergarten. They will be put into groups of 3 to 5 preschoolers and be assigned developmental areas around the room, then switch as the daily schedule states. Of course, there is choice play 2 or 3 times per day depending on your child's hours in the classroom. The idea is to help the preschoolers get use to direction by a teacher and to experience all developmental stations giving them a huge jump on the kindergarten experience. Schedules are posted in classroom but stations with their purpose are as follows..

Station A- Arts and Music: In this station the children will use their fine motor skills to hold a pencil, crayon, marker or paint brush, to squeeze a glue bottle, and to cut with scissors. They will be expressing their creativity by making works of art, sometimes by choice sometimes with direction if it relates to our curriculum, to cover our classroom walls or to take home and share with their family.

Station B- Building Blocks: In this station the children will use all sorts of blocks- plastic, wooden, foam, legos ect. Exercising their fine and gross motor skills. They will also be expressing their creativity and interests to their teachers and sometimes to their families (we will take pictures occasionally). Problem solving is often used in this station because other friends will be working around them or team work may also play a role in the case that they are working together.

Station C- Creative Play: In this station the children will have various dress up materials such as police officer, teacher and mail man teaching work roles of their community members and family roles when using the dress up materials such as grandpas or the baby's clothes. There's also a kitchen, tool bench and other pretend play materials in this area to help support their imagination. Station C is most importantly teaching social competence and self-concept due to the fact most of the time the children are playing with each other learning to communicate, explore relationships, cooperate and interact appropriately.

Station D- Discovery: This station is mostly teacher ran and relates to our curriculum. The children will be using their scientific thinking to explore materials, make predictions and use tools such as binoculars or a magnifying glass to spark their interest in nature. They will be playing in the sand and water table working on fine motor skills as they use tools to pour and sift while also engaging in cognitive development such as classification, comparison volume, capacity and measurement.

Station E- Computer Center: This station exercises the children's fine motor and cognitive development with the learning games they play.

Teachers will start to document child's development upon enrollment using Teaching Strategies Gold. Assessments will be shared with parents at conferences, which are twice a year. Some art work or pictures may be kept until conferences to show progress.

Pre- Kindergarten (4-5 years) program-

Teachers from this class work closely with the teachers from the preschool room in making the transition for the children as smooth as possible, the transition happens right around age 4 depending on their development and space availability. Preschool assessments will be completed before entering this classroom and the children take another large step towards getting ready for kindergarten. We add 4 more stations to their daily schedule and work on cutting nap times out. The added stations are as follows....

Station A-E- refer to Preschool section

Station F- Manipulatives: In this station the children also work their fine motor skills building with small legos, pretend play with little community people, putting puzzles together, or molding with play dough or clay. While working in this station they will also be working on their understanding of the community and roles people play in the workforce and family. Cognitive development will grow along with self-concept as the children get faster or complete puzzles.

Station G- Writing: This station is used to start letter and word recognition and tracing letters. There will be a "notebook assignment" every day giving the opportunity to practice tracing over and over again. Also helping the children understand writing is a way of communication.

Station H- Reading: The children will have options to either have a teacher read to them, listen to a book or eventually start reading themselves. With knowledge from our curriculum and the writing station the children should start to recognize some letters and even words during their time in this station. This station focuses on language and literacy development as well as self-concept as they progress they will feel more and more confident and independent.

Music Time Policy:

First Steps offers Music and Movement Time once per day around Group Time. Music and Movement may possibly be Dance Time, Free Play with Music playing or with musical instruments. First Steps has one large set of musical instruments available in the gym at teacher's discretion for use. Children will only listen to CDs made by First Steps or CDs that are obviously titled or made for Children's use.

Screen Time Policy:

First Steps offers one 1.5-2-hour themed video clip to preschool students the last Friday of each month. This video is chosen by preschool teachers, must relate to their learning topics and be rated G. Toddler students will have no screen time while in care.

Daily Connect Policy:

First Steps uses a website called "Daily Connect" to log all student's daily activities, diaper changes, naps, and much more. Please be understanding with teachers about entry times and amount of entries, as our very first priority is our student's needs. If Daily Connect demands by clients become an issue we have the right to discontinue Daily Connect use and resort to written daily logs.

Tuition Policy:

Tuition weekly rates: (Subject to alteration each January 1st, rates determined in October the year previous)

Infant Classrooms- rates will not be prorated

5 days/ week = \$320 4 days /week = \$300 3 days/week = \$280 Daily Drop In rate= \$100 Client drop in- \$40

Toddler Classroom- rates will not be prorated

5 days/ week= \$280 4 days / week = \$260 3 days / week= \$240 Daily Drop In rate= \$90 Client drop in- \$40

Preschool Classroom- rates will not be prorated

5 days/ week= \$242 4 days / week = \$222 3 days / week= \$202 Daily Drop In rate= \$80 Client drop in- \$40

Enrollment Fees:

1. An Enrollment fee of \$100 is due to hold a student's slot and due again each year in October per family, this fee is non-refundable.
2. A two weeks deposit is due to hold a student's slot for any pre-determined amount of time, approved by the Center Director. This deposit may be put towards the student's first two weeks of care. This deposit is non-refundable.
 - o Amendment: Effective 1/1/19 (any students starting after 1/1/19) the two-week deposit will be put towards student's last two weeks of care and is non-refundable. Any student that began care prior to 1/1/19 used their two week deposit for the first two week's of care.
3. In the event a start date must be changed by more than 14 days, 50% of tuition will be due as outlined here. A start date is required after the child is born.

Additional Fees:

1. A charge of \$5 per 10 minutes will be charged in the event an authorized individual does not pick up ill student from care within 1 hour of being informed of illness.
2. An automatic \$25 plus \$15 every additional 10 minutes will be charged for any amount of time in attendance after First Steps has closed in addition to above charges.
3. A \$25 fee will be charged for each NSF check returned to First Steps. After a second NSF check, First Steps has the right to only accept cash.
4. Payments are due in the drop box outside of Director's office by Friday for the week to follow. If they are not received by Monday at drop off a \$20 fee will automatically be added at noon each day until it is received. If payment is not received by Wednesday at drop off your child will not be able to attend First Steps until it received. If this happens a third time the contract will be terminated.
5. First Steps will automatically submit year end tuition statements to each family by the end of each January. First Steps will only send invoices via E-mail upon tuition being late or upon a request.

Alternative Tuition Funding:

1. County Child Care Assistance Program- It is required that First Steps receives confirmation of tuition coverage prior to the start of care to waive the two week's deposit. The yearly enrollment fee may be charged to Child Care Assistance in the total of \$70, the remaining \$30 balance is at the cost of the client. Any balance not covered by Child Care Assistance is at the cost of the client, in full. Outlined below is what Child Care Assistance will cover.
 - a. Infant weekly rate- \$322 if infant attends 6 hours per day 4 days per week
 - i. Infant daily rate - \$87.60 which means our 3 days per week rate would not be covered in total
 - b. Toddler weekly rate- \$270 if toddler attends 6 hours per day 4 days per week
 - i. Toddler daily rate- \$73.20 which means our 3 days per week rate would not be covered in total
 - c. Preschool weekly rate- \$242 if preschooler attends 6 hours per 4 days per week
 - i. Preschool daily rate- \$61.20 which means our 3 days per week rate would not be covered in total
2. Early Learning Scholarship- First Steps is 4-star Parent Aware rated which qualifies your family to receive \$7500 in tuition funds. Be mindful of when your scholarship will diminish, some might consider calculating themselves a weekly 'parent share' to make the funds last all year. Executive Director will inform you if your funds will run low in the following month.
3. Crisis Nursery- First Steps accepts Crisis Nursery reimbursement.
4. Olmsted County- First Steps accepts any and all types of county tuition reimbursement options.

Schedules:

1. Schedule of attendance must be stated on the enrollment form prior to first day of care. A schedule of attendance allows First Steps to staff according to students in attendance. Due to state licensing regulations on ratio of teacher to students, this schedule is of high importance.
2. Drop off is not permitted between the hours of 12:30 and 3:00pm in an effort to make nap time peaceful for other enrolled families. Drop off before 9am is strongly encouraged for most beneficial learning outcomes.
3. First Steps will accept rotating schedules with 2 weeks' notice via E-mail or in writing. In the event a schedule is not received by the Director with 2 weeks' notice, First Steps reserves the right to no longer allow the rotating schedule.
4. Schedule changes must be approved with 2 weeks' notice, First Steps reserves the right to not allow schedule changes in the event the change effects our capacity. **Schedules may not be altered the weeks of holidays or due to illnesses.**

5. Clients may request to add days of attendance at the daily drop in rate. In the event this added day is no longer required, 2 weeks' notice must be given to drop the additional charge.
6. Fluctuating number of days per week, in regard to tuition rates, is not permitted. First Steps signs contracts with clients for 5 days, 4 days or 3 days per week.
7. Any change of hours or scheduled days, either permanent or one time only will require a change of hours form found at the parent communication cubby.
8. First Steps will not allow more than 3 contract schedule changes in regard to days of attendance or number of days per week in one January to December fiscal year.

Holiday, Vacation, Sick Time, Inclement Weather & Discounts:

1. Holidays First Steps is closed: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. First Steps will be paid normal contract rates. First Steps reserves the right to close either the Friday before or the Monday after a holiday in the event the holiday falls on a weekend. Clients will be informed of these dates on monthly calendar or may ask a Director in advance.
2. First Steps offers 1 consecutive week of vacation for each family who has attended care for over 6 months. This means if your child does not attend care for 5 consecutive (Monday-Friday) days First Steps will waive the weekly tuition fee one time per January-December year. The chosen week must be E-mailed to the Director at least 3 weeks prior to use and you must inform the director you want to use the week as your one free week this year. Vacation weeks may not be used for 2-week termination notice or during a week with a holiday.
3. In the event your child is ill and cannot attend care First Steps will be paid normal contract rates. We suggest seeking a backup sick care program on call.
4. First Step's hours will be altered to open at 8am when the Rochester Public Schools close for inclement weather in attempt to keep clients, students and staff safe.
5. First Steps offers a 5% discount on total weekly tuition for families of 2 or more.
6. First Steps students may take up to 90 days of absence and still hold their slot with one of two options. Option one is to pay the non-client drop-in rate and attend for two Director chosen days per week.

Withdrawal Notice:

1. A two-week trial period begins on your child's first day of attendance, this time period is used to make sure First Steps is a good fit with your family. During this two-week trial period, First Steps may terminate the tuition contract without further commitment, although payment is still due. Any time after the two week trial period, if either party wishes to terminate the tuition contract a completed "Withdrawal Form" and payment in full (whether or not your child attends care) is due with two weeks' notice. Payment will continue to be expected until both this form and payment in full has been received. Any payments not received by First Steps will be presented to our lawyer for collection and late fees apply as stated above. If First Step's teachers or children are harmed, threatened or safety becomes a concern in any manner, First Steps has the right to ban the person from the facility, give written explanation and two weeks' notice with the same guide lines as stated above. In the event a Director cannot contact a client and the student does not attend care for 3 consecutive days First Steps considers this withdrawal from the program.

Security-

First Steps offers a safe, secure child care facility to 150 plus children. All doors leading into the facility are locked from the outside to prevent unwelcomed visitors. The front door can be unlocked by two primary caregivers listed on the enrollment form of children enrolled at First Steps with a 4 digit code that changes monthly on the 10th. New codes are always available by viewing the Parent News Board, calendars at each communication cubby and our monthly newsletter. This code must not be shared with friends, relatives or anyone, even in the event you have asked them to pick your child up from care. All persons not listed as #1 or #2 primary caregiver of a child in care must ring the doorbell for assistance. Staff will answer the call promptly and request a photo ID to verify full name and who they intend to pick up. Staff will then ask this person to kindly wait while verifying parent has authorized them for this pick up today. Parents please inform your child's teacher or the Director when alternative pickups are required. Parents must complete an "Authorization to Pick Up" which can be found at parent communication cubbies IF the person is not listed on the child's enrollment form. Thank you for respecting the safety of all of First Step's children.

Photography-

Photographs taken by parents must include ONLY their child. By enrolling your child in First Step's care you agree First Steps staff has the right to photograph your children while in care with First Step's with a camera or Daily Connect. Photographs may be posted around the center or on Daily Connect. It is requested that these photographs are not shared on public media as a courtesy to children who may also be in the photograph. Thank you for respecting the privacy of First Step's children.

Social Media-

First Step's staff are strongly encouraged to refrain from any media connection to clients, this includes but is not limited to being friends on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. This policy is in place to ensure First Steps has record of all communication between staff and clients through Daily Connect messaging. It is also intended to provide First Step's teachers their deserved privacy and off the time clock personal time, free of questions, inquiries, ect. Teachers are available via Daily Connect messaging during their posted working hours. Directors of First Steps are available via E-mail during office and non-office hours.

Privacy-

First Steps staff are strictly prohibited from sharing any personal information about First Step's students, clients or fellow teachers. Personal information includes but is not limited to first name, last name, birthdate, address, phone number, place of employment, financial arrangements, names of children, parents or relatives, information about student's development or behaviors, information about past or present illnesses, taking and posting pictures of students on social media or sending to anyone. If for some reason clients have knowledge of fellow classmate's private information it is strictly prohibited that clients share this information as well. Director's knowledge of such information being shared will be considered grounds for termination of employment or child care contract.

First Steps will protect the privacy of our client's children by not allowing any parent to parent communication to happen through our cubbies. There are personal items and information in cubbies that needs to be disclosed. If you wish to have communication with other families in your child's classroom it needs to be done at pick up or drop off time, passing in the halls or in the classroom or parking lot. Our teachers will not be distributing any personal contact between families in exception to birthday invitations. If you choose to bring birthday invites please only do so if you plan on inviting the entire class.

Grievance Procedure:

First Steps has a grievance procedure in place to ensure that all concerns are appropriately and effectively handled. We take all concerns very seriously, investigate and hold staff members accountable to their actions, statements, and procedures.

Step 1: Is this a concern you cannot or do not feel comfortable speaking with the staff member about? Or is this an ongoing concern that you have spoken with the staff member about and have not seen a suitable solution?

Step 2: Complete a complaint form with a Director.

Step 3: Director completes an investigation, and may question all parties involved and witnesses.

Step 4: Director schedules meeting with client to discuss possible solutions.

Step 5: Director follows up with client discuss whether solution was effective.

First Steps values open communication to provide the best possible quality of care.

Behavior Guidance Policy and Procedure-

All staff will provide a positive model of acceptable behavior, while teaching how to use acceptable alternatives to problem behavior in order to reduce conflict. First Step's behavior guidance is tailored to the developmental level of the children

that our child care center is licensed to serve. Children of all age groups first will be redirected toward constructive activity in order to reduce conflict, while teaching the children how to use acceptable alternatives to problem behavior in order to reduce conflict. If the same behavior incident happens a second time, we will provide immediate and directly related consequences for a child's unacceptable behavior, the child will be put in a separation. If that same incident happens a third time parents are to be notified at pick up time and asked if they would take the time to develop a plan to address the behavior with us. Staff will also start to document the behavior including recording the child's unacceptable behavior and the staff's response to the behavior with an incident report form. Upon 2 incident for a preschooler and 3 incidents for a toddler a Director, is called to observe possible triggers and ensure teachers are using all effective redirection strategies taught by First Steps and Conscious Discipline. Upon 3 Incident reports in 1 day preschool student's parents will be notified and expected to pick up within 1 hour. Upon 5 Incident reports in 1 day toddler students' parents will be notified and expected to pick up within 1 hour. This is to ensure the safety of all students and teachers at First Steps. First Steps will exhaust every possible solution to continuous problem behavior prior to termination. We ask that clients keep in mind First Steps must be an advocate for all students in care and if behavior is continuously distracting or violent we may be forced to discontinue care.

In consideration of a calm and nurturing atmosphere that First Steps desires for all clients, students and teachers students will be sent home after 1 hour of inconsolable crying. All efforts will be exhausted by teachers and directors to sooth and calm student prior to calling parents. In the event you are called, pick up is expected within 1 hour. After 1 hour, emergency contacts will be contacted. Directors, teachers and parents will then schedule a meeting to brainstorm effective soothing techniques and develop a plan to work towards the best situation for all parties.

A child shall only be separated from the group if they are over the age of 16 months and if their behavior is harming themselves, a staff member and/or other children around them. The child will be within the classroom and will only be there until the violent behavior has stopped and only if less intrusive methods have been ineffective. The reason for separation with the child's name, age, time, date, staff person's name, what less intrusive methods that were used and how the behavior can be redirected will be documented, how the child's behavior continued to threaten the wellbeing of the child or other children in care and a copy will be given to the parents and a copy will stay on file. If a child is separated from the group three or more times in one day, the child's parents shall be notified and the parents notification shall be indicated on the daily log, if a child is separated five or more times in one week or eight or more times in two weeks staff will document everything as stated above.

At First Steps we do not accept corporal punishment (rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting or spanking). Subjection of child to emotional stress such as name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about a child or child's family, using language that threatens, humiliates or frightens the child. And withholding food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care will not be tolerated. The children will not be separated from the group expect within rule requirements. The children will not be restrained in any way unless physically harming themselves or others around them, no use of mechanical restraints, such as tying. There will be no punishment for toileting accidents.

During drop off and pick up times when both teachers and parents are around the children, it is expected that the rules of the child care center are to be followed and teachers will enforce them if parents do not.

If parents are ever having discipline problems at home they should feel free to ask the teachers or director for advice and helpful feedback. We are happy to help in every way possible with our customer's parenting experience.

Open Door Policy-

First Steps Child Care Center offers an Open Door Policy. An open door policy allows parents to visit their children in our facilities any time they wish. We do ask parents who plan to visit their children frequently to follow the classroom routine, to avoid disturbing classroom schedules and activities. We also ask that visits are respectful of the other students in care, we suggest short visits (less than 10 minutes) or watching from the hallway. This is ensure that the students are not distracted from their learning activities and classroom rules.

First Steps often has classroom celebrations that you and your child may want to be a part of. As much as First Steps appreciates parent involvement, visitors can be overwhelming to teachers, students and even your own child. During First Step's hours of operation all children present add to our capacity whether or not parents are present. With that said, if you wish to allow your child to participate in celebrations on days not normally scheduled, please see tuition policy for charges that apply. Furthermore, First Steps limits a total of 2 additional adults for a half hour in each classroom. Please speak with your child's Lead teacher about arrangements: First requested, first granted. Our only exception to the rule is when parents are formally invited to our "Family Engagement Hours."

Illness Policy-

First Steps asks that each parent consistently adhere to the guidelines listed below. Please have an alternate child care plan for when your child is ill and unable to attend daycare. Remember that when a child is ill with an infectious disease, they can spread the disease when in contact with others at First Steps. If your child is ill, please call the director to notify her of your child's illness. If your child has been diagnosed with an infectious disease, you must notify First Steps immediately. A notification will be posted on the communication cubbies if your child has been exposed to any illnesses. Children with any of the following symptoms will not be allowed to attend daycare:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Vomiting more than once within 24 hours
- 3 or more episodes of watery diarrhea in 24 hours
- Green or red discharge from the ear
- Frequent yellow/green drainage from the eye or nose
- Any bacterial infection that has not completed 24 hours of antibiotic therapy
- Unexplained lethargy
- Lice, ringworm or scabies that has not been treated
- Any rash that can be disease related or from an unknown source
- Significant respiratory distress
- Not able to participate in regular child care programs comfortably

Please keep in mind, this is a basic list and any other symptoms will be at the discretion of the director and professional health consultant to determine if your child can attend daycare. This is not only to prevent other children becoming sick, but to keep our staff healthy.

We do not require a Doctor's note to administer oral medication, we do require the parent to fill out a permission to administer sheet found on the parent communication cubby. A director will administer the oral medication and it will be logged into Daily Connect. First Steps staff will notify a director of a temperature 100 degrees or over. The director will then take the child's temperature.

Should your child be tested for any infectious disease, they may not return to daycare until they have been cleared they do not have an infectious disease or have had the proper treatment; a doctor's note will be required to return. This doctor's note or doctor's dictation notes on visit must state what the symptoms are caused by. In the case a Doctor's Note is required to return to care, the doctor may not be related to the patient.

If your child develops any symptoms during the day, you will be called and expected to pick up your child within 1 hour. If we leave a message and do not receive a return call within 30 minutes, we will start calling backups. In the event your child is not picked up by an authorized individual within 1 hour, charges apply per our tuition contract. Your child will be separated from the other children, still within sight of staff, until you arrive. If there is a concern for your child's health and we have not heard back from you, First Steps reserves the right to take action with permission given on "consent to emergency treatment" and will call Gold Cross (at the expense of the parent) for assistance and possibly transporting your child to an emergency department, if necessary.

In the event of an emergency, staff will first try all parent telephone numbers provided. If unable to reach parents, we will next contact person listed on enrollment agreement. If unable to reach any parties, we will take action with permission given on "consent to emergency treatment" and will call Gold Cross (at the expense of the parent) for assistance and possibly transporting your child to an emergency department, if necessary.

All emergencies, including minor cuts or bumps will be recorded, kept on file and written documentation will be given to parents on our "accident report".

All Teachers at First Steps are CPR, First Aid, SIDS and shaken baby syndrome trained and regularly review procedures and policies in the event of an emergency.

We encourage families to teach your child how to stop the spread of germs with simple good habits:

- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands often
- Practice healthy habits; eating a healthy diet, plenty of rest and exercise

First Steps requires immunization records prior to child's first day of enrollment and a health care summary within 30 days of enrollment. Immunization records must be updated regularly to attend daycare. When documentation exists that a child is unimmunized on the basis of personal beliefs rather than on a medical condition a program can refuse to enroll the child. For legal information, contact: Child Care Law Center, www.childcarelaw.org, 415.558.8005.

First Steps illness policies are recommended by our facility health consultant and will be strictly followed. First Steps is inspected regularly to meet licensing code to make sure it is a safe, comfortable environment for the children. First aid kits, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are in place in every room and the furnace area and kitchen is off limits and locked when not being used by an employee. Fire, storm and intruder drills are taught and practiced with the children monthly and plans are available upon request. All staff persons are mandated reporter, meaning if we see or suspect abuse or neglect, we must by law report it.

DISEASE	SYMPTOMS	FIRST STEPS POLICY
Bronchitis	Runny nose, fever, cough that starts dry and harsh and becomes loose and productive. May have a sore throat. Cough can last 1-2 weeks.	Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.
Common Cold	Runny nose, sneezing, chills, tiredness, fever, muscle aches, sore throat, and cough which may last 2-7 days.	Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.
Fifth Disease	Rarely any symptoms other than a rash ("slapped cheek") that begins on cheeks; later found on the backs of arms and legs. Rash is very fine, lacy, pink, and tends to come and go in sunlight and heat.	No exclusion necessary unless fever is present.
Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease	Sores occur toward the front of the mouth, on the sides of the tongue, inside the cheeks, and on the gums. May last 7-10 days. In most cases, sores can be found on the palms of the hands, the fingers and soles of feet. A low grade fever may be present.	Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities. Sores in mouth must be gone. No drainage from sores on hands/feet.
Head Lice	Itching of the scalp. Look for: 1) crawling lice in the hair, 2) eggs (nits) glued to hair near the scalp or neck at hairline. 3) scratch marks on the head or back of neck/hairline.	Exclude from center until first treatment is completed, no live lice are seen, and all nits are removed. Communicable until treated. Advise exam of household members for nits and lice.
Impetigo	Blister-like sores that form an oozing, sticky yellow crust; itching.	Exclude from the center until child has been treated with antibiotics for a full 24 hours. Encourage good hand washing. Avoid close contact with other children.
Influenza (Including H1N1)	Sudden onset of fever, headache, muscle pain, generalized discomfort, cough, and sore throat. Usually lasts 3-7 days.	Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.
Norovirus (Stomach Flu)	Watery diarrhea and vomiting, fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and stomach cramps can occur. The illness can be mild to moderately severe with symptoms usually lasting 24 to 48 hours.	Exclude from center until diarrhea and vomiting have completely stopped for 24 hours, temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	First symptoms are similar to common cold: sneezing, low grade fever and cough. Coughing spells can be in uncontrollable bursts and the child	All cases of pertussis must be reported to the MN Department of Health, so it must be reported to the director immediately.

	<p>may have a difficult time taking a breath during spell. Cough may or may not have high-pitched whooping sound. Coughing may cause child to vomit. Between coughing spells, child may seem well.</p>	<p>Children will be excluded from center until test results are confirmed. If positive, must remain out of center until completion of five days of appropriate antibiotic. Cough may continue for several weeks until lungs heal.</p>
<p>Bacterial/Viral Pink Eye OR an Eye Cold</p>	<p>Bacterial: pink or red conjunctiva with pus that causes matting of the eyelids; pain or redness of eyelids.</p> <p>Viral or Eye Cold: consistent drainage from the eye(s) and possible matting of the eyelids.</p>	<p>Bacterial: Exclude from center until student has been on medication for 24 hours and minimal drainage.</p> <p>Viral or Eye Cold: Exclude from center until student has minimal drainage from the eye.</p>
<p>Pneumonia</p>	<p>Runny nose, cough and fever for several days. May have rapid breathing, shortness of breath, and lung congestion.</p>	<p>Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.</p>
<p>Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)</p>	<p>Symptoms can be similar to a mild cold with low-grade or no fever, cough, watery eyes, runny nose, nasal stuffiness, and sneezing. However, the more severe form includes wheezing. Infants infected in the first few weeks of life may only show tiredness, irritability, and loss of appetite and may have episodes where they stop breathing for short time periods (apnea) with few other respiratory signs.</p>	<p>Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.</p>
<p>Ringworm</p>	<p>Body: Ringworm appears as flat, spreading ring-shaped lesions. The edge of the lesion may be dry and scaly or moist and crusty. As the lesion spreads outward, the center often becomes clear.</p> <p>Scalp: Ringworm may be hard to detect in the early stages. It often begins as a small, scaly patch on the scalp. Mild redness and swelling may occur. Infected hairs become brittle and break off easily.</p>	<p>Exclude from center until a full 24 hours after treatment has started.</p> <p>A child with ringworm should not participate in activities that have close contact with other children until 72 hours after treatment has begun.</p>
<p>Roseola</p>	<p>Usually a high fever that appears suddenly and generally lasts 3 to 7 days. As the fever breaks, a rash appears on the trunk and neck and may later spread to the rest of the body. The rash may last from several hours to several days. At this time, the child usually does not feel very sick.</p>	<p>Exclude from center until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and other rash illnesses, especially measles, have been ruled out.</p>

	Infection also occurs without symptoms in many children. Seizures may occur in children with high fevers.	
Rotaviral Infection (Stomach Flu)	Vomiting, fever, and watery diarrhea. Sometimes a cough, runny nose, or ear infection is present. Symptoms may last 4 days or longer.	Exclude from the center until diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours and temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.
Streptococcal Sore Throat/ Scarlet Fever	Sudden onset of fever, sore throat, swollen glands, headache, abdominal pain; nausea and vomiting in severe cases. With scarlet fever, a very fine raised rash is present. A fuzzy, white tongue may occur. The rash appears most often on the neck, chest, in folds of armpit, elbow, groin, and on the inner thigh.	Exclude until throat culture report is received. If positive for strep, exclude from center until a full 24 hours after antibiotic treatment is started and until temp <100.0 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medication and child is well enough to participate in activities.

Resources: MN Department of Health; CDC; Mayo Clinic; Hennepin County
Reviewed and updated: April 2017

Prescription Medicine Policy-

Any medications that need to be administered while children are at daycare must be prescribed by a doctor with clearly labeled instructions and a "Permission to Administer Medication" form must be filled out and signed. We will not allow a fever reducer to be administered during hours of care unless otherwise prescribed. If prescribed the Doctor's note must indicate length of prescription otherwise it will be valid for 7 consecutive days. We, furthermore, advise parents to not administer a fever reducer before care to prevent masking illnesses, in consideration of our other students. Orajel may be administered by a Director with a "Permission to Administer Medication" form completed.

To administer medicine at First Steps we need:

1. Paperwork

Doctor's note stating the illness and what medication is for.
A Doctor's note for pain reliever will only last for seven days
Permission to administer medication is completely filled out and signed
Administered by parent at least once before providers

2. Medication checked when received

Properly labeled with child's name and date
Proper child proof container
Instructions for how to administer are clear
Medicine needs to be stored in a locked cabinet labeled "Medication Station" or in the kitchen refrigerator, if refrigeration is required.

3. How to Administer Medicine

Staff is informed how to use by parent
Hands are washed before and after administering medication
The 5 rights are followed- right child, medication, dose, time, and route
Child is observed for side effects
Daily Connect should be updated each time medicine is administered.

Please note: this policy is subject to change at any time.

Attire Policy-

Winter:

- Toddler classrooms will utilize outside equipment if the "Feels Like" temperature is 15 degrees or higher. Preschool classrooms will utilize outside equipment if the "Feels Like" temperature is 0 degrees or higher.
- Please provide your toddler or preschooler with snow gear: coat, snow pants, snow boots, hat and mittens. If your child does not have these items they must stay in. Please let a Director know if your family is in need of support in funding these required materials. We will be happy to provide resources. Please provide these materials as early as fall to be sure we have them for the first snow fall.
- First Steps teachers will be working with children to learn how to dress themselves, please work on this at home as well. If teachers had to do bathroom breaks, hand-washing and dress all 15 children in a classroom their actual time spent outside would be very, very minimal.
- To assist teachers with putting on any snow gear, all gear will be labeled with first and last name or initials.

Summer:

- First Steps will provide sunscreen if you wish to provide your own it needs to be labeled with first and last name of child and not aerosol
- All classrooms will utilize outdoor equipment if the heat index is 100 degrees or below.
- Please provide closed toed shoes for safety reason such as: to avoid tripping and toes being stepped on.
- At the beginning of the summer please provide a labeled swimsuit and towel for 'Water Wednesdays.' First Steps staff will wash all swimsuits and towels after use.
- To assist teachers with putting on any summer gear, all gear will be labeled with first and last name or initials.
- When wearing skirts/dresses diapers and underwear must be covered by a pair of shorts, or a four snap diaper cover to limit the exposure to bodily fluids if an accident occurs.

Summer time Water Play

- First Steps coordinates outdoor water experiences throughout the summer. Swim suits and towels are required to participate. Swim suits and towels will be washed at First Steps after use unless parents request otherwise. First Steps will not use swimmers because students will not be submerged in water. Water experience will exist with tables, buckets, sprinklers, etc. forms other than wading pools for sanitary purposes.
- Water Play will be cancelled in the event the feels like temperature does not meet 75 degrees or higher by 9am.

Student Accessories and Personal Belongings

Department of Human Services, Licensing Division, requests that First Steps highly encourages the removal of student accessories such as jewelry, scarfs, belts, ect for safety and sanitary purposes. Any accessories MUST be removed for sleeping at all ages. Please be advised that permanent accessories will still need to be removed to use child care services in a licensed program. Furthermore, any lost or broken items are not the responsibility of the program per our requirement they are not bought into the program for any reason other than show and tell days.

Meals and Snacks Policies-

Serving Times: Breakfast- 8:00-8:15 am, A.M Snack 10:00-10:15 am, Lunch – 12:00-12:15 pm, P.M Snack- 3:00-3:15 pm

We keep a strict meal time schedule to ensure state guideline temperatures so if your drop off time is after a certain meal please be sure your child has gotten that meal before coming to daycare. If your child is scheduled to attend before a meal time but arrives over a half an hour late for 1 week straight we will discontinue counting them for the meal. If by chance they do end up showing up on time thereafter they will receive a cold meal option. Please speak with the Director if you would like your child to receive the hot meal option again. This is to prevent waste of goods in turn keeping First Step's tuition costs reasonable. We participate in CACFP food program, which ensures your child is getting a healthy, well balanced meal every day.

Children with dietary restrictions prescribed by a medical care provider will be followed. Staff will keep the diet menu and food allergy information on file and in the kitchen and posted in the classroom. Classrooms will conceal first and last name of student by using a folded piece of paper. We may not allow any child to have a special diet without a diet statement on file that is signed by a medical care provider.

Infants 6 weeks until 16 months will be sent home with a monthly Infancy Schedule to be updated and brought back by parents for any updates/changes to their child's schedule. These can be requested by parents and changed at any time. Young infant diets will be followed as parents instruct, written instructions will be kept on poster provided by center and updated after each feeding as to when the next feeding will be. Older infants who are on solids will be on our solid food feeding schedule and follow our CACFP Infant Meal Pattern requirements.

For formula fed babies we require three bottles be stored at the center, we will label these with the infants first and last name. For breast fed babies we require parents to provide pre-made bottles (labeled with the infants first and last name, date and ounces) exact amount of milk offered at each feeding, with one full serving extra bottle sent daily in case of spillage or in the event of a late pick up etc. Infant cereal may be made with formula, breast milk or water.

Sanitary procedures and practices certified by a health consultant will be posted on preparing, handling, and storage of breast milk and formula.

In event of a special occasion, First Steps will allow a special treat to be brought to the child care facility must be sealed in its original container for staff to serve to the children.

First Steps strives to be a peanut free facility so please understand that we will not serve anything containing peanuts. Furthermore, if your child has eaten something containing peanuts prior to attending care please have your child thoroughly wash their hands before entering the facility for everyone's protection. Foods containing peanuts will be prohibited from entering the building. Thank you for understanding.

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Naps and Rest Policy-

The parent of each child will be informed at the time of enrollment regarding the center's policy on naps and rest. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all children under the age of 5 receive adequate amounts of rest periods to result in a greater learner retention. The nap and rest policy is consistent with the developmental level of the children enrolled in the program. As a courtesy to First Step's currently enrolled students, we do not allow drop offs between the hours of 1230 and 3pm.

Infant: Naptime is determined by each individual infant.

Mobile infants: Two naps AM/PM

Toddler: One afternoon nap after lunch

Preschool: One afternoon nap/rest after lunch

-Infants are not placed in cribs until 8:45am and 12:45pm after 6 months of age.

-Students 6 months and up are not assisted in falling asleep until 8:45am and 12:45pm.

-Naps and rest must be provided in a quiet area that is physically separated from children who are engaged in activity that will disrupt a napping or resting child.

- A child who has completed a nap or rested quietly for 30 minutes will not be required to remain on a cot or mat or in a crib or bed. A child who fell asleep during the required 30 minutes will be woken at 3pm.

-Cribs, cots, beds and mats will be placed so that there are clear isles and unimpeded access for both adults and children on at least one side of each piece of napping and resting equipment.

-Cribs, cots, beds and mats will be placed directly on the floor and must be stacked when not in use.

-Children's head will be uncovered during sleep time.

-All toddlers and preschool children will sleep with footwear on to ensure safe evacuation for emergencies.

-Separate bedding is provided by parents for each child in care.

-Bedding will be washed weekly by the center or sent home to be washed if requested.

-A crib that meets federal safety codes will be provided for each infant the program is licensed to care for.

-The program complies with routine crib inspection requirements.

-Each time an infant is placed in their own crib (which has a firm mattress) they will be placed on their back unless the program has documentation from the infant's physician directing an alternative sleep position for the infant. The physician directive must be on a form approved by the commissioner and must remain on file at the licensed location. An infant who independently rolls onto its stomach after being placed on back may be allowed to remain sleeping on its stomach if the infant is at least six months of age or the license holder has a signed statement from the parent indicting that the infant regularly rolls over at home.

-Crib sheets fit snugly on a crib mattress and overlap that mattress so it cannot be dislodged by pulling on the corner of the sheet. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskin pillow-like stuffed toys or other soft products will not be in a crib with an infant. Nothing should be placed in the crib except a pacifier.

-If an infant falls asleep before being placed in crib, the licensor holder must move the infant to a crib as soon as practicable, and must keep the infant within sight of a staff member until the infant is placed in the crib. The sleeping infants must not be in a position where the airway may be blocked or with anything covering the infant's face.

-Placing a swaddled infant down to sleep in a licensed setting is not recommended for an infant of any age and is prohibited for any infant who has begun to roll over independently. However, with the written consent of a parent or guardian according to this paragraph, a staff member may place the infant who has not yet begun to roll over on its own down to sleep in a one-piece sleeper equipped with an attached system that fastens securely only across the upper torso, with no constriction of the hips or legs, to create a swaddle.

I.D.E.A Policy-

If you think your child needs special education services, you have to follow a legal process to make it happen. This process can be confusing. It can involve several laws. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the most important one to understand.

As the nation's special education law, IDEA provides rights and protections to children with disabilities and to their parents. Learning your rights under IDEA can make it easier for your child to get the help he needs (and is legally entitled to) at school.

The Purpose of IDEA

IDEA was first passed in 1975. (At that time, it was called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act.) The primary purposes of IDEA are:

- **To provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities.** IDEA requires schools to find and evaluate students suspected of having disabilities, at no cost to parents. Once kids are identified as having a disability, schools must provide them with special education and related services (like speech therapy and counseling) to meet their unique needs. The goal is to help students make progress in school. Read more about what is and isn't covered under FAPE.
- **To give parents a voice in their child's education.** Under IDEA, you have a say in the educational decisions the school makes about your child. At every point of the process, the law gives you specific rights and protections. These are called procedural safeguards. For example, one safeguard is that the school must get your consent before providing services to your child.

IDEA covers kids from birth through high school graduation or age 21 (whichever comes first). It provides early intervention services up to age 3, and special education for older kids in public school, including charter schools. (Find out how IDEA affects students in private school.)

Services Under IDEA: Who's Eligible

Not every child with learning and attention issues is eligible for special education under IDEA. To qualify, your child's issues must fall under one of categories that IDEA covers. They are:

- Autism
- Deaf-blindness
- Deafness
- Emotional disturbance
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Visual impairment, including blindness
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment (including ADHD)
- Specific learning disability (including dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia, and other learning issues)
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury