

STEPPING STONES CHILDREN'S CENTER

Parent Handbook 2022-2023

Welcome to our Center. Parents are an integral part of a successful early childhood program. Through the involvement of parents, we are better able to meet the developmental and personal needs of the children. As early childhood professionals, we can serve as a valuable resource for parents and their children concerning most areas of child development. Therefore, we like to think that families and early childhood programs can and should work together to provide an environment that facilitates the growth of a child into a physically and emotionally healthy individual.

This handbook has been developed to help facilitate the relationship between teachers and parents by providing them with specific information about our center; it includes descriptions of our policies and procedures, program's philosophy, role of the staff, goals for the children, and our expectations from parents. In addition, we have included a schedule of our program day and examples of our curricular activities.

It is hoped that this booklet will explain and define the activities and procedures that you, as parents may observe at our Center. We hope you will find this booklet beneficial and informative. Our goal is to make you more familiar with the program and more comfortable in our center.

I. Background Information

1. Stepping Stones Children's Center Inc. (hereafter referred to as Stepping Stones) is licensed by the State of Vermont Agency of Human Services Child Care Services Division. We are authorized to care for twenty-four children. Our license is posted by the front entrance.
2. Copies of the Vermont Childcare Licensing Regulations are available at the center and online
3. Stepping Stones accepts children from 24-months to six years of age.

4. The center is open from 8:30 am - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
5. We are in an Early Development and Learning Partnership with several local school districts (Act 166). This collaboration helps ensure that children have access to a high quality, developmentally-appropriate preschool experience and a successful transition to kindergarten. We will ask your support in sharing information about your child (names, addresses, developmental assessments (required by Act 166) and your contact information) with these school districts. These important relationships between public school and early childhood programs improve quality in both preschool and kindergarten for all children.
6. We do not discriminate against race, creed, religion, and/or gender. This applies to hiring our staff as well as families that we serve.

Stepping Stones promises to follow the rules and laws that have been written by the State of Vermont Department of Human Services. We feel that these rules have been written to ensure that children are cared for in a safe environment. These rules ask very little of the early childhood program and we go far beyond these standards to supply you and your child with quality care. We hope that you will bring to our attention any questions or concerns you have regarding the care of your child.

II. Philosophy of the Program

The philosophy of an early childhood center largely influences the types of activities, the curriculum, and the role of the adults at the center. Therefore, it is imperative that parents become familiar with the philosophy behind the center in order to understand the focus of the program.

Our program focuses on the development of the whole child. What we mean by this is that we look at the cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and creative needs of the children. In the cognitive realm we believe that children progress from one stage of development to another (often with stages overlapping); they need time to feel confident and competent in one stage

before they move on to another. Every child develops at his/her own pace. Children are not rushed or hurried. To support and encourage this we work to provide the children with challenges they can master as they move from stage to stage. In the physical realm we also work on establishing challenges while giving children the time they need to practice a skill over and over so they have the confidence to take new risks. Supporting children's emotional and social development encompasses a large portion of our work. It is our belief that if you can teach children how to get along with each other, then you can teach them anything. The reverse of this statement is also true. Caring, respect, and sensitivity for oneself and others is modeled and nurtured. We believe that children are social learners connected to each other, their families, and their teachers. Individual differences are discussed and celebrated. Families and teachers are invited to share their home cultures with the program and we welcome home contributions to menu planning, holiday celebrations, book/ music selections, and anything else appropriate to share with children. Children are encouraged to use and share their discoveries to cement their learning and further the learning of their peers. In the development of the child's creative use of materials in unusual ways, and divergent thinking skills are fostered by encouraging children to express themselves in at least "100 Languages," i.e., dance, painting, drawing, clay, dramatic play, conversations.

Our philosophy related to curriculum is multi-faceted. It is our belief that children learn best through hands on experiences and play. We also believe the children need to have experience in making choices and self-selecting materials with a curriculum/daily schedule supporting these two ideals. Children are encouraged to follow their interests and those are an important focus of our program. Our learning and study about the Reggio Emilia schools in Italy shape some of our ideas in this area. Our curriculum is based on the interests of the children. Rather than the teacher looking out the window saying "The leaves are changing colors let's do fall." The teacher looks at the interests of the children. For example, after observing a child comparing colored leaves in the backyard, the teacher might offer a painting

activity supplied with autumn colors, or ask the children to assist in the making of these colors. This change of focus has brought us in wonderful and unexpected directions. There have been projects about rainbows, mazes, and Little Red Riding Hood. There have been studies of seeds, families, and the potty! The learning of the children is much more meaningful when it comes from them where teachers and children become partners in learning through exploration together. From focusing on the rhythms of the children we have also learned to slow down our pace. We take time to let their interests evolve. We allow the projects to emerge and last for a natural lifetime- sometimes projects go on for months. A study might last a couple of days or ten minutes. Our work in small groups has deepened and enriched the children's experiences.

Lastly, we feel that in order for children to grow they need a setting that is rich, inviting, comfortable, and safe. We look for materials that are aesthetically pleasing and stimulating. We add to the dynamic aspect of our environment by rearranging the space every so often incorporating the children's ideas or the current project. We create indoor spaces that encourage small groups of children to play together and use the outdoors as an extended classroom.

Through our bi-weekly updates, student journals/memory books, conferences, and parent meetings/Zoom calls, we maintain an ongoing dialogue with parents. After all, it is you who is your child's first and most important teacher!

III. Discipline

We encourage children develop self-control and to be self-directed. In order to do this they need the opportunity to build self-esteem, develop a positive self-image, make good choices and develop pro-social behaviors. We accomplish this through close supervision and gentle guidance where children are taught to identify and express their feelings. Teachers use techniques like re-involvement, logical-consequences, redirection, positive reinforcement, meaningful praise, and taking a break. Time-out is avoided as are any other practices that

shame, harm, or humiliate or coerce a child will not be used. Rules are few, simple and stated in a positive manner: "We keep ourselves and our friends safe. People are for gentle touches." Through these disciplinary procedures designed help to encourage independence and self-control while promoting the development of a child's positive self-image. We do not condone violence of any kind towards any human, least of all children.

IV. Goals for Children

Based on our philosophy, we believe that children develop naturally. They cannot be hurried from one stage to the next, but need time to progress at their own pace. However, we feel that our program can aid children by providing an environment that will enhance, encourage, and nurture their development. This can be accomplished by identifying a child's needs and matching these needs to materials and experiences that will stimulate their growth. With this in mind we have developed the following goals for the children at our center.

1. Children are cared for in a safe nurturing environment.
2. The center provides children with an enriched environment that meets the physical, social and emotional needs of each child. It will provide an appropriately stimulating environment that will further enhance children's social, cognitive, and creative development.
3. Children will be exposed to a wide variety of activities that will facilitate the construction of knowledge. Open-ended materials will be provided, whenever possible to encourage continued growth in all areas of development.
4. Children are encouraged to act independently in their explorations of materials and performance of activities, but gentle guidance is provided to keep children safe and to facilitate essential successes in new adventures.
5. Tasks and activities that are developmentally appropriate will be provided based on the assessment of the needs and abilities of the children.

6. Children will be exposed to a language and print-rich environment to facilitate their language and literacy development.
7. Children are presented with challenging situations that encourage problem solving, but minimize frustration.

V. Role of the Teacher

Teachers at Stepping Stones are professionals who assume responsibility for establishing an educational program that meets the developmental and personal needs of a child. For these reasons, we have established some guidelines that we feel define the role of the Teacher.

1. Teachers provide a safe environment where children can freely explore their surroundings without fear of harm, and in which children are supervised at all times.
2. Teachers are knowledgeable about child growth and development and use this knowledge to further and facilitate children's learning.
3. Teachers provide a stable environment that maintains necessary routines but allows for flexibility to most appropriately meet the needs of each child.
4. Teachers are facilitators of communication between parents and the center working with parents provides an environment that is most beneficial to the child.
5. Teachers involve parents in planning a program for their child. Teachers arrange for parent conferences at least twice a year, more often if necessary.
6. Teachers are child advocates by looking out for the child's best interest in the center, the family, and the community. If concerns arise they will be brought to the attention of the director.
7. Teachers maintain confidentiality about each child and his or her family.
8. Teachers act as a resource person for families and their children. They bring information about child development and about other resources available in the community to parents.
9. Teachers organize the setting to encourage open movement and involvement in activities.

10. Teachers are responsible for a group of “Journal” children assigned to them about whom they document the child’s social, emotional, physical, language, and cognitive development.

These records keep parents informed about their child’s activities and interactions.

Information is gathered on an ongoing basis using observation, work samples, photographs, documentation, child webs, the child’s journal, conversations with teachers and parents. Effort is made to ensure that the same teacher stays with the same children for as long as possible, with preference given to staying that child’s journal teacher for the entire time (s)he attends.

Our formal assessment process would be the tool offered through Teaching Strategies Gold also required by the Vermont Agency of Education or the Ages and Stages Questionnaire from the Vermont Department of Health. These assessments are used to help drive curriculum, improve program quality and determine how a child’s needs will be best served. They also serve as the foundation for the parent/teacher conferences.

Occasionally children need support from an outside source to work through developmental or behavioral issues. When teachers and parents decide together that an objective third party or a norm-referenced or standardized test may be needed to determine if the child is eligible for special services, we reach out to our Early Essential Education program. In Chittenden County, birth to three-year olds are covered by Children’s Integrated Services and three-five-year olds are under the individual school district.

11. Teachers are responsible for attending at least 15 hours of in-service training and other conferences to keep them current in the field.

12. Teachers strive to understand a parent’s perspective on sensitive issues and provide support to parents during sometimes emotionally charged situations.

13. Most importantly teachers immediately see to the child’s physical and emotional needs for food, clothing, cleanliness, safety, security, and nurturance. Above all, we want parents to feel they have selected a center that they can trust.

VI. The Daily Program

As previously mentioned, our schedule is designed to support the emergent learning philosophy of the school and the rhythms of the children. **Children Make Choices** is the theme of our work. Though it can sometimes look like barely controlled chaos from a parent perspective, this freedom of choice allows children to practice their decision-making skills and have time for extended creative play. A child is free to choose from a wide variety of games, toys, puzzles, interest areas, or gross motor activities. The curriculum for our early childhood program is based on providing children with a large variety of activities and experiences to foster growth and learning. The following is a listing of opportunities children are free to engage in around the center and how they relate to the developing child's growth needs.

1. Manipulatives: These include puzzles, small building blocks, small vehicles, pegboard games, stringing beads, and so forth. These activities encourage the child's development of problem-solving techniques and fine motor skills along with the knowledge about how objects relate to each other.
2. Water/Texture Table: This allows children to experience a large variety of textures and tactile sensations. Children experiment with water, dirt, beans, rice, shaving cream, etc. Objects such as cylinders, measuring cups, bowls, and funnels are placed at the tables to enable children to experiment with pouring, scooping, and the properties of each of the materials. This encourages fine motor skills, and knowledge about various textures and materials and the physical properties and characteristics of each material. With the advent of COVID-19, these materials are discarded after use or kept in individual, labeled bags that are only utilized by the respective child.
3. Sandbox: In this interest area children fill, spill, and dig. The size of our sandbox lends itself well to small groups of children working together on projects like building a road, filling large tubs or buckets, or using cardboard tubes to pour sand through. In addition to

cooperative play, and developing hand eye coordination, children explore cause-and-effect relationships here.

4. Book Area: This area is usually established in a quiet area or space, but books are such an important part of our curriculum and language facilitator, don't be surprised to see them everywhere. A wide, ever -changing variety of books is available every day, though our schedule does not have a planned story time books are read to children many times throughout the day. The cozy feeling of sharing a book with a child or group of children is a wonderful way to introduce children to the joy that can be found through reading.

5. Playdough, Silly Putty, or Clay. These materials are available for the children to roll, squeeze, pat pound, and mold. Playdough encourages fine motor strength and manipulation and increased knowledge about another type of texture and material. This is another language development area where dialogue describes actions, textures and characteristics.

6. Gross Motor/Creative Movement. Since children are still practicing many newfound physical skills, time for large motor activity is an essential part of the program. Children climb, jump, crawl, run, walk, hop, and slide, as they master gross motor skills.

7. Writing Area. A variety of paper and writing implements is always available. Through the use of these materials children develop the fine motor skills necessary for the eventual development of writing skills. Open-ended activities encourage creativity as children use their writing as a means of self-expression thus promoting language and literacy development.

8. Dramatic Play. This interest area is likely to be whatever the children may envision or imagine, but the set up to "play house" is a time-tested favorite. The children imitate activities such as cooking, talking on the telephone and caring for "babies" using familiar household items. The dramatic play space is a place where children can practice a variety of social roles and characters as they develop emotional-social competence. In what other place could one be the "baby" who needs someone to feed them a "bottle" one minute and the ferocious dog who lives next door, but comes in and eats up all the food in the next?

9. Teacher Guided Activities. These include activities that are facilitated or directed by the teacher. Teacher-guided activities may be centered on an interest of the children or designed to further the children's exploration of a current project or study. Though these activities have more structure, they can still be open-ended and process oriented. Art experiences would be one example of this kind of activity. These may include painting, using various materials on various textures, gluing, or collage, sculpture with styrofoam or cardboard, drawing with pens crayons, or colored pencils on various materials. Children of this age are much more interested in the process of creation than they are in the actual product that they produce. It is not unusual for children to go for weeks at a time without bringing something home since some activities end up without a product to bring home. Our Thursday Bread is a good example of this; even though we make and bake bread every Thursday any resulting product is inevitably eaten! Children can get so absorbed in the process of their art that their creation becomes transformed into the process itself. When children are learning about watercolor paints they always start by using lots and lots of water and very little paint. The resulting painting is often a washed-out monotone shade of gray or brown that the child feels no connection for once it's dry, or sometimes there is so much water that the paper gets holes painted in it until it disintegrates into a pile of sludge.

In terms of a schedule, a typical day for us may look something like this:

8:30 – 10:00 Children arrive

8:30 - 10:00 Children snack as they are hungry

8:30 – 11:30 Children engage in play and project work with teachers throughout the morning, for example bread making, science lab, sewing, yoga/show, arts, purposeful work (helping in the kitchen or taking care of our pets) and block building, outdoor play with loose parts, gardening and/or neighborhood walk.

12:15 Lunch and journal work

1:00 - 1:30 Quiet reading time for all

1:30 - 3:00 Rest-time as needed

3:00 – 4:30 Stories, inside and outside play, dance, constructive play (repeat of morning)

4:30 – Pick Up at Playground gate

Routines and Rituals:

As you can see our days are busy and full, yet the schedule flows with the needs of the children rather than being ruled by the clock. All of our time frames are flexible except lunch and resting time. Though our day may seem to lack the structure of a typical preschool, we feel confident the children are being provided with all of the same rich experiences and more. By giving up the constraints of the clock the children have ample opportunity to deeply immerse themselves in their work without being constantly moved from one activity to another. Though there is not a pre-set time for various activities there are certain routines and rituals that guide us.

Outdoor Play and Walking Trips

Outdoor play allows children more opportunities for freedom of choice. Children can choose from a wide variety of activities such as the playhouse, sandbox, ride on toys, balls, etc. The warm weather in Vermont is just in too short abundance to miss even a minute of it and provides us with the opportunity to bring many other activities, such as art or the water table, outdoors. Outdoor play happens on a daily basis even in the winter months with activities enabling children to further develop their gross motor skills and give them the benefit of a change of scenery and fresh air throughout the day.

Walking Trips are the main way we explore our neighborhood. It is only on rare occasions that children are driven in a motor vehicle while in our care. On these occasions parents are notified in advance and any transportation would meet all safety requirements. Our close proximity to area parks and the make walking field trips to these places a regular event.

On occasion we also walk to the library, but as this is a long walk, we usually take the city bus back.

Nap/Resting Time

Resting is an essential part of our day. Children need an opportunity to rest after a busy morning in order to be refreshed for the afternoon activities. Children are asked to lie down quietly while soft music plays and teachers rub backs to encourage children to sleep. Older children who do not nap read quietly as the younger children are soothed to sleep. Elders are given materials and activities to work with during resting time that would not be developmentally appropriate for the napping group (small beading etc.).

Mealtimes

Hot lunch is provided daily as well as a substantial breakfast-type morning snack and a more traditional afternoon snack. Our menu is available on the kitchen refrigerator and is a blend of simple, mostly vegetarian meals and ethnic specialties. Lunch usually consists of milk, a non-meat protein such as eggs, cheese, or beans; a fresh fruit and/or vegetable such as peas, cucumbers, or bell peppers, and a starch such as bread, rice, or pasta. Afternoon snack consists of two food groups, such as rice cakes and hummus served with water.

Lunch and snacks are served in the safest way and outside whenever possible. Independence and self-help skills are developed as children master mealtime tasks such as spreading their own bagel with sun butter or jam. Often younger children have not developed these skills, and will be guided by an older, more competent peer. Snacks are available for a long period of time so small groups of children can come and go from the table as they wish when they are ready for a break from their morning or afternoon play. Lunch is also served family style (once COVID protocols are lifted), but children and teachers are all seated at

the same time. Mealtimes tend to be very social and we practice using cloth napkins and positive manners (please, thank you).

Arrival and Departure Times

This is a good time for exchanges of information between the teachers and parents concerning the child's experiences at home and daily activities at the center. Children are helped with the process of the transition from home to school and given as much support as needed. We ask that children be picked up promptly, and a fee will be assessed if parents are late to pick up.

VII. Health Guidelines

Your child may not attend if they are sick. Please follow the Vermont Department of Health COVID protocols (<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-colleges-child-care-programs>) and those established by Child Care Licensing Regulations or download the State Licensing Regulations (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs/childcare>).

There are a few illness/health conditions where our policy is a little stricter than the State Regulations.

A child or staff member diagnosed as having the following conditions shall be excluded until indicated below:

Lice: May return after appropriate treatment is completed, and child is nit free.

A child or staff member who has the following symptoms shall be excluded from the child care setting until the symptoms disappear or until otherwise indicated by a medical professional:

Diarrhea: 1 loose stool beyond what the child normally has in 24 hours or if bowel movement is extremely loose and causes extensive clean up.

Vomiting: 1 or more episodes in the previous 24 hours.

Fever; Greater than 100 degrees F. in ear or auxiliary (arm pit).

Purulent conjunctivitis (pink eye).

Parents will be called and asked to pick up a sick child, and must do so promptly. A reasonable amount of time (defined as within one hour). Any child sent home with a fever may not return to the center until they have been both fever and medication free for 24 hours and tested for COVID if appropriate. All medication sent in with children for staff to administer must be in its original labeled container and placed in the basket on the shelf labeled medicine on the shelf behind the locked attic door or in the locked box in the refrigerator. If you tell your pharmacist that your child attends child care (s)he will split the prescription into two labeled containers, this enables you to leave one at the center and leave one at home. Parents must also sign and date the medication form on and indicate proper dosage information in order for staff to administer medication.

Children who are not well enough to keep up with the regular program are not well enough to be at the center (“Johnny is not well enough to go outside”.)

When your child is enrolled, one of the required forms is an immunization schedule that will need to be filled out and signed by someone in your pediatrician’s office. Stepping Stones does accept children who are not immunized, in this event the paperwork is accompanied by a signed statement. This indicates that you have discussed this with your pediatrician and made an informed choice not to immunize your child, and that you are aware that your child will be around children who are or will be immunized and may expose your child to the illnesses for which they are being immunized. If a vaccine-preventable illness presents in our Center, any child who is NOT vaccinated against this disease shall be immediately excluded until this illness has resolved.

VIII. Emergency Plans

As we are not licensed to care for sick children, we ask that you have an emergency backup plan for care if you need to work when your child is too ill to attend.

If a child were to become severely injured at the center emergency services (911) would be called and the child would be accompanied by the teacher to the UVM Medical Center. Parents would be notified by phone immediately. In the event that your child becomes ill at the center and we request that you pick up your child, plan to pick your sick child up within a one-hour time frame. An emergency contact must be listed who can pick up your child within that hour if you are unable to do so - this means that your emergency contact must be local.

In the event of a center emergency children will be evacuated to the back yard or to the parking lot across the street. Evacuation procedures and fire drills are practiced monthly. In the event that we were unable to return to the center within a few minutes' children would be evacuated to Dealer.com. Parents would be notified by phone or through BrightWheel immediately.

Our center follows the Burlington School District guidelines for snow days, if Burlington Schools are closed, we will be closed. Due to virtual instruction, BSD may not call for school closings and you will be notified by e-mail/BrightWheel from the director by 7:00 a.m. if Stepping Stones will be closed.

The center is supplied with the requisite first-aid kit. All regular staff members are certified in emergency pediatric first-aid treatment, cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques for infants and children, and emergency management of choking.

IX. Celebrations

We value a childhood experience that is rich in traditions and rituals. We celebrate birthdays by creating a friend-decorated birthday t-shirt for the child. During lunch we ask the

child if they would like to be sung to and if they would like to have their new age clapped out. In this way the child feels celebrated without the addition of sugary snacks.

Holidays are celebrated according to our population of families. We want to enrich our own celebrations with any family traditions of your own that you feel are appropriate and that you want to share. Usually we tie in the November/December Holidays with the themes of love and light. The spring holidays are connected with the theme of re-birth and renewal.

One of our favorite family holiday celebrations is in honor of Thanksgiving. We read the story Stone Soup and talk about the idea of cooperation and what can happen when we all work together to get something done. Children and families are asked to bring in one item to contribute to making Stone Soup. The children make the soup and by lunchtime, after it has simmered all morning long filling the center with its wonderful aroma, we invite families for lunch to help us eat it up! This is a wonderful communal time where we are often lucky enough to have grandparents as well as parents in attendance.

X. Parent Communication and Participation

We have both formal and informal levels of ongoing communication. Our most frequent and common communication happens daily during drop off and pick up time. In the morning when we hope you will share with us any information from home that you feel might help us better meet the needs of your child. For example: "We had dinner at Grandmas last night and got home a little later than we planned so Suzie might be a little tired today." At the end of the day we will attempt to connect with you and let you know how your child's day was. For example: "Mrs. Smith, Jimmy really enjoyed working in the block area today. He and several children worked cooperatively to build a rocket ship. They used great problem-solving skills when they ran out of the block shape they needed." Daily postings on Bright Wheel will provide immediate communication and photographic depiction of our busy days at Steppers.

We have the best intentions to make this daily check-in at the end of the day a priority, yet sometimes it is not as effective as we wish. In the event that several parents arrive to pick up their child at the same time, or a parent comes when a teacher is right in the middle of a project engaged with children it may not be possible to get the kind of in-depth feedback you would like, or to have a discussion with a teacher about another issue related to your child that you wish to discuss. This was one of the factors that prompted us to start utilizing journals/memory books as another more formal way to communicate with you some of the important interests and developmental milestones we observe. Teachers make weekly entries and we invite and encourage you to do the same. This can provide us with an ongoing connection between home and school, though phone calls during the day are always welcome. Conferences will be scheduled twice a year, or more often if you wish. Parent attendance is encouraged for a variety of social events during the course of the year and we will make every effort to maintain social distancing.

Community Meetings have provided us with a way for parents and teachers to communicate ideas with each other. The first one of the school years usually highlights our curriculum and introduces new parents to parents whose children have been attending for longer, while others can have a variety of topics.

It is in all of our best interests for the lines of communication to be open at all times. If you have questions or concerns, it is expected you will speak directly with one of the teachers and/or the director. If after speaking to the director you feel your concern has not been handled in an appropriate manner and your concern is in violation of the state licensing regulations you may call the Child Care Concern Line at 1-800-540-7942.

Parents and family members (anyone who is an important or integral part of your child's life) are encouraged to be actively involved and are always welcome to join in our program at the center. All parents are encouraged to share and participate at the level they feel comfortable. We are aware of how busy your lives are, but feel strongly that your participation helps to

validate your child's experiences here. Parents who visit the program sometimes read a story, play a game or musical instrument, have lunch, or just observe and enjoy your child. All parents are encouraged to share personal interests, including hobbies, talents, cultural backgrounds, favorite recipes, etc. Parents can volunteer in the classroom, repair equipment, and do gardening, etc.

If parents are unable to participate on site they may choose to help by fundraising or collecting recyclable materials for completing a project, etc. If the center and parents are able to work together to provide a setting that best meets the child's growth needs, the child will surely benefit. Parents and family members should feel free to come spend time with their child at any time.

Additional Information

- Stepping Stones closes for various holidays and in-service/conference days throughout the year. The calendar is prepared and distributed via email in advance.

- Toys from home should be left with whomever drops off at the front door. We recognize that children sometimes need a transition tool but please be confident that they become engaged in our activities more quickly when they focus on the curriculum and not the whereabouts of a home toy. Candy and gum are not permitted in the program.

- Children are not allowed to touch the outside doors (or the door to the hall) and may not leave the building without their parent/guardian or teacher. This also applies to older siblings who may be involved in picking up a child. Children may only be picked up by adults 18 and older.

- Everyone who works at Stepping Stones is a Mandated Reporter. This means that we are under legal obligation to report any signs or suspicions of child abuse or neglect. We also must report unsafe or improper car seat use. If a staff member is accused of abuse or neglect, it will be reported to the authorities.

- Parents must fill out and complete all admission paperwork prior to admission and they are responsible for informing the Center of changes in phone numbers, addresses, information regarding emergency contacts, or allergies.

- Orientation of new children: If a family's schedule permits, we ask that arrangements be made to allow children a gradual adjustment, having your child attend with you at first, and then progressing to a full drop-off.

- If a child is to be picked up by a person other than the people listed on the release form, a parent must tell the teacher in advance of the pick-up and the adult picking up the child must provide photo identification. The child will not be released from the Center unless these steps have been taken. Children will also not be released to any adult who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- Parking in this neighborhood is at a premium. Please park in the driveway with the dumpster or on the street.

- Parents of children in diapers provide diapers, wipes, disposal bags and **check supply weekly**.

- Have 2 extra changes of seasonally- appropriate clothes available for your child in the event that they become wet or soiled. Child's play is messy work. Do not send your child to school in special clothes. The Center is not responsible for clothing that has been stained by activities or the normal course of play.

- If for any reason you are unhappy with our program, discussion with the teachers and/ or director is required at an appropriate time. If you should decide to terminate your child's placement with us before the end of the contract, you will be responsible for the cost of your child's tuition until the empty spot is filled or the remainder of the year (depending on which comes first) unless otherwise determined by the director.

- Stepping Stones does not discriminate against race, creed, religion, and/or gender. This applies to students, families, and teachers. In order to broaden and enrich your child's life the center will attempt to enroll children from diverse backgrounds as well as those who are at different developmental stages in their life.
- Building security and access: Parents do have access to the Center after operating hours. If there is an emergency and you need access, please call the director.
- Staff have been trained by Vt. Child Health Improvement Program at UVMMC on the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (SE) assessment tools, and have been trained in using the Teaching Strategies Gold assessment tool required by the VT Agency of Education. We use TSG twice per year and share our assessments with parents in the parent/teacher conferences, and we use the ASQ once per year during the child's birthday month. We will share the results of the ASQ upon request or if there is a specific concern, as well as at the conference. We typically only score the ASQ-SE if there is a specific social/emotional concern for the child. You, as the expert on your child, are encouraged to bring up any concerns you may have regarding your child's development, and teachers can discuss these worries with you and incorporate further assessment or call in specialists if needed. You may bring up questions or concerns at any time, not just the two times per year that we conduct conferences. Written summaries are provided at conferences and any time a teacher runs an ASQ.

This agreement may be changed at any time by Stepping Stones Children's Center Inc. to comply with governmental regulations or for any other reason.

Please be prepared to have fun and enjoy our Center, we want your experiences and those of your child to be happy ones!