



Little Steps

EARLY LEARNING CENTER



Parent Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	3
Philosophy	4
Infant Program	5
Toddler Program.....	6
Preschool Program	7
What to Bring	8
Toilet Training & Biting.....	8
Laundry.....	9
Transitions.....	9
Confidentiality and Client Records / Files.....	9
Staff Qualifications.....	9
Volunteers.....	10
Services to Children with Special Needs.....	10
Food Program Information.....	10
Food Allergies and Restrictions.....	10
Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect.....	10
Social Media and Photography.....	11
Parking.....	11
Building Access.....	11
Daily Arrivals and Departures.....	11
Authorization for Pick-up.....	12
Late Pick-up Fees.....	12
Emergency Closings.....	13
Illness and Medication Policy.....	13
Administering Medication.....	14
Injuries	15
Outdoor Play.....	15
No Smoking.....	15
Appropriate Dress for Children.....	15
Nap / Rest / Relaxation.....	16
Behavior Management.....	16
Compliments, Suggestions, Concerns.....	17
Scheduled Closings.....	17
Tuition Prices & Policies.....	18
Parent Handbook Signature Page.....	20



Dear Families:

Welcome to Little Steps Early Learning Center!

Thank you for choosing to enroll your child in our program.

Our staff looks forward to getting to know you and your child and to working together to foster your child's development in a safe, nurturing, learning environment.

Please review this handbook to familiarize yourself with our philosophy, policies and programs. While we hope that this is a clearly written document, we encourage you to ask questions if any arise.

Little Steps has an open door policy for the parents of enrolled children. Feel free to stop by any time.

We encourage family participation and feedback and strive to maintain open lines of communication with all families.

We look forward to providing quality care and education for your child.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Collins
Center Director



Our Philosophy

We value the individual child within the context of the group. Our programs are designed to encompass different learning styles and abilities. We provide a variety of developmentally appropriate learning opportunities for your child based on the belief that children learn best through play. The planned curriculum allows opportunity for activities and discoveries based upon children's interests.

Non - Discrimination Statement

At Little Steps Early Learning Center we appreciate that families are unique and embrace diversity. We prohibit any type of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, or disability.

Infant Program



Blueberries

This room includes children ages 6 weeks to 19 months. Each infant is lovingly cared for by their primary caregiver according to their individual schedule.

What is a Primary Caregiver?

A primary caregiver is the teacher assigned to respond to your child's individual needs throughout the day. This individual is responsible for your child's diapering and feeding. They will also fill out your "Infant Info" sheets which are sent home each night to tell you about your child's day. A roster listing your primary caregiver will be displayed in the classroom.

The center provides a safe environment where infants can explore and grow under nurturing guidance from their classroom teachers. Activities include gross motor, social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth and development. We also explore art, sensory, music and other special activities that are developmentally appropriate. Breakfast, lunch and two snacks will be provided to those infants for whom it is appropriate. Appropriateness will be determined by parents and teachers together.

For the health and safety of your baby we may not introduce new foods to your child at the Center. When your baby is ready for cereal or table foods you must first introduce them at home and sign off that you have done so. Your infant's teachers will work with you to determine when it is a good time to introduce new foods as well as when it is appropriate to transition to a sippy cup.

The center is supportive of families who wish to provide breast milk and/or visit the center for nursing.

Breast Milk/Prepared Formula

- Expressed breast milk and prepared formula shall be:
 - Stored in covered containers, labeled with the child's name and dated;
 - Used immediately or stored in the refrigerator no longer than 48 hours;
 - Discarded if not fed to an infant and left un-refrigerated for an hour or more; and
 - Discarded after each feeding, if there is any leftover in the bottle.

- Frozen expressed breast milk shall be dated and stored in a freezer at 0 degrees Fahrenheit and discarded after 3 months.

Toddler Program



Mangos

This Classroom serves children from 19 months to 2.5 - 3 years.

The center provides a safe environment where toddlers are encouraged to explore and grow under nurturing guidance from their classroom teachers.

Toddler teachers plan developmentally appropriate play activities that focus on fine and gross motor, social, emotional and cognitive growth and development.

Toddlers are exposed to different art mediums, differing styles of music and multiple sensory materials. We provide breakfast, lunch and snack to all toddlers. The children also have the opportunity to use the outdoor playground twice every day (weather permitting).

Preschool Program



Papayas

This classroom serves children from 2.5/3 to five years of age, or until they are Kindergarten eligible.

The days are a bit more structured and include more teacher directed activities.

What to Bring (All Classrooms)

- At least one complete extra change of clothing
- Appropriate outerwear for outdoor play (snow gear for winter ; hats, gloves, snow pants and boots) and water wear for summer.
- Please supply your child with sneakers for outdoor play if they choose to wear sandals in the summer.
- A sheet and blanket for nap time. We recommend a small fitted sheet to cover the mat and a small blanket to cover your child. (Blankets for toddlers and preschoolers only)

Please label all items with your child's name.

Toys from home can be very difficult to share and can lead to conflicts between children. We request that children only bring a comfort toy they may use for nap.

The center provides a number of age appropriate and stimulating toys and activities for your child.

Parents are responsible for providing diapers, wipes and diaper cream (if needed).

In addition, parents of infants are responsible for bringing:

- Formula / Breast Milk
- Bottles for feeding

Biting

Biting and being bitten can be a difficult and stressful experience for all involved. We make every attempt to prevent biting by offering multiples of the same toy, offering engaging activities and working to develop children's communication skills.

Toilet Training

Toilet training is a unique experience for every child. Teachers will work with you to determine an appropriate individual plan for your child.

Laundry

At Little Steps, we will wash one sheet and one blanket each week. We use detergent gentle enough for babies. If you prefer to launder your own, please inform your child's teacher and remember to return the bedding the following week. Soiled clothing will be bagged and sent home.

Transitions

At Little Steps Early Learning Center there is a suggested age guideline for transitioning from one room to the next. We also take into consideration your child's development. We always want to provide your child with developmentally appropriate opportunities and activities, and each classroom will provide different materials geared towards the child's age. Your child's teacher will keep you informed about your child's development and readiness and work with you to determine when to move them to the next classroom. Children who are currently enrolled will have first priority for placement in another classroom.

Confidentiality & Client Records / Files

At Little Steps Early Learning Center we respect the privacy of our families. Protecting your privacy includes but is not limited to maintaining the confidentiality of all information we learn about children and their family members and friends in the course of providing our services. All of our records are legally protected, confidential records and are treated as such. Children's records are kept on file in the Director's office.

Staff Qualifications

All staff meet New Hampshire Child Care Licensing teacher qualification guidelines. All staff actively participate in ongoing professional development workshops and trainings. All staff must pass a pre-employment background and fingerprinting check, a drug and alcohol screening, and other pre-employment requirements.

Volunteers

From time to time some classrooms may have a volunteer present. All volunteers must pass a background / fingerprinting check and agree to our privacy policies. They always work under the direct supervision of a teacher and are there to support and help with classroom activities. You will be informed if a volunteer is present in your child's classroom.

Services to Children with Special Needs

Little Steps Early Learning Center welcomes children of differing abilities. We are happy to assist in referrals to Early Supports at Community Partners if there is an identified concern, and we will work in conjunction with early intervention specialists. Our goal is to support your child's growth and development within the scope of the tools and resources available at our center.

Food Program Information

Our center follows childcare meal patterns set forth in the New Hampshire Childcare Program Licensing Rules. This includes serving balanced and age appropriate meals and snacks to your children. Breakfast is served every morning between 7:30 and 8:30 and lunch is served between 11:15 and 12:00. Children will also receive a morning and afternoon snack. Children are encouraged to try every food, but are never forced to do so and food is never used as a reward or punishment. Mealtime is designed to be a pleasant and social part of your child's day. Please find weekly menus posted outside your child's classroom.

Food Allergies and Restrictions

We will make every attempt to accommodate food allergies and / or special meal restrictions. In certain cases, it may be necessary for us to request that you provide food from home. Please help us to safeguard our children with peanut and tree nut allergies by not bringing any foods into the Center that contain nuts or nut butters. The oil from these products can stay on a child who has eaten them or even on furniture and equipment they have touched and cause a life threatening reaction. Some extremely sensitive children may even react to these products in the air. Please make an effort to clean nut residue from your child before entering the center.

Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

All Little Steps employees are mandated reporters in accordance with state law and shall report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth and Families.

Social Media and Photography

We may use your child's photo on our website, in advertisements and in the classroom. During registration, you will have the opportunity to permit or deny the use of your child's photo. Children's full names will not be used for public posting.

Parking

The first 5-6 parking spots at the top of the stairs are reserved for parent drop-off / pick-up. Please do not park in handicap spots unless you have handicap plates or tags. Please refrain from parking in fire lanes.

Building Access

The childcare entrance is equipped with a security system designed to allow access to employees and parents only. All of our doors are locked at all times and a pass-code is needed to enter. All parents/guardians will receive an individual code. It is important that you DO NOT share this code with ANYONE including your authorized pick-up people. When an alternate pick-up person arrives at the center they will need to ring the doorbell. When entering the center, please to do not hold the door for anyone who is unfamiliar to you. During inclement weather and/or cold winter months, parents are encouraged to use the front entrance of the family practice to avoid dangers from falling ice or snow in the back walkway.

Daily Arrivals and Departures

All children must be escorted into the building and signed in. We ask that you allow for a few minutes each morning to update staff members with important information that might impact your child's day. We encourage you to keep us informed about changes in your child's sleep pattern or physical and emotional health so your child's teachers are prepared to support any additional needs your child might have during the day.

When departing, parents must sign out. Once you have signed your child out of our program, you are responsible for their supervision and safety.

Pick-up / Drop-off Policy

Parents are asked to write in their estimated pickup and drop off times on their enrollment agreements. The Center expects that parents will come as close to these times as possible.

Authorization for Pick-up

As part of enrollment, parents are required to provide a list of people who are authorized to pick-up their children, who may be contacted in case of an emergency when the parent cannot be reached, and who can pick up an ill child, etc. Names should be listed in the order in which they should be contacted. We will NOT release a child to any adult who is not on the authorized pick-up list. All adults, including parents, will need to present photo identification when picking up until the child's classroom teachers become familiar with parents, extended family or friends. If an unfamiliar adult comes to pick up a child and they cannot produce a photo ID, we will not release a child to them. No child will be released to anyone under the age of 16.

Regardless of change in marital/relationship status, biological parents cannot be denied access to their child, including pick up privileges, without documented court authorization. Any court-authorized documents regarding custodial changes or restrictions must be submitted to the center director before our staff can enforce these changes.

If a parent/guardian or designated pick-up person is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol/drugs when they arrive at the center, the individual may be called aside by a staff member and/or administrator to discuss the concern. The Center will provide assistance with contacting an alternate adult to provide necessary transportation if a parent confirms they are in need of assistance. If the situation isn't able to be resolved and the agency still has concerns about the well-being of the child, then the agency will contact the local police department to report the concern and will cooperate with the police as requested.

Late Pick-up Fee

Little Steps closes promptly at 6:00 PM. We ask that you leave enough time to pick up your child and gather their belongings so you can vacate the building by 6:00 PM. Anyone arriving after 6:00 PM will be charged a late fee, which is added directly to your account and is due with your tuition payment for the following week. If you arrive between 6:00 and 6:15 PM, you will be charged \$10. If you arrive after 6:15 you will be charged an additional \$15 for each 15 minutes.. Be advised that if we are unable to reach you or an authorized pick-up person after the center has closed, we may need to notify appropriate authorities. Please be aware that repeated lateness or failure to pay late fees could be cause for dismissal from the center.

Emergency Closing

Little Steps will rarely close during inclement weather.

Please understand that per our tuition agreement, we cannot credit parents for emergency closings. Your basic tuition rate is still expected regardless of your child's attendance.

In the event of a power outage or loss of heat or water our Center is obligated to close.

Illness and Medication Policy

Little Steps makes every attempt to provide a safe and healthy environment for children. We require a copy of each child's immunization record and a completed New Hampshire Early Childhood Health Assessment Record prior to enrollment. This information must also be updated annually.

We work to prevent the spread of illness by using universal precautions. This includes disinfecting surfaces and toys in the classroom nightly and as necessary, wearing gloves when diapering and administering first aid, and promoting important health practices like proper hand washing.

We request that children do not attend childcare if they are ill, as we generally cannot provide care for sick children. A child should be well enough to comfortably participate in classroom activities.

Teachers must be able to care for a mildly ill child without compromising the care of the other children.

Contagious Illness or Other Medical Exclusions

When children are excluded from care due to signs and symptoms of a possible contagious illness, evaluation by a health care provider may be required before the child can return to care.

Children who have been diagnosed with conjunctivitis, impetigo or strep throat must be excluded from care for 24 hours after treatment has begun. Length of exclusion for other communicable diseases or conditions is based upon the diagnosis and the recommendation of the Bureau of Disease Control and the child's primary care physician.

The following conditions typically require exclusion from our program:

- More than one episode of vomiting in one day
- More than one episode of diarrhea in one day
- Uncontrolled coughing or wheezing
- Mouth sores with drooling - Evaluation by a health care provider is required with written recommendation as to when they can return
- Head Lice
- Unusual or extreme fatigue or lethargy
- Skin lesions which have not been diagnosed or treated by a licensed health care practitioner
- An oral temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- Under arm temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher combined with any of the following:
 - a.) Diarrhea
 - b.) Rash
 - c.) Ear Ache
 - d.) Sore Throat
 - e.) Vomiting

Administering Medication

Child care staff may administer non-prescription topical substances with written permission from a child's parent.

Prescription medications may be administered with a prescription label or written directions provided by a licensed health care practitioner, and written permission from a parent. Medication orders shall be valid for no more than one year.

Prescription medication orders shall contain the following information:

- The name of the child
- The medication name, strength, the prescribed dose and method of administration
- The frequency of administration
- The indications and any special precautions or limitations regarding administration of the medication
- The maximum dosage allowed in a twenty-four hour period

We must obtain written parental authorization to administer medication which includes a statement that the child has received the specified medication prior to the child care program administering the medication to the child. All medication is stored out of the reach of children.

Injuries

At all times during center operation a staff member currently certified in Child CPR and First Aid will be present. Minor injuries are treated by our staff using universal precautions.

Parents/Guardians are notified of all injuries through written "Accident Report Forms" that require your review and signature. In the case of an injury that may require a physician's attention, you will be immediately notified. If emergency medical treatment is required, we will call 911 and you will be notified of the situation and asked to meet us at the nearest medical facility.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor activity is an important part of the day at Little Steps. In the case of extreme heat and humidity children will go outside only in early or late parts of the day when temperatures are coolest.

In the winter we will not go outside if the temperature with wind chill is below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

We require parents to supply sunscreen labeled with the child's name to be applied before outdoor play in the summer. Parents will also be asked to provide written permission for administering sunscreen.

No Smoking

Little Steps and Salmon Falls Family Healthcare both maintain a smoke free environment. No smoking is allowed on the premises, including the parking lot. This includes not smoking in your car while on our premises.

Appropriate Dress for Children

Please do not send your child to school in an outfit that you do not want to get messy. Although we try our best to make sure that clothing stays clean, it is not always possible to make that happen. We provide many different activities to children that can include all types of materials. Our playground may also contain water or mud that your child may want to play in. Rain boots are a good idea for outdoor play in Spring and Fall. Please provide sturdy shoes or sneakers for your child to wear throughout the year.

Nap / Rest / Relaxation

We provide at least one hour of rest time for our children each day. We provide a quiet, soothing atmosphere that is conducive to resting through the use of calming activities, quiet music and by sitting with the children to rub their backs or help settle them down. Per licensing regulations, children who do not fall asleep after 30 minutes of rest are given the opportunity to do quiet activities on their mats. After 60 minutes, children are allowed to get off their mats and engage in quiet activities.

Behavior Management

Our approach to behavior management begins with structuring the environment to reduce conflict. Children respond to consistent limits and modeling of acceptable behavior. Teachers guide and redirect behavior to assist children in developing self-control, promoting cooperation and respect.

Should behavior be unsafe and require separation from the group, separation is brief and appropriate to the circumstances and developmental level of the child.

Behaviors described below are prohibited:

- Withholding food from children or forcibly feeding children
- Disciplining children for not eating
- Shaming, humiliating or disciplining any child for toileting accidents or lapses in toileting habits
- Using isolation as a form of discipline
- Prohibiting children from using the toilet as a form of discipline
- As a means of discipline, requiring children to:
 - Sleep or rest
 - Go to their cot, mat, crib, bed, playpen or other sleeping or rest facilities
- Disciplining a child for not sleeping at rest or nap time
- Attempting to control children's behavior by actions which are humiliating, threatening, shaming, frightening or otherwise damaging to children

In the event that a child displays continual behavior that puts the safety of the child and / or his / her classmates at risk, Little Steps reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment. Such a drastic step would be taken only after other avenues of behavior management have been attempted, including but not limited to meeting with parents to develop a behavior management plan.

Compliments, Suggestions, Concerns

Questions, concerns or comments are important to us and we want the opportunity to clarify and resolve issues as quickly and appropriately as possible. If you have questions, concerns or comments, please let the classroom teacher know. She will bring your concern to the attention of the Director if it cannot be resolved in the classroom. You may, at any time, notify the Director of concerns of any nature.

We will maintain a written record of your concern, including the nature of the concern, the investigation process, and the outcome. We endeavor to resolve any concerns you may have in a timely and effective manner.

If you are not comfortable approaching your teacher or the Director with your comments or concerns, you may utilize the daycare's Comment/Concerns Submission Form available on the Little Steps Early Learning Center website: www.littlestepsnh.com.

Scheduled Closings

New Year's Day

Memorial Day

Fourth of July (or the Friday or Monday before or after)

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Eve, generally closed by 2:30

Christmas Day (or the Friday or Monday before or after)

Center Hours:

Monday - Friday
7:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Pricing

Rates include a maximum of 9.5 hours of care per day

Daily Rates*:

Infant: \$58
Toddler: \$56
Preschool: \$54

Weekly Rates*:

Infant: \$250
Toddler: \$240
Preschool: \$230

Registration Fee: \$25 per child

* Prices subject to change

Multiple Child Discount:

There is a 10% discount for the second child and any additional siblings. The discount is taken on the child charged the lowest rate.

Tuition Payment Policy:

Payment is expected on Monday for the upcoming week of care. Families choosing to pay on a bi-weekly or monthly basis must pay in advance. There will be a late payment charge of \$10.00 assessed each Friday for accounts with a balance. If an account is two weeks overdue we may be unable to accept your child for care. Care provided outside of your scheduled hours may also result in the assessment of a \$10.00 fee.

Cash, check, and credit card are accepted forms of payment.

Tuition is due in full regardless of holidays or your child's absence from the program.

Upon enrollment, Little Steps will collect a security deposit equal to one week tuition. This deposit will be applied to the final week of care.

Return Check Policy

A \$25 charge will be applied for any returned checks. Once we have received two returned checks on an account, cash or credit card payments will be required for future payments.

Changes in Enrollment

If you would like to increase your child's enrollment, it will be dependent on current enrollments. You may only be able to increase enrollment if there is space in your child's classroom. We will try our hardest to accommodate you as early as possible in this situation. If you are going to decrease enrollment, we ask for a written notice two weeks before you would like to decrease your enrollment.

Withdrawing from our Program

Parents are responsible for giving a two week notice when withdrawing children from the program. This is critical to allow us appropriate time to fill the upcoming vacancy with a new enrollment. We also ask that parents share this information with their child's teacher(s) so they can assist in making the transition a smooth one.

A child will be considered automatically withdrawn from our program after two weeks of absence if no contact has been made with the center.

Thank you for taking time to read your Parent Handbook, we look forward to getting to know you and your child.

**** All policies subject to change. Parents will be notified in writing of changes, eliminations and additions to the Parent Handbook**





Parent Handbook Signature Page

I _____, acknowledge that I have read and agree to all the policies and procedures as stated in the Little Steps Parent Handbook

Parent / Guardian:

Date:

I would like to be contacted through electronic communication:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____



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