

PARENT HANDBOOK

Stepping Stones Learning Center



115 N. Madison Avenue
Eatonton, Georgia 31024

706-485-0690

Revised: January, 2011

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Stepping Stones! Stepping Stones is a ministry of First Baptist Church of Eatonton, Georgia. We are proud to be dedicated to the mission of providing quality childcare for your child in a Christian environment. We pledge to provide a developmentally appropriate program for your child and this is a responsibility that is taken very seriously.

This handbook has been designed to make you aware of the center's policies and procedures. Please use this handbook as a reference tool. We want you to know that many of our policies are enforced by Bright from the Start, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of the staff if you have any questions. It is our pleasure to be able to minister to you through Stepping Stones.

God Bless-

Denise M. Carmichael

Director

Administrative Staff

Denise M. Carmichael, Director

Phylicia Chastain, Associate Director

Board of Directors

Amy McElhenney, Chairperson

Kim Camp

Rick Cogdell

Tasha Cannon

Lynda Walker

Bob Schell

OUR GOALS FOR YOUR CHILDREN

TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND PLAN FOR THEIR LIFE.

TO DEVELOP FREEDOM FOR CREATIVE EXPRESSION.

TO BUILD SELF-ESTEEM.

TO WORK, PLAY AND SHARE WITH OTHERS.

TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATION AND LISTENING SKILLS.

TO ACQUIRE GOOD HABITS OF HEALTH AND SAFETY.

TO LEARN TO GET ALONG WITH OTHER CHILDREN AND ADULTS,
UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS AS WELL AS HIS OWN.

TO ASSIST AND ENCOURAGE EACH CHILD IN BECOMING INDEPENDENT.

TO PROVIDE A VARIETY OF MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH PERMIT
THE CHILD TO MAKE CHOICES.

Ages of Children Served

The center serves children 6 weeks through 5 years of age. The Director will place children in classrooms according to: age, ability, maturity and availability of space in the room. When possible, all children in a room will be the same age. When your child will be moved to another classroom, you will be notified as soon as possible prior to the move. You will be given an opportunity to meet the new caregiver and discuss any pertinent information. After school program serves children through age 10.

Admission Requirements

Stepping Stones Learning Center does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin. Before begin enrolled in the program, parents must complete an application for enrollment and submit the enrollment fee. A waiting list fee may be applicable. Re-enrollment is an annual process for each child and requires a re-enrollment fee. No child may enter the Center without a current immunization record.

Parental and Child Information

Parents are responsible for supplying and maintaining accurate required record information, such as, but not limited to, immunization records on the child, place of employment of the parents, custody changes, and emergency contact numbers. It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the Director of any changes of information that has been given to the center.

Hours of Operation

The center is in operation year round. Hours of operation are 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Children will not be allowed in the center before 6:30 AM. Please be prompt in picking up your child. All parents and children are to be out of the building by 6:00 PM. There is a \$1.00 per minute charge for late pick-up. The payment should be made to the staff member with the child at the time he/she is picked up. It is recommended that children not remain at the center over 10 hours daily.

Holidays

The center is closed for the week between Christmas and New Year's and the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving
Good Friday	Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
Memorial Day	Independence Day (July 4 th)
Labor Day	

Holidays that fall on the weekend will be observed on the previous Friday or the following Monday. Parents will be notified of observance on weekend holidays. **Full tuition is expected for every week of the year with the exception of the full week of Christmas.**

Entering and Exiting the Center

Parents or guardians must escort their children into and out of the center and sign them in and out on a daily basis. Parents shall take their children to their classrooms. Parents are asked not to linger in the classrooms. The staff is expected to give their attention to the children. If a conference is needed with a staff member, please schedule one with the Director or Associate Director. Parents or guardians must always sign out children before leaving the center.

Parental Access

Custodial parents of a child shall, at any time the child is in attendance, be permitted access to all child care areas of the center and shall make his or her presence known to center staff prior to removing the child from the center.

Volunteer Guidelines

- Volunteers must be 16 yr.'s old and over
- Volunteers will schedule a time a week prior with the office to conduct a structured activity with a classroom- for example reading a book, art project, rocking babies etc. this activity will last no more than 30 minutes per classroom
- Director/Associate Director will schedule the time with the teacher to ensure that the classrooms schedule is not to be interrupted by an activity.

Fees & Tuition

Stepping Stones is a non-profit organization that operates entirely on tuition, donations and fundraisers. Therefore, we cannot make deductions for absences, holidays or school cancellations due to inclement weather.

Addendum entered on May 5, 2009 and executed on January 1, 2010.

Stepping Stones Learning Center will observe the summer schedule according to both Gatewood and Putnam County School System. If you choose to keep your child at home during these months outlined in the school calendar you will be responsible for a charge of \$60.00/week in order to keep your child's fulltime spot on the fall roster. Full tuition is expected the first two consecutive weeks your child is absent. For each consecutive week following your child's absence then a \$60.00 per week fee applies until fulltime enrollment resumes in the fall. This also includes any family vacations that fall during the summer school calendar.

An exception to this policy will be considered by the Director and the Board of Stepping Stones when a child misses two weeks due to a medical condition and it appears the absence will be longer. In such case a half price rate may be granted until the child can return.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement weather conditions, please be advised that we will follow the same guidelines that are set out by the Putnam County School System. Please follow school closings on 13 WMAZ of Macon and 11 ALIVE of Atlanta. (If the school system is closed, we will be closed also.)

Registration Fee

An enrollment fee of \$50.00 is due at the time of enrollment and annually thereafter.

Waiting List Fee

If a waiting list is in place, a \$25.00 fee may be assessed in order to guarantee placement.

Nonpayment and Late Fees

Tuition is due on Monday or the first day of the week by 6:00 PM. An \$15 late fee will be charged if payment is not made on time. The late fee charge may be delayed 24 hours after obtaining authorization from the Director. Tuition is due for those weeks with holidays and for days that the center is closed due to severe weather. There is no tuition due for the one week during the year that the center is closed.

If your account becomes one week past due, a 10% past due charge, a written reminder will be sent and your account will be brought to the attention for the Board of Directors which will consider your child for removal from the center. In the event that your child is absent for several days due to illness, we ask that you please make an effort to pay their tuition at the beginning of that week or contact the Director and make arrangements to pay it at the earliest convenience. It

is imperative that fees be paid in a timely manner, so that we can provide quality care for your child.

Returned check fee

If a check is returned to the center for non-sufficient funds more than one time in a year, you will be charged \$25.00 for each returned check.

Absences

Parents shall report their child's absence by calling the center by 8:00 a.m. so we may plan for meals. Fees are payable days the child is out. If an absence is planned, the parent will be encouraged to let the staff member know the day before.

Withdrawal

Should you decide to withdraw your child from the center, please notify us in writing two weeks prior to the withdrawal date. **If you fail to give two weeks notice, you will be billed for those weeks regardless.**

Positive Guidance and Discipline Techniques

Discipline involves teaching character and self control. Staff will only use positive guidance, redirection and the setting of clear-cut limits that foster the child's non-ability to become self-disciplined. Staff will encourage the child to be fair, respect property and assume personal responsibilities. Disciplinary actions shall not be detrimental to the physical or mental health of any child. Staff may utilize time-out, supervised isolation from the group, denial of privileges or special activities for a short period of time, etc. Parents will be notified of behavior that is dangerous or becomes problematic or habitual. Parent-Teacher conferences or Parent-Teacher-Director conferences may be called if offensive behavior cannot be controlled after a reasonable time period. **Extremely aggressive behavior (such as continued biting) that cannot be resolved may result in the child being dismissed from the center.**

Classroom Staffing

On occasion a different caregiver may be placed in your child's classroom. This may be necessary when the primary staff/care giver is absent. At times classes may also have to be combined due to absences. Early morning and late afternoon staff will often vary.

Staffing levels meet or exceed the requirements of Bright from the Start, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. The Director and most staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. Many have completed training for their Child Development Association certificate. Others are presently enrolled in the program as well as other continuing education courses in Early Childhood care.

Curriculum

Stepping Stones uses Creative Curriculum as the guideline for teaching your children. Our church pianist and other volunteers are enhancing the enrichment program with Kindermusik. The center also uses HeartShaper Christian Curriculum which introduces your child to the Bible as well as Christian beliefs and philosophies.

Emergency Medical Care

Emergency medical information on each child shall consist of known allergies, special medical needs and conditions, current prescribed medications required for a chronic condition, the name and phone number for the child's doctor, the local medical facility the center uses, and the phone numbers where parents can be reached. The Director and most Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. If a medical emergency arises involving a child at the center, the staff shall administer the appropriate first aid and CPR, contact the parents, the child's physician, if necessary, and keep the child comfortable until the parent arrives. If the staff believes the situation requires the immediate assistance of a medical professional, 911 will be called. Putnam General Hospital is the hospital that will be utilized in the event of an emergency. Every attempt will be made to contact parents at once, but our first concern will be the well being of the child. An incident report form will be filled out and Bright From the Start will be notified within 24 hours.

Parents of a child who becomes ill or is injured shall be notified immediately of any illness or injury requiring professional medical attention, or any illness which may not require professional medical attention but which produces symptoms causing moderate discomfort to the child, such as, but not limited to, an of the following: elevated temperature, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Communicable Diseases

A child shall not be accepted nor allowed at the center if the child has the equivalent of a 101-degree oral temperature or any contagious symptom such as, but not limited to a rash, diarrhea, or sore throat. If a child becomes ill while at the center, parents will be called and expected to pick up the child immediately. Such child will be kept comfortable and away from other children until parents arrive.

Children who have a fever of 101-degree oral temperature or higher shall not return to the center until they have been without fever for 24 hours without fever reducing medications.

The guidelines of "Infection Control in Day Care Centers" shall be observed. Parents are responsible for reading the chart and knowing when their child can return to the center. A copy of these guidelines can be found in the reception area. Parents shall also inform the center if their child has contracted a communicable disease. Parents of all children in the center will be notified in writing of any reportable communicable diseases within 24 hours or the next working day after the center becomes aware of the illness. The center is required to report any reportable communicable disease to the Putnam County Health Department.

Medication

Medications will only be dispensed at 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM. If your child requires medication at any time other than 9:00 AM or 3:00 PM, arrangements should be made by the parent. Any medication to be dispensed to a child during the day must be given to the Director with complete directions for administering, using the form provided by the center. The form must be filled out in entirety with specific times and dates. **If the form is not filled out in entirety, medication will not be dispensed.** All medication must be kept in the office.

Emergency Situations

Emergency plans for fire, gas leaks, bomb threats, severe weather, and power failures have been developed and are posted in the reception area for parent viewing.

Infant and Toddler Care

Disposable diapers and wipes are to be supplied by the parents. **There will be a fee of \$1.00 per diaper for diapers furnished by the center.** All bottles, sip cups, formula, and baby food are to be provided by parents and labeled with the child's **name and the day's date.** It is not necessary to date the sip cup if it is sent empty. Parents are to take cups and bottles home daily for washing. Parents of infants are to complete a new infant feeding plan whenever the feeding plans for their infant changes.

Field Trips

Field trips are for children ages 4 and up. Each child on a field trip shall wear a nametag with the child's name and the center's name, address, and phone number. The center shall obtain written permission from the parents in advance of the child's participating in any field trip. The field trip permission notice shall provide details of the trip, including:

1. The name and address of the destination.
2. The date of the trip.
3. The time of departure and estimated arrival time back at the center.

Written parental approval shall include:

1. The field trip destination.
2. The signature of the parents.
3. The date.

A list of children and adults participating in the field trip and emergency medical information card on each child shall be taken on the trip in the possession of the adult in charge of the trip. A copy of the same records shall remain at the center.

Meals & food service

The center provides breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack for children who are no longer on baby food. **Parents are asked not to send food with their children.** Of course, birthdays and special holidays are times to celebrate and a special snack for the class is welcome. If a child has food allergies or a modified diet for medical reasons, a written statement from the child's parent shall be given to the Director for the child's file. It is the parents' responsibility to provide substitutions. Weekly menus will be posted in the reception area as well as in each classroom. Stepping Stones Learning Center does participate in the Federal CACFP Food Grant to ensure all meals are nutritionally balanced.

Outside Play, Rest, and Daily Schedules

Parents are to notify the center no later than 8:00 AM of any changes in their child's regular schedule. If your child is not at the center by 8:00 AM without notification, the staff will assume the child is not coming and he/she will not be included in the day's meal count. **To minimize disruptions during meal and rest time, we ask that children not be dropped-off or picked-up between 11:00 & 2:30 without prior approval.**

Outside play is a part of the daily schedule. Children should be dressed appropriately for outside play. We ask that children wear **closed toe shoes** for safety reasons. If a child has been sick and should not play outside, a written statement should be given to the child's teacher.

Each child will be offered a time to rest each day. Each child has either a crib or an individual cot for rest time. If a child chooses he/she can participate in a quiet activity during rest time. (Drawing, coloring, reading, etc..)

Each teacher has the daily schedule for her class posted in the classroom. A copy is available upon request.

Each child should have a complete change of clothes at the center. Children in the potty training process will need 3 changes of clothing at the center. These may be kept in individual diaper bags or in center cubby. We ask that these clothes be appropriate for the current season.

Parental Agreement

We ask that each parent read the parent handbook thoroughly and contact the center administrative staff if questions arise.

Please sign this form and return to the center administrative office.

I have read the Parent Handbook of Stepping Stones Learning Center and agree to comply with the policies and procedures of Stepping Stones Learning Center as mandated through Bright From The Start, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning of the State of Georgia.

Parental Signature _____

Date _____