



TUITION RATES

EFFECTIVE JUNE 2017

Monday- Friday 7:00am-5:30pm

FULL TIME WEEKLY:

Enrollment Deposit – 2 X child's weekly tuition

Curriculum Fee – See below per age group

Processing Fee - All payments not made through a *Brightwheel* deposit account will include an additional \$5 fee per child.

\$143.50 - 6w to 12m

\$133.50 - 12m to 18m*

\$123.50 - 18m to 2y*

\$118.50 - 2y & 3y*

\$115 – 3K Program (must be 3 years old by Sept. 1)

\$110 – Pre-K Program (must be 4 years old by Sept. 1)

*\$60 Annual Curriculum Fee per child 12M-5y

AFTER SCHOOL: (3:25-5:30)

\$70 – 3y-13y**

**After-school students that need a full day of care, such as school holidays, teacher work days, etc., will require an additional \$7 per day per student.

SUMMER : (Care for students enrolled in other private or public schools)

\$115 – 3y

\$110 – 4y & 5y

\$100 – 6y to 13y

DAILY DROP-IN: (upon availability)

\$35 - 6w to 18m

\$30 - 18m and up

\$15 - After School Care (3:25pm-5:30pm)



ENROLLMENT PACKET

Enclosed, you will find the following forms. Please complete and return the listed forms. The Parent Handbook and Tuition Rate Sheet are yours to keep. Your child cannot be enrolled until all forms have been completed and returned and the Enrollment Deposit is made. You may use the following checklist for your own reference:

Forms to be returned:

- Admission Information
- Shot/ Vaccination Records (may be filled out on admission form, or attach copy)
- Statement of Good Health from your child's Healthcare Provider
- Discipline and Guidance Policy
- Acknowledgement of Policies
- Authorized Persons For Child Pick Up
- Photo Consent Form

PARENT HANDBOOK

NOVEMBER 2014

(Revised July 2017)



Ashley Stock
Center Director
Owner

301 US Hwy 77S
Hallettsville, TX 77964
361-798-9300

Welcome, and thank you for choosing The Stepping Stone: Private Early Learning Center! We are a locally owned and operated company dedicated to providing quality childcare for children ages 6 weeks to 13 years.

We understand you have options for child care. By choosing The Stepping Stone, you are choosing a Licensed Childcare Center held to the most stringent Minimum Standards set forth by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). These Minimum Standards help ensure your child is properly cared for and safe. At The Stepping Stone, we strive to exceed this minimum and are proudly committed to providing your child with a safe, clean, and fun learning environment.

At the same time, we introduce your child to a curriculum that will place them “ahead of the curve”. This will be achieved by providing a variety of developmentally appropriate activities focusing on the intellectual, physical, emotional and social skills of your child. We also want to help your child develop a positive self-image, learn respect and responsibility and learn to be accepting of others.

We also strive to be parent friendly by working to continuously improve to meet your overall childcare needs. If at any time you have any comments, questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Center Director. We value and appreciate your comments and suggestions and we will do all we can to alleviate your concerns.

We encourage you to view our most recent Licensing Report. The most current report is always posted on our bulletin board at the entrance of the center.

For more information about Minimum Standards Rules please visit the Texas Department of Protective and Family Services website or call their local office.

www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care.

Local State Licensing Office: (361) 574-7320

The Stepping Stone does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability or any other protected status. It is our policy to accept children in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We will review each child’s situation on a case by case basis and reasonable accommodations will be made if needed. The Stepping Stone is a large group care facility and cannot provided one to one care.

Child Abuse

The Stepping Stone director, caregivers and staff are required to have annual training in methods for increasing awareness, recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect. By law childcare professionals are required to report any incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. The Stepping Stone also coordinates with local and state services to work toward the prevention of abuse and neglect of children. The Stepping Stone can assist parents of a child that is a victim of abuse or neglect with the steps to intervention. Confidential reports may be made by calling 1-800-252-5400 or by visiting the TDPFS website at www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care. Information on child abuse and neglect will be shared with parents as it becomes available.

Liability Insurance

The Stepping Stone provides liability insurance as stated in Section 42.049 of the Human Resources Code. A Verification of Insurance notice can be found on the front board of the Center.

Hours/ Days of Operation/ Enrollment

The Stepping Stone is open year round Monday-Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Parents are welcome to visit the center at any time during operation hours to observe their child and the center program activities without having to secure prior approval.

The Stepping Stone accepts children from 6 weeks to 13 years. Please refer to the Weekly Tuition Rates. The Stepping Stone aims to be parent friendly so please contact the director if a special arrangement is needed on a short term basis.

To best help your child fit into The Stepping Stone's routine of curriculum activities, meals, rest times, etc., we request that you drop your child off at the center no later than 9:00 AM. Breakfast is served at 8:00 AM and ends between 8:15 and 8:20 AM. If your child arrives later than 8:15 AM, please make sure he or she has already eaten breakfast. Our staff and students will have moved to the next scheduled activity of the day. If a later drop off is occasionally necessary, please talk with the Center Director in advance. If your child will not be attending, please notify the center no later than 9:00 AM that day.

A late fee of \$1 per minute after 5:30 PM will be collected at time of pick-up. The staff at The Stepping Stone follows the time on the clock located in the front room of the center. Late fees will be added to weekly balance fees if not received at the time of late pickup.

Holidays and Closures

The Stepping Stone will be closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the director will post a notice at least 1 week in advance as to whether the center will close to celebrate those holidays on the previous or following weekday.

All center holidays are paid days for caregivers, therefore tuition will remain the same during a week including a center holiday.

In the event of severe weather or other emergency, please listen to the local radio and television stations or check the primary email account that was provided at enrollment or *Brightwheel* for information regarding closures.

Enrollment Procedures

All parents must provide an enrollment deposit and complete the enrollment packet forms before their child may attend The Stepping Stone.

Each child must have proof and be current with their immunizations, and have a doctor's statement indicating the child is mentally and physically able to take part in our program. This health statement must be submitted within 3 months of

enrollment. Immunization guidelines and schedules can be found on the Center for Disease Control's web page. They can also be provided by the Center Director upon request.

Enrollment Screenings

Texas State Law requires hearing and vision screening for children at age 4 who are enrolled in a preschool program. Information regarding these screenings will be sent home as it becomes available. Records of your child's Hearing and Vision Screening results must be kept on file at the center. Once these screenings are taken, please provide the center with a copy of the results.

Tuberculin testing is not currently required by our local Health Department. Information on this will be shared as it changes or comes available.

Enrollment Deposit, Curriculum Fee and Tuition

An enrollment deposit of two weeks' tuition is required to obtain your child's spot. Enrollment will not take place until this deposit has been made. It will be returned on the last day of enrollment following your two week un-enrollment notice. The enrollment deposit will not be fully refunded unless any remaining balances owed to The Stepping Stone are paid in full.

A curriculum fee is due upon each enrollment and again each August. Please refer to the Weekly Tuition Rates.

The entire weekly tuition is due upon your child's arrival on the first day of attendance. A late payment fee of \$5.00 per day will be added to any remaining balance not paid on time. Your child will be un-enrolled if the balance and associated late fees are not paid in full by the end of the current week of attendance.

The Stepping Stone accepts *Brightwheel* payments through secure *Brightwheel* Deposit accounts at the regular weekly tuition rate. Payments via cash, check, or money orders will have a \$5.00 weekly fee added. Monies received will be applied to your account in the following priority:

- Past due balances/ Late fees
- Current tuition

The Stepping Stone reserves the right to require cash or money order only for payments at our discretion. A \$30 returned check fee or overdraft fee is due for any check returned back or deposit withdrawn. A 4% fee is assessed for any credit card transaction.

In the event of failure to pay in full, all money owed to The Stepping Stone, all cost incurred for the collection processes will be the responsibility of the debtor. This includes but is not limited to court, attorney, and collection agency fees.

Withdrawing your Child

In the event you need to withdraw your child, we require two weeks written notice. Otherwise balances will continue to accrue for two weeks at which time your child will be un-enrolled and your enrollment deposit will not be refunded. Any prepaid balances will be remitted to you within 90 days of withdrawal.

Parent Involvement

The Stepping Stone believes that parent involvement is essential in providing quality childcare. Open communication is the key to a successful childcare experience. Please feel free to review and discuss any of our procedures with the Director at any time. Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit and participate in any part of their child's day here at

The Stepping Stone. If you have a special skill such as singing or playing a musical instrument, or if you would like to come in and read a story at story time, we would be happy to have you.

Please communicate to your child's teacher or director if there are any changes in your child's life that may affect them (divorce, death of family member or pet, sleepless night, moving, etc.). Please do not hesitate to ask questions, make comments, or voice concerns. We value your opinion and want your child to have a great childcare experience.

Notes and Information

Communication between your child's teacher and you is important. Please check your child's cubby daily for any notes or other information to be sent home. Please respond to all parent notices as soon as possible. Communication via the *Brightwheel* app will take place on a daily basis. Please use this tool to communicate with your child's teacher and the Director as needed. Parents will be notified of policy changes in writing.

Parent Conferences

The Stepping Stone will accommodate a conference for parents with their child's caregiver and/ or the Center Director as needed. Please contact the Center Director to schedule a conference for any questions or concerns you may have during your child's enrollment at The Stepping Stone.

Sign in/ Sign out

State regulations require that upon arrival and departure, the parent, guardian or teacher sign the child in and out. This is done via the *Brightwheel* app on any classroom device. For this reason, and for the overall safety of your child, all children must be escorted into the center to be checked in. **Drop off in the parking lot is not permitted.**

Absences/ Vacancies

If your child will not be attending The Stepping Stone, please call the center by 9:00 AM. **Tuition Fees are not discounted for absences unless the child is absent for the entire week.** Tuition will be discounted 50% for those children absent one entire week. If a child will be absent for multiple consecutive weeks, only the first week will be discounted 50% and the additional weeks will be charged at full price. A maximum of 2 total weeks will be discounted through the entire program year, and these 2 weeks cannot be taken within the same absence. After 2 weeks of absences, and an unpaid balance, your child will be considered withdrawn from the program, unless other arrangements have been made with the Center Director. You may contact the Center Director for any clarification of this policy.

Transportation

Children will not be transported by The Stepping Stone without signature approval from a parent or legal guardian. Busing to and from Hallettsville Independent School District and Vysehrad School District is available. You may contact the Center Director for more information.

Water Activities

The Stepping Stone will occasionally have water activities during the summer months. These include sprinkler play, wading pools and water table play. If you do not wish for your child to participate or you have any special instructions for these activities, please note this on your child's Admission Form and share this with your child's teacher and the Center Director. We may also ask parents to provide bug spray or sun block for their child during these times.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable play clothes and comfortable shoes. We request you keep an extra set of clothes in your child's cubby. The Stepping Stone may contact parents to bring clean clothes if none are available.

Please label all hats and jackets. We cannot be responsible for lost or damaged clothing.

Personal Items

The Stepping Stone provides many fun and educational toys for your child at the center. For fear of loss or breakage, we ask that your child leave their special toy at home. Children may bring their soft cuddly toy and a pillow and blanket for rest time. Please label these items with the child's name.

Procedures for release of children

The Stepping Stone will only release children to those adults authorized in writing by the parent or guardian on the Admission and Authorized Persons for Child Pick Up forms which are included in your enrollment packet. Please note that the "Authorized Persons for Child Pick Up" form does require a driver's license number and address. The Stepping Stone will compare the name, address and number of the presented ID of an infrequent request for pick up to the information we have on file. If, and only if, a recognized parent or guardian calls and makes arrangements with the Center Director in advance for an adult that is not on the list, a valid ID will need to be presented and made a copy of for our records. If a valid ID is not available, they will not be able to pick up the child. There are no exceptions to this. The Stepping Stone puts your child's safety at first priority. In the event of child custody issues, you must provide The Stepping Stone with a copy of notarized, court-ordered papers to allow or deny access to any of the listed parties.

Please notify the center of any changes of emergency contact information or other enrollment information as soon as possible.

The Stepping Stone provides childcare in a safe, secure and nurturing environment. We may un-enroll a child immediately and/ or contact local authorities if their behavior or the parent's/ legal guardian's behavior threatens the safety of, or becomes abusive to, the children or staff.

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.

Fire/Severe Weather/Chemical Spill Drills

Fire drills will be practiced monthly. The children will exit the building and we will meet in the parking lot of Lonestar Missionary Baptist Church next door to The Stepping Stone. Local news and radio stations will be alerted and every effort will be made to contact all parents. It is important to have contact information for multiple people that is as up to date as possible.

Severe weather drills will be practiced every 3 months. The children will line up along the inner wall of the center. Teachers will make this an enjoyable but learning experience.

During chemical spills, the children will remain in their classrooms, air conditioners will be shut off, any air leakage around windows and doors will be taped up and there will be no one allowed in or out of the building.

Emergency Preparedness

An emergency preparedness plan will be in effect at all times for the center. If at any time the center or surrounding property comes within extreme danger, the children will be transported as safely as possible to the Knights of Columbus Hall where coverage and public bathrooms are available. You may view a copy of our Emergency Preparedness Plan at any EXIT of the Center. If you have any questions or concerns about the drills or plans, please feel free to discuss them with the Center Director at any time.

Meal and food service practices

The Stepping Stone's menus are designed to be nutritiously balanced for each child's age according to the FDA's guidelines. We serve meals at breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack. The Stepping Stone offers meals and dairy milk for children who are ready for table food and drinking from a sippy cup. Formula, cereal, baby food and milk for bottles will need to be provided by the parent/ guardian. To meet the needs of our parents and infants, an area in the infant room is available for mothers who choose to breastfeed.

Breakfast will be served from 8:00-8:20 AM, lunch will be served from 11:00 to 11:30 AM, and an afternoon snack will be served at 3:00 PM. If your child will be arriving after 8:15 AM, please make sure they have eaten breakfast at home or a special arrangement has been made in advance. You may call the center before 8:15 to reserve a plate for your child if you are running a few minutes late.

Infants have a separate feeding schedule from the other children based on their meal patterns and it is posted in the Infant Room. A feeding schedule will be updated and signed by the parent/ guardian every 30 days. The Stepping Stone offers meals and dairy milk for children who are ready for table food and drinking from a sippy cup. Formula, cereal, baby food and milk for bottles will need to be provided by the parent/ guardian. To meet the needs of our parents and infants, an area in the infant room is available for mothers who choose to breastfeed.

If your child has any food allergies, please communicate this to your child's class teacher. Additionally, we will need a completed FOOD ALLERGY & ANAPHYLAXIS EMERGENCY CARE PLAN. This plan will include a doctor's documentation of any food allergies or intolerance, possible symptoms if exposed and the steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction. This plan must be completed for The Stepping Stone to remove any foods or make substitutions to the child's meals. These Emergency Plans will be located in a secure visible place in each room where the child spends time. If no substitutions can be made by the center, we ask that you provide the preferred food for your child.

Substitutions to this menu for your child may only be made with a doctor's written notice. If you choose to provide your child's meals, the center is not responsible for their nutritional value for meeting the child's daily food needs. These meals cannot be shared with any other children at the center. Exceptions include special center occasions where substituted snacks will be provided by parents or the center. Please be aware that some of these items will differ from the posted menu. The Center Director can provide clarification of this if needed.

Rest Time

TDFPS requires that each child be provided with a rest time. Rest time is after lunch and lasts for 2-3 hours. We ask that you provide a non-absorbent mat, mat cover and blanket for your child at rest time. A pillow and cuddly toy are optional. Mat laundry will be sent home every Friday for washing. Please return these items Monday morning for use at rest time.

Illness and exclusion criteria & Procedures for dispensing medications

We feel that this measure is necessary to ensure the safety and health of all the children in our care, our staff, and your own child. In order to protect the group as a whole, we ask that parents assist us by keeping sick children at home. Illnesses spread much quicker through children at young ages and we do our best to prevent them, but are asking for your help also.

In the event that a child becomes sick while in our care, you will be notified immediately, and arrangements for prompt pick up should be made. If a child is sick, unable to play outdoors, and/or unable to participate in regular daily activities, alternate arrangements for care must be made.

Children with infectious illnesses cannot attend.

The following policy is a state regulation, and is the **minimum** requirement to be in compliance with Texas State law. We also require that these guidelines apply WITHOUT the use of fever/ pain reducer/ cold medications for at least 24 hours.

When a child may not attend daycare:

Fever of 100.0 degrees and higher. This includes the night before/morning of daycare ~ No fever for 24 hours without taking fever reducing medication. If you had to give your child medicine the night before then that still means they cannot come to daycare the next morning. A child must be symptom free for 24 hours, without the use of a fever reducer, before they may return to care.

Rash ~ Unexplained rash ~ Consult doctor/Need a note stating your child is not contagious.

Vomiting or/and Diarrhea ~ All symptoms must be gone and no Vomiting or Diarrhea for 24 hours

Strep Throat ~ Consult doctor/Need a note. Child must be on antibiotics for 24 hours and be without a fever without medication for it.

Flu/Bronchitis/Pneumonia ~ Consult doctor/Need a note stating it is ok to come back to daycare. This usually takes about 2-3 days before they can come back to daycare. Must be on antibiotics and no fever for at least 24 hours, without taking fever reducing medication.

Ear Infection ~ Consult doctor/Need a note. Child must be on antibiotics and no fever for 24 hours before returning.

Conjunctivitis (red eyes with yellow discharge)/Pink Eye ~ Consult doctor/Need a note. Child must be on eye drops/antibiotics for 24 hours after no symptoms are visible.

Head Lice ~ Usually takes 24 hours to treat head and house ~ When all nits have been removed and child is cleared from the doctor. Need a note.

Common Cold Policy

Children suffering from a common cold will be assessed on an individual basis.

Factors of consideration include the developmental level of your child in correspondence with our ability to limit the spread of germs.

The younger your child, the more difficult it is to keep the spread of germs down: hand to face contact, mouthing of

toys, uncontrolled nasal discharge, uncovered sneezing and coughing etc.

(Also when caring for an ill child, the ability to provide high quality care to all of the other children is jeopardized)

A child may return when he or she is free from symptoms and no longer infectious. The child should also be well enough to actively participate throughout the day. In any case of serious or unexplainable illness, a doctor's medical clearance may be required prior to admission back into care. The final decision of admittance back into care is at the discretion of staff.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS OF ALL CHILDREN IN OUR PROGRAM, AND REFRAIN FROM BRINGING AN ILL CHILD UNTIL 24 HOURS HAVE PASSED SINCE ANY FEVER, VOMITING, DIARRHEA, OR ANY OTHER COMMUNICABLE SYMPTOMS HAVE OCCURRED.

If you have any questions concerning this policy and whether your child should attend, please call us before bringing your child.

Please understand that it is part of our responsibility to keep the children and staff as safe and healthy as possible while in our care.

Vaccine Preventable Diseases

All Stepping Stone staff is required to complete a Health History and Vaccination Policy which determines if they are at risk of contracting or spreading any vaccine preventable diseases. Staff is not currently required to obtain any vaccinations but information on each vaccine preventable disease is provided to each employee. Records for vaccinations voluntarily administered to employees are kept on file at The Stepping Stone. Current guidelines for recommended and required vaccinations comply with the local Health Department and Center for Disease Control Standards.

Potty Training

Potty training requires a team effort and we will work with you whenever you decide the time is right for your child to start potty training. We ask that you provide us with plenty of extra clothes for accidents, and patience and encouragement for your child.

The three year old children that have not successfully accomplished potty training will be enrolled in and kept in the Two and Three Year Old class until they are potty trained and center staff and parents agree that the child can be permanently moved to the Pre-School Class.

Discipline and Guidance Policy

The Stepping Stone will use methods of discipline and guidance as outlined in Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L of the Texas Administrative Code.

Discipline must be:

1. Individualized and consistent for each child;
2. Appropriate to the Child's level of understanding; and
3. Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
3. Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
4. Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
5. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
6. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
7. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
8. Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

We use praise and encouragement for good behavior and use the following system for inappropriate behavior.

Level 1: Positive statement to redirect behavior

Level 2: Time out in child's classroom

Level 3: Time out in another supervised classroom with parent notification

Level 4: Parent conference scheduled to develop action plan

Level 5: Dis-enrollment

Incidents and Accidents

The Stepping Stone strives to ensure the safety of your child while in our care. However, sometimes accidents may happen. If your child is injured and we feel medical attention is needed, we will call you. In the case of severe injury or illness, we will call 911 immediately for assistance and administer CPR/ First Aid as needed until EMS arrives. We will contact the parent as soon as possible in this situation. Please understand the importance of having multiple up to date emergency contact numbers available at all times that your child is in care.

In the event of a minor injury, first aid will be administered. The parent will be notified via *Brightwheel* and/ or an incident/ accident report will be filled out and discussed with the parent at the time of pick up.

Biting

Biting is common in a childcare environment. Children bite because they are teething, frustrated, curious, exploring, imitating, anxious, seeking attention, or they just like the reaction. Almost all biters are nonverbal and are unable to express themselves using their words. Most biters will cease to bite when they become more verbal. In the meantime we will take all precautions necessary to deter any biting. If a child does get bit, he/she will be attended to immediately. They will be comforted, and first aid given if needed. The biting child will be redirected to appropriate activities and

talked to about the biting incident. Both parents will be notified of the incident via *Brightwheel* and/or a Bite Report will be filled out and discussed with the parent at the time of pick up, but the names of the children will not be released.

We will work with your child as much as possible to help them get through this time of development safely. However, if a child continues to bite the child may need to be un-enrolled from the center if it is determined that the safety of the other children is being compromised or that the child is unable to handle the stress of being in group care.

Childcare/Educational Supplies

The Stepping Stone will collect a curriculum fee at each enrollment and again each August to provide your child with what they will need throughout their day for activities or to make care more comfortable for them. This includes but is not limited to: individual sleeping arrangements, educational toys/ materials for infants & curriculum, pencils, markers, crayons, glue, paint, scissors, paper etc. for toddlers through school age children.

Parents of Infants will need to supply:

- Bottles
- Disposable diapers
- Wet wipes
- Ointment
- 2 changes of clothing and burp rags
- Pacifier or comforting item(s) for infant
- Folding mat (non-absorbent or washable) with cover and blanket for walking infants

*The center provides milk and table foods at meal times according to the FDA's standards. Any formula and or baby food will need to be supplied by the parents along with bottles.

Parents of Non-Potty Trained children will need to supply:

- Disposable diapers
- Wet wipes
- Ointment
- At least 3 complete changes of clothing
- Folding mat (non-absorbent or washable) with cover and blanket for rest time

Parents of Preschool and older age children will need to supply:

- Extra clothing
- Folding mat (non-absorbent or washable) with cover and blanket for rest time

Childcare/ Education and Curriculum

The Stepping Stone utilizes age appropriate curriculum for each group of children that provides hands-on, center based, individual, and group activities with carefully selected themes that capture children's interests. These interactive activities help children develop a love for learning while they are growing, playing, and having fun. Our staff is trained in utilizing this curriculum to provide advanced learning to your child, targeted at their specific age and readiness level.

School Age Children

The Stepping Stone offers age appropriate and fun activities to school age children during afterschool hours, school breaks and the summer to help maintain their school taught skills. The school age staff will also encourage after school students to complete homework assignments upon arrival to the center after a school day.

**The Stepping Stone: Private Early Learning Center Parent Handbook policies are subject to change in part or in whole with 2 weeks written notice. Additional supplemental policies may also be issued as needed for special programs or activities.

THE STEPPING STONE: PRIVATE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

INFANT SAFE SLEEP POLICY

Purpose: The purpose of the Safe Sleep Policy is to maintain a safe sleep environment that reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUIDS) in children less than one year of age. Texas law requires all licensed child care facilities that provide care for children less than one year of age to implement and maintain a written safe sleep policy in accordance with the most recent safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Texas child care licensing rules require licensed child care facilities to keep posted or provide parent(s) and/or guardians(s) who have infants in care a copy of the facility's safe sleep policy.

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden death of an infant less than one year of age that cannot be explained after a thorough investigation has been conducted, including a complete autopsy, an examination of the death scene, and a review of the clinical history.

Sudden unexpected infant death (SUIDS) is the sudden and unexpected death of an infant less than one year of age in which the manner and cause of death are not immediately obvious prior to investigation. Causes of sudden unexpected infant death include, but are not limited to, metabolic disorders, hypothermia or hyperthermia, neglect or homicide, poisoning, and accidental suffocation.

Child care providers can maintain safer sleep environments for infants that help lower the chances of SIDS. Our goal is to take proactive steps to reduce the risk of SIDS in child care and to work with parents to keep infants safer while they sleep. To do so, this facility will practice the following safe sleep policy:

Safe Sleep Practices

1. Infants, less than one (1) year age, will always be placed on their backs to sleep. When, in the opinion of the infant's licensed health care provider, an infant requires alternative sleep positions or special sleeping arrangements, the provider must have on file at the facility written instructions, (Form J-800-2710 INFANT SLEEP EXCEPTION) signed by the infant's licensed health care provider, detailing the alternative sleep positions or special sleeping arrangements. Caregivers will put the infant to sleep as specified in the written instructions.
2. When infants can easily turn from their stomachs to their backs and from their backs to their stomachs, they shall be initially placed on their backs, but shall be allowed to adopt whatever positions they prefer for sleep. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants are placed on their back to sleep, but when infants can easily turn over from their back to their stomach, they may adopt whatever position they prefer for sleep. We will follow this recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
3. Sleeping infants shall have a supervised nap/sleep period. The caregiver shall be positioned where he or she can hear and see the infant. The caregiver shall physically check on the infant frequently during napping or sleeping and shall remain in close proximity to the infant in order to hear and see them if they have difficulty during napping/sleeping or when they awaken.
4. Equipment such as a sound machine or radio at a volume that may interfere with the caregiver's ability to see or hear a child who may be distressed, is prohibited.

5. Steps will be taken to keep infants from overheating by regulating the room temperature, avoiding excessive bedding, and not over-dressing or wrapping the infant. Infants should be dressed appropriately for the environment, with no more than one (1) layer more than an adult would wear to be comfortable in that environment. Caregivers will conduct physical checks of the infant to ensure the infant is not overheated or distressed.
6. The lighting in the room must allow the caregiver/teacher to see each infant's face, to view the color of the infant's skin, and to check on the infant's breathing and placement of the pacifier (if used).
7. All caregivers will receive in-person or online training on infant safe sleep based on AAP safe sleep recommendations. This training must be completed within 30 days of employment or volunteering and will be completed every year.

Safe Sleep Environment

1. Room temperature will be kept at no less than 68°F and no more than 85°F. Infants are supervised to ensure they are not overheated or chilled.
2. Infants' heads and face will not be covered during sleep. Infants' cribs will not have blankets or bedding hanging on the sides of the crib. We may use sleep clothing (sleepers with free movement of the arms and legs) that is designed to keep an infant warm without the possible hazard of covering the head or face during sleep/nap time.
3. No blankets, loose bedding, comforters, pillows, bumper pads, or any object that can increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation or strangulation will be used in cribs, playpens or other sleeping equipment.
4. Toys and stuffed animals will be removed from the crib when the infant is sleeping. Pacifiers will be allowed in infants' cribs while they sleep. The pacifier cannot have cords or attaching mechanisms.
5. Only an individually-assigned safety-approved crib, portable crib, or playpen with a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet will be used for infant napping or sleeping.
6. Only one infant may occupy a crib or playpen at one time.
7. Sitting devices such as car safety seats, strollers, swings, infant carriers, infant slings, and other sitting devices will not be used for sleep/nap time. Infants who fall asleep anywhere other than a crib, portable crib, or playpen must be placed in the crib or playpen for the remainder of their sleep or nap time.
8. No person shall smoke or otherwise use tobacco products in any area of the child care facility during the period of time when children cared for under the license are present.
9. Home monitors or commercial devices marketed to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) shall not be used in place of supervision while children are napping and sleeping.
10. All parents/guardians of infants shall be informed of and given the facility's written Safe Sleep Policy at enrollment.
11. To promote healthy development, infants who are awake will be given supervised "tummy time" for exercise and for play.