



# First Steps Child Development Center

# Parent Handbook

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## **PHILOSOPHY**

The First Steps Child Development Center provides childcare of the highest quality, stressing a safe, secure, and inclusive environment; a nurturing, professional team of staff; and the finest educational experiences. We are committed to providing a program that balances each child's intellectual, physical, social, creative, and emotional needs and supports development across all domains of learning. We believe that early learning is relationship-based. Our fundamental goal is to establish trusting relationships among children, teachers, and parents that foster a sense of belonging and support healthy cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. We value families as a child's first and most important teacher and actively collaborate with families to support each child's growth. All children develop at a different pace and possess a wide range of strengths and needs. It is our belief that children learn best through hands-on, stimulating, and engaging activities, as well as through consistent daily routines that support exploration, independence, and problem-solving. Our curriculum is guided by research-based early childhood practices and aligned with state early learning standards. We use ongoing observation and assessment to inform instruction and ensure each child's individual development is supported. Our classroom environments are intentionally

designed to be developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and culturally responsive. We honor and respect the diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences of the families we serve. Instruction is guided by ongoing cycle of observation, documentation, assessment, planning, implementation, and reflection to ensure individualized learning experiences

We are here to provide a fun, educational atmosphere where children are encouraged to think critically, cooperate with peers, develop self-regulation skills, and build mutual respect. Aligned with Washington State Early Learning and development guidelines.

## **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the First Steps Child Development Center is to provide childcare in a caring, nurturing and developmentally rich environment within a safe, secure and clean facility and to empower our team of employees to experience professional and personal growth. Our mission is to build upon a child's natural curiosity to create a community of learners. We nurture children's curiosity and turn it into a love of learning. Program goals are informed by child assessment data, family input, and ongoing program evaluation.

## **OUR GOALS**

The goals of the First Steps Child Development Center are to:

- Provide a caring, safe, nurturing environment.
- Provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum that engages children in activities to promote problem solving, higher order thinking skills and creativity.
- Create an environment conducive for learning and exploration.
- Reinforce positive behavior, self-awareness and cooperative skills with praise and positive reinforcement.
- Provide a well-rounded daily schedule that addresses all domains of learning and meets the needs of all students enrolled.
- Build a solid foundation between family, school and community.
- Engage families in curriculum planning, developmental goal setting, and program improvement.
- Maintain a professional early childhood teaching staff
- Be a model early childhood program for our local community.
- Serve as a model in the community for quality childcare by maintaining standards aligned with National Association for the Education of Young Children.

## **DEFINITION OF FAMILY**

In this handbook, family refers to a parent, legal guardian, or any individual responsible for the well-being and best interests of the child.

## **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY AND INCULSION**

Families are welcome and children will be admitted to the center regardless of race, gender, religion, or national origin and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Classroom materials, books, visuals, and learning experience reflect diverse cultures, languages, family structures, and abilities represented in our community. To best ensure that their needs are met, when children with special needs are enrolled, there will be consultations with the parents and as needed, the Center's medical advisor, the staff who will be involved, and any other appropriate individuals. Additionally, an assessment to determine the full scope of needs and appropriate services may be required. Assessments may be made on a periodic basis after a child with special needs is enrolled to ensure that the child continues to have their needs adequately met. If translation services are required for anyone in the family, please see the program director for assistance.

First Steps Development Center believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs. Staff participate in ongoing professional development in equality, inclusion, and culturally responsive practices.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except as required by licensing, law, and regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children on our program are confidential.

## **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS/CHILD TO STAFF RATIOS**

All staff at First Steps Child Development Center are hired in compliance with the Washington State DCYF licensing requirements as a minimum standard. Educational requirements are verified and maintained for each position. Caregivers complete required orientation and ongoing professional development in the areas of child growth and development, health and safety practices, developmentally appropriate practices, positive guidance, family engagement, cultural and individual diversity, and professional. All required training, including Childcare Basics, STARS annual training hours, CPR and first aid, bloodborne pathogens, food handlers permit, Safe Sleep, and background checks are completed in accordance with the WAC Licensing Regulations. All staff maintain active profiles in the Washington State MERIT system to document training, certifications, and educational qualifications. First Steps maintain child-to-staff ratios and compliance with the Washington Administrative Code Licensing Standards.

Teacher to student Ratio and allowable class size:

- Infants 4:1 Maximum class size:8

- Wobblers and toddlers 7:1 Maximum class size: Toddler room is 8 wobbler room 6
- Preschool 10:1 Maximum class size: Preschool 1: 6 Preschool 2: 9 Mixed age Group: 10
- School age 15:1 Maximum class size: 10

Whenever possible, staffing assignment support continuity of care so children experience consistent relationships with primary caregivers. Staff participate in reflective practice and job embedded professional development to strengthen teacher/child interactions, instructional support, and classroom organization. Professional Development Plans are reviewed annually and aligned with individual staff goals and program improvement priorities. Our site utilizes an Early Achievers Consultant for additional support in the classroom. We also have access to a medical and mental health consultant.

## **DAYS/HOURS OF OPERATION**

The center is open Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6:00pm.

We ask all parents to be at center by 5:55pm as we are closed at 6:00pm. The latest drop off time is 10:30am. Past that time will be denied entry unless approved 24 hours in advance.

The center is closed for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, July 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>, the Friday before Labor Day for staff training, Labor Day, Veteran's Day Thanksgiving Day and the day after, Christmas Day and day after, if the holiday falls on the weekend we will be closed based on the state holiday schedule. Early day closures are Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve at 2:00pm. Any emergency closures due to weather/illness/ will be posted on our Facebook pages and or texted to parents not available social media by request. Any new closure dates will be posted and made public before dates. Yearly standard closure dates and tuition rates are posted by December for the following year. Tuition rate is the same as holiday closures and weather.

## **TUITION RATES/FEES/PAYMENT OPTIONS**

Classroom

Weekly rate is the following

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Infants (6 wks-12 months)      | \$425.00 |
| Wobblers (13 months-19 months) | \$355.00 |
| Preschool (3-5yrs)             | \$330.00 |
| Before/After school            | \$250.00 |

Registration fee \$50.00 at time of registration and nonrefundable, this will hold your spot for two weeks up to enrollment date.

Late pick up fee first time \$1.00 per minute per child  
Late pickup fee second time is \$5.00 per min per child  
If late pickup is reoccurring, you will be subject to termination of care.  
Late payment fee \$35.00 (all payment due by payment schedule contract)  
Returned check fee \$35.00

All part-time care payments are due on payments dates and regardless of attendance the rate is provided the same as holding the spot for days like weekly rate. Part time rates differ and can be calculated upon request. We offer 3 days or 2 days a week for part-time care.

All payments are due by the arranged date you choose from your registration packet. All payments are due whether your child attends or not. You may choose from monthly or biweekly payments. Payment for this contracted schedule is required on the dates you choose this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary all year. No credits are given back for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closures or closures due to implement weather.

### **OVERTIME CHARGES/LATE PICKUP**

Overtime rates apply to parents that go over the maximum of 10 hours a day in the center. Part-time families that go over their allotted schedules picked will also face additional charges for those days or hours. Any late pick up after closure will be a \$1 per minute/per child the first time. Anytime thereafter it will move up to \$5 per minute per child. If a child is not picked up within 30 minutes of closing and all emergency contacts have been attempted, local authorities may be contacted as required by WAC. Staff will remain with the child until proper release procedures are followed.

### **PAYMENTS**

Tuition must be paid in full by the arranged due date, tuition not paid by 5 calendar days after at close will be charged a \$35.00 late fee. If tuition is not paid in full by 6<sup>th</sup> day, disenrollment may occur. Monthly co-payments must be paid in full by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. Co-payments not paid by the 5<sup>th</sup> or arranged date will also be charged a \$35.00 late fee. Each family is allowed to use one week of vacation credit per calendar year after 90 days of enrollment. Vacation credit must be one scheduled week off and not broken up into days. To use your vacation credit, a vacation written notice for week must be turned in to the director two weeks prior to the date of the vacation. No tuition credits will be given for holidays or weather closures. A two-week notice is required for disenrollment.

First Steps accepts Check/money order and cash as payments. If two checks are returned with insufficient funds, you will be placed on a cash only payment plan. All payments are to be made at First Steps.

**No allowances, credits, refunds, or makeup days shall be made for occasional absences. At the end of the year tax information will be available at the end of January by request.**

## **MEALS**

The facility is operated in accordance with the USDA policy which does not permit discrimination due to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any USDA related activity should write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington DC 20250.

A caregiver who was trained in first aid for choking is present at all meals.

Meals or snacks are served every 2-3 hours. Any child with permanent special dietary needs must have a completed "special needs documentation package" (updated annually) on file in the center. If the special needs are less than 30 days a note from a physician will substitute for a special needs form. Children with restricted diets due to religious/cultural beliefs must have a letter from the parents stating specifically what foods are not allowed. Only food prepared at the center is served for meals and snacks. For special events store-bought food only will be allowed in the center. No outside food can be brought in. If your child is eating at drop off, we ask you to finish in car.

The center will provide all food for the child. We will provide infants with Iron fortified Similac and Similac sensitive baby formula and will provide baby food including all varieties of fruits, vegetables and whole grain cereals. Breast feeding mothers may provide breast milk or visit the center to feed their infants. Bottled breast milk is discarded after the child refuses it during mealtime. Bottles must have the child's name and the current date labeled on them. No medications or other liquids may be mixed with the formula unless written authority from the physician (specific information about storage and serving is required). New baby foods should first be tried at home. Parents will inform the center which baby foods have been provided to the child so that food can be added to the baby's menu.

### **Infant Feedings**

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed "on cue" to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent caregiver/teacher.
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's

name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to days.

- Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after consultation with the child's family.

### **Children 24 Months and Older**

- No child shall go for more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy.

### **School Aged Participants**

- Before and after school childcare participants will be offered a light snack at each session. Or breakfast if arrives before bus departures.

#### Mealtimes

Breakfast 630-800am

a.m. Snack 9-930a.m.

Lunch 1100-1200pm

p.m. Snack 230-300pm

## **GUIDANCE POLICY**

Guidance used in First Steps will be implemented in such a way as to protect the child's self-esteem and emotional health. We help children learn the appropriate ways to behave.

### **Acceptable guidance techniques include:**

#### **Redirection**

- Planning ahead to prevent problems
- Encouragement of appropriate behavior
- Using consistent, clear rules and
- Logical or natural consequences

If a child's behavior becomes harmful, we will at this point call the parent for pickup. If behavior issues become or are ongoing, we will work with the family to help find healthy solutions/support. If the behavior becomes unmanageable for staff and center, we will start the unenrollment process.

First steps follows WAC code for Guidance Regulations.

Unacceptable guidance techniques include any humiliating or frightening punishment. These include but are not limited to the following:

Spanking, slapping, hitting, pinching, shaking, or any form of physical punishment  
Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family  
Withholding or forcing meals, snacks, or naps  
Binding, tying to restrict movement, or placing in a confined space such as a closet,  
Punishment for lapses in toilet training.  
Corporal punishment of any kind. Humiliation, intimidation or shaming. Isolation used as punishment. Deprivation of meals, snacks, rest or basic needs. Physical restraint except in rare situations necessary to protect immediate safety.

While in the facility parents are required to follow the above-mentioned procedures. We try to teach emotional skills, modeling, calm down space, social stories as prevention measures before we call parents for pick up.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

Daily schedules and weekly activity plans will be posted in each classroom. Daily outdoor play must occur for all ages, weather permitting. Staff will use good judgment when the temperature is cold (32-65 degrees) or hot (85-100 degrees). Children recovering from illness who are restricted from outside activities may not attend if the weather permits outdoor play. No child shall be denied access to any activity if possible.

The daily activities are developed from a knowledge of individual and age appropriateness. No child will be restricted from participating in any activity unless the child's behavior warrants the restriction due to safety concerns. Parents should dress their children to participate fully and sometimes get dirty/messy. Parents requests to restrict children from "playing in the sandbox; doing finger-painting; playing with certain children etc." cannot be honored. Employees will attempt to protect children's clothing and other belongings, but the center is not responsible for lost or damaged items.

First Steps does not allow food or beverages outside without permission. We have other children and staff with food allergies frequently on site and this is a safety measure.

## **REST TIME**

A rest time is scheduled from approximately 12:00pm-2:00pm daily depending on when the child finishes mealtime and potty time. Infants will rest as their individual schedules dictate; we will not wake a sleeping child and follow WAC state policy. Children will rest on their mats with coverings and blankets as appropriate. Personal items used for sleeping (teddy bears etc.) may be brought from home. At rest time children will remain on their mats for a minimum of 30 minutes after which the staff will prepare quiet activities for the remaining time for those children who do not sleep. Infants will nap in cribs. Infants will be placed to sleep on their backs as recommended by the American

Academy of Pediatrics as a preventive measure against sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). We ask parents to take home blankets and personal nap items for washing once a week. The center washes all mat coverings once a week or as needed.

### **DAILY ADMISSION/PICK-UP**

Each time a child is admitted to the center, the parent must sign the child in and walk the child into the child's classroom. Any new or unfamiliar adult must be prepared to present a picture identification before the child will be released to them. Children will only be released to people listed on the child's authorized pick-up list. No authorizations for pick up will be made over the phone. Please notify the center when your child will not attend due to illness or other situations. No drop off time later than 10:30am will be admitted into center and all late pickups will occur the late pickup fee.

It is not uncommon for non-custodial parents to attempt to take their children without consent of the custodial parents. It is our policy to ensure all appropriate staff are well informed of custodial situations between parents. If your family has a custody agreement or there is a restraining order, we require that a copy be provided to the center.

### **APPROPRIATE DRESS FOR CHILDREN**

Children should be dressed appropriately, as we go out in weather above 32 degrees and below 90 degrees. Shoes must always be worn by walking children in the event of emergency evacuation. Children are not permitted to wear open toe sandals because the materials on the playground can cause injury to bare feet. During cool weather children should have coats, hats, and mittens/gloves. Extra clothing should be left at the center for unexpected accidents or for layering in cold weather. The children will participate in various "messy" activities designed to stimulate growth and learning. Parents should consider the durability of their child's clothing. Clothing should be labeled with the child's name. The center cannot be held liable for lost or damaged personal items.

### **DIAPERING/ POTTY TRAINING**

Only disposable diapers will be used. Parents must provide diapers as well as diaper wipes for the use during changing to help prevent the possibility of allergic reaction. No diaper ointment will be applied during diaper changing unless a medical authorization form has been completed in advance. Baby powder and cornstarch must also have medical authorization forms completed. Medical authorization forms are good for up to 2 weeks then a new form must be filled out.

Potty training will start in our 2.5 Preschool room. We encourage pullups first, then once the child is dry more than wet, we will switch to underwear and encourage lots of changes of clothes. We will offer the bathroom at every hour in this process or as needed to child request. If your child is learning before entering this room and enrolled in our

toddler room we will start the process, but bathroom breaks will be offered as best as we can with staffing availability and count to ratio still being met safely. The child will need to be in a pullup until transition into preschool class. As we still have changing tables and children in diapers in this classroom. Once your child is potty training, we encourage them to wipe themselves and start the process of them taking clothing down and up themselves. Once a child is fully potty trained, they are encouraged to wipe fully on their own. We will offer wet wipes to ensure proper cleanup. All potty-training children will be changed in bathroom of preschool center standup or changing mat available for teachers in bathroom. Mat is disinfected between every change. Soiled clothing will be in a sealed bag for you to take home that day and wash.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

The center will attempt to make reasonable accommodation for children with special needs. A special needs package must be completed by a physician and submitted to the center before enrollment begins. IEPs, and other individualized plans will be used only by teachers for developmental planning for your child. IEP's will not be shared with anyone that is not directly responsible for the well-being of your child unless permission is granted by the parent/guardian.

## **10 Hour Rule**

Children may remain in the center for up to 10 hours per day. Weekly fees cover 10 hours of care per day and any amount over the 10 hours will be charged extra. Parents may seek a waiver for the 10-hour rule; however, the waiver does not waive the extra charge for care over 10 hours per day. If parents are on a subsidy program, they must get the waiver approved by the agency. Parents who pick up their children after closing will be charged the fee listed above. Employees will contact local authorities for children who have not been picked up 30 mins after closing. Parents are required to have someone available for contact at all times of care.

## **ADMINISTERING MEDICATION**

Children with special needs or temporary illnesses often need medications while at the center. Medications prescribed by a doctor must have a prescription label on the medication with an official note from a medical authority. Permission for medication must be given prior to administering medication. Dates that medication is to be given must be specified on the permission form. If a child requires a medication for more than 30 days a "special needs referral package" must be completed annually (asthma etc.) Parents must provide the dispenser and plastic bag for storage. Medications will be stored in either an isolated medication box in the refrigerator or in a locked container inaccessible to children. All medications will be administered by staff who have been

specially trained annually to dispense medications. Creams and lotions can be authorized for up to two weeks if a signed permission slip is completed. Sunscreen permission slips will be provided in the month of May. Sunscreen permission slips will need to be completed annually.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Washington State law requires all children enrolled in licensed childcare to have a current certification of immunization status (CIS) on file prior to attendance.

Children must meet Washington State immunization requirements for childcare entry unless a completed and state approved certification of exemption is provided.

First Steps Child Development Center accepts medically verified exemptions only. A completed Washington State Certificate of Exemption signed by a licensed health care provider must be submitted prior to enrollment. Children who are out of compliance with immunization requirements must be excluded from care until documentation is updated in accordance with state requirements. Immunization records must always remain current. Families are responsible for updating the center with any changes to immunization status. During outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases, children who are not fully immunized must be excluded from care as directed by public health authorities.

## **ILL/MILDLY ILL CHILDREN**

Children who are unable to participate in the day's activities should not be in attendance. The program will be very strict on admittance of ill or mildly ill children. If a child is sent home ill from the center, time limits and other instructions will be given to the parents as to the return of the child to our care. The center is required to post any contagious disease. Please contact the center to inform us of any potentially contagious disease that may need to be posted.

Children with any of the following symptoms will not be permitted to remain in care at centers with programs not specifically approved for the care of ill children unless we receive a physician's note stating otherwise. Children must be well enough to participate in all activities to attend even with a physician note.

1. Fever of at least 100 F under arm (axillary) or higher AND who also has one or more of the following:

- A. Diarrhea/vomiting
- B. Earache
- C. Signs of irritability or confusion
- D. Sore throat
- E. Rash
- F. Fatigue that limits participation in daily activities.

Children may return to care 24 hours after fever/vomiting/diarrhea last took place without medication this does not refer to time of pickup from center but time the symptoms stopped  
\*\*\* No rectal or ear temperatures will be taken. Digital thermometers are recommended due to concerns about mercury exposure if glass thermometers break.

**Vomiting** on 2 or more occasions within the past 24 hours.

**Diarrhea:** 3 or more watery stools within a 24-hour period or 1 bloody stool.

**Rash:** especially with fever or itching.

**Eye discharge or conjunctivitis (pinkeye)** until clear or until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment.

**Sick appearance, not feeling well and/or not able to keep up with program activities.**

**Open or oozing sores**, unless properly covered **and** 24 hours has passed since starting antibiotic treatment, if treatment is necessary.

**Lice or scabies:** For head lice, children and staff may return to First Steps care after treatment and no nits or eggs. For scabies, children and staff may return after treatment.

**\*Child must be picked up within one hour of being notified from the Child Care Center. All parents must be reached at any time of the day or have backup to be reached**

\*\*\*\*\*

Following an illness or injury, children will be readmitted to the program when they no longer have the above symptoms, no longer have significant discomfort and Public Health Communicable Disease guidelines for Child Care are met.

**\*Must be 24 hours from the last symptom. OR a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious/or well enough for return.**

Minor injuries will be documented and shared with families that pick up through a written incident report. Head injuries, significant bumps, or injuries involving swelling or concerning symptoms were reported to families immediately. In the event of a medical emergency, staff will call 911 first, then notify the parent or guardian, followed by emergency contacts if needed. Licensing authorities will be notified when required by WAC.

COVID and pandemic guidelines will always be followed by the CDC recommendation. ANY symptoms for covid must be tested for return to center. Symptoms are subject to change. Any new guidelines will be posted on our parent board in centers and Parent page on Facebook. First Steps only accepts medically exempt children from vaccinations and not religious or personal.

## **NO SMOKING/DRUGS / ALCOHOL / FIREARMS ALLOWED**

The center is a **non-smoking** facility. Adults picking up their children who show any obvious signs of drinking or drug use will be asked if a designated driver or another adult is

present. First Steps staff **will** ask you to please find a sober driver. If the parents refuse our help the police will be notified.

**At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of Firearm, Ammunition and/or Weapon on First Steps property for any reason.** Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT/COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

First Steps values strong partnerships with families. Open, respectful, and consistent communication is essential to supporting each child's growth and development.

### **DAILY COMMUNICATION**

Daily classroom highlights, activities, reminders, and new letters are shared through our private, invitation only First Steps family Facebook group. Families are encouraged to check this page regularly for updates regarding:

- Classroom activities and learning experiences.
- Project time, free play, and outdoor engagement.
- Center announcements and reminders.
- Policy updates and important notices.
- Weather or emergency updates or closures.
- Yearly closure dates.
- Payment reminders to avoid late fees.
- Pictures of daily activities with picture release approved.

First Steps maintains a private Facebook group for enrolled families and staff only. Families will be removed from group upon care ending. All contacts shared in the group are considered private and may not be copied, screenshot, reshared, or distributed outside of the group without written permission from the Director. This protects the privacy and consent of all enrolled families. Photographs posted include only children with approved photo release forms on file. Parents may post within the group for center related communications, such as notifying staff of an absence or asking general questions about the school day. The Facebook group is not monitored for emergencies. For urgent matters please contact the Director directly or center directly.

### **STAFF BOUNDARIES AND COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS**

We asked families to refrain from sending friend requests to staff members or privately messaging staff through personal social media accounts. Requesting personal phone numbers is against company policy. This protects staff personal time outside of work hours and allows classroom teachers to remain focused on active supervision and engagement with children during program

hours. All questions or concerns should be directed at the director during business hours. Families may contact the director, Crystal, Monday through Friday 6:30am to 6:00pm by:

- Email: [Crystalechelle@icloud.com](mailto:Crystalechelle@icloud.com)
- Phone: 360-628-2218
- Facebook Messenger (work hours only)

Questions received outside of business hours will be addressed as soon as possible during regular operating hours. Unless otherwise an emergency.

**Please refer to our Parent information board for updates and closure information. This is posted in each center as well as our private Facebook group. This group is for enrolled families only and you will be removed upon care ending. All photos are private and not allowed for reshare.**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/182803221804689/?mibextid=oMANbw>

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

First Steps maintains an open-door policy. Parents and guardians are welcome to visit the program at any time during regular operating hours. All visitors must sign in and out upon leaving. While staff will always do their best to speak with families, classroom staff are primarily responsible for supervising children. If a longer discussion is needed, please schedule an appointment. The infant classroom welcomes parents and guardians to nurse or feed their infants as needed.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO POLICY**

Children may be photographed or video recorded for internal classroom documentation and, when authorized, external program use. Photographs and videos support children's sense of belonging, document learning experiences, and strengthen the home school connection. Add enrollment, each family completes a photo release permission form indicating whether images may be used internally and externally. No child's image will be used outside the program without written consent on file. All images shared within the private Facebook group are confidential and may not be copied, screenshot, or reshared.

First Steps utilizes security cameras in exterior areas and entry points of the building for general facility security and monitoring purposes. Cameras are intended to support building safety and controlled access. They do not provide full cast room coverage and are not used as a substitute for active staff supervision. Camera access is restricted to the director and owner. Footage is confidential and only reviewed when necessary for safety or required by law or licensing authorities. Security cameras are not available for live family viewing.

## **AGGRESSIVE/INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

All child experiences while at the center are considered confidential and will not be discussed with anyone other than the child's teacher, management and the child's parents.

An Early Achievers consultant may be included in classroom management's decisions, to include behavior management. In the rare event when positive guidance techniques may not be effective on certain behaviors, the following procedures will be followed.

Repeated aggressive acts against children, adults, or equipment may indicate a special behavior problem. A conference will be held with parents, caregivers and management to decide the appropriate course of action. Working together we will attempt to determine the cause of the behaviors and develop supportive strategies as a team to improve behaviors. It may be decided that a large group environment is not suited to the individual child's needs.

Parents will be notified of any unacceptable behaviors that endanger the health and safety of their child or other children in the center. On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

Aggressive behaviors include acts of violence against other children and adults; willful destruction of center property; or the repeated disregard for the authority of the center employees. A parent or guardian has an hour to pick up the child when contacted by staff about behavior.

Biting in younger children, usually under the age of 3, is sometimes used to handle frustrating situations. Each child's reason to bite is an individual as the child.

Unfortunately, biting is much more prevalent in large group environments. When a child bites, a record will be kept on the child who bit to assist staff in determining if a pattern of biting may exist. If the bite breaks the skin, both the victim's parents and the biter's parents will be notified.

If a pattern of biting develops 2-3 times a week, a conference will be held with parents, teachers and management to determine the appropriate course of action.

Biters over the age of 36 months are not as frequent as younger children. Special concerns will be given to older biters.

## **CHILD ABUSE IDENTIFICATION, PREVENTION AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, all licensed childcare providers are 'mandated reporters' and they are legally required to report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of First Steps are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition

prior to making a report. Mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect.

We, at First Steps, take this responsibility very seriously. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. By law mandated reporters cannot be held liable for good faith reports made to Child Protective Services which are later determined to be unfounded.

The employees at First Steps Child Development Center will be properly trained and accountable for implementation of child abuse identification, prevention, and reporting procedures. Any suspected maltreatment situation will be reported without regards to personal bias or influenced judgment. Any employee who fails to report suspected abuse or neglect is subject to disciplinary action, including termination and possible civil prosecution. No personal bias may enter the decision to report including friendship, working relationships, familial relationships etc.

First Steps employees must have a cleared state and/or federal background check. Until all checks are cleared, the employee must work within line-of-sight of another employee who has completed and cleared background checks.

Employees suspected of child abuse, neglect or not complying with the centers guidance policy will be immediately removed from their work site and a written referral will be made to Child Protective Services.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

The center will be prepared for emergencies including fire evacuation, severe weather, accidents/injuries, lockdown and earthquakes. The center maintains and regularly updates the disaster policy as well as the health care policy which are included in the parent packet provided.

All employees are certified with pediatric first aid and rescue breathing. Emergency first aid will be applied by staff as needed. No medication will be provided without written consent from a medical authority and a parent. First Aid Kits are in each classroom and on each playground. All blood exposures will be treated using universal precautions against the threat of HIV, HBV, or other communicable diseases. An incident report will be provided to the parent at pick up.

## **WEATHER DELAYS AND CLOSING PROCEDURES**

First Steps Child Development Center follows NTPS School District plans. For updates and information you can go to the following site <http://www.schoolreport.org> we will also have the quickest message on our Facebook page. If you are unable to have access to our social media page, please contact management for text or call updates.

\*If NTPS Schools are closed, First Steps Child Development Center will also be closed. If NTPS is closed for holiday breaks First Steps management will make the call on if or

any closures or delays after assessment of roads/staff and family's safe ability to get into centers.

*\* If NTPS Schools have a delayed opening, First Steps Child Development Center will be delayed and also make the final call on any changes due to staff safely getting in*

\*If power outage occurs for longer than 1 hour during operating hours parents will be called to come to get children from center.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS / PESTICIDES**

Washington State does not have smog or severe air pollution; however, should it become an issue, First Steps will limit outdoor play and physical activities if there is Poor air quality.

If First Steps Child Development Center uses any pesticides on the premises, a notice will be posted 48 hours prior notifying families when the pesticides will be used, where they will be used, and any other information pertaining to the pesticide and its use. Children will not be allowed in the treatment area for 48 hours after treatment. Pesticides will only be applied when children are not present, and staff will ensure there is no residue left from the pesticide when children return to treated areas. Any questions or concerns should be addressed with the center director.

## **PET POLICY**

The selection of pets will be in accordance with the state licensing requirements. No birds, reptiles or amphibians that can cause severe illness in children will be located on the premises. Staff and children will wash hands after handling pets. Children will be always supervised while handling pets. Animals, cages and equipment will be properly cared for and cleaned. Staff will clean pet cages and equipment in the utility sink located in the laundry room.

## **ALLERGIES**

Health forms must be completed prior to enrollment. Any known allergies or dietary restrictions should be noted on the health form. If your child has a food allergy, a written note from a medical authority must be provided. The medical authority should state what

food would be an appropriate replacement. All Epi Pens must not be expired and the child's name on it. All staff have been trained on usage.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

All field trip transportation will be provided by the center. When transported by vehicle children will be required to adhere to all child seat safety standards. Child seats will be provided by the parents. As pedestrians, children will all wear brightly colored clothing or other identifiable items. Children will walk as pairs in small groups as determined by ratio. All staff members in charge of children on a field trip will have the following: clear background checks, current CPR, and current First Aid. A minimum of two staff is required for each field trip. Center ratios will be maintained during all field trips and in some cases will require extra staff supervision. Staff will always have a roster of children. Children will be checked in and out of the building while on a field trip. Children will not be allowed to leave with a parent or guardian from a field trip. All children leaving the building must return to the building to be signed out by a parent or guardian. Name to face recognition will be done before leaving the building, throughout the transition times and again upon arrival at center. A first aid kit, cell phone in case of emergencies, and emergency contact information for each child will be with a staff member at all times during field trips. A parent or guardian's written consent must be obtained for each field trip before the child will be allowed to leave the building.

## **CURRICULUM**

First Steps Child Development Center curriculum philosophy is an emergent based project curriculum program. We have found children learn best by doing, exploring and playing. This program is used to develop supportive activities based on teachers' assessments and observations of students. Our classroom environments and materials are Emergent based project curriculum. Children have ample opportunities during their day to participate in dramatic play, social interactions and all forms of art, to include but not limited to music, drawing and painting. Our goal is to help encourage children to become confident in themselves, develop independence and to increase large and fine motor skills.

## **DUAL LANGUAGE**

First Steps will make every effort to make all families feel comfortable and welcome, by having information available in languages they understand, bringing in a translator or using applications to translate information. Classrooms will have items marked in languages that reflect students' cultures. Dual languages are used in the classrooms where staff are teaching and are proficient in a second language.

## **SAFE SLEEPING POSITION**

Infants must be placed to sleep on their backs. Infants who fall asleep in bouncers will be moved to their cribs on their backs. Infants may not sleep in bouncers, car seats etc. A physician's note must be provided if you request that your infant sleep in a different position other than their back. We allow all infants to follow their own sleep patterns and follow the WAC

## **CHILD FILE MANAGEMENT**

Children's files are kept on site in a locked cabinet in the administrator's office. The files are updated as needed or on a quarterly basis. The child's information is kept confidential, and parent permission will be requested for classroom teachers to have access for developmental information. Legal parents and legal guardians will have immediate access to their child's file when requested. Child files will also be available for review by regulatory authorities upon request. Any information requested by other medical or educational professionals must be authorized by the parent in writing and approval will be kept in the child's file.

## **TRANSITIONS**

Transition in Childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

### **Transition from home to center**

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At the time, please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

### **Transition between learning programs/classrooms**

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

### **Infant Transitions**

Infants experience many transitions during the first year of life. The first year of life has many developmental milestones for the child to reach. In the infant room transitions include making a change from breast milk to formula, breast feeding to bottle, and bottle to cup. Adding table foods is also a transition once the child is ready.

Emotionally infants may gravitate back and forth between teacher and parent many times. When in childcare little ones need to interact with other children and the teacher. The experience an infant has will foster positive feelings which in turn develop the relationship needed for growth in the next level of class. Expect some changes in your baby or toddler. While they are getting used to the new routine and schedule, they may be clingy, sad, or out of sorts. This is normal for many children, according to research, because children's stress hormones elevate during the transition. But it has no lasting

damage. When transitioning to an older class we start to transition about one month before the next birthday, depending on developmental needs as well. We provide a lot of time in the next class to help prepare the whole child for the change.

Examples include:

- Bottle to cup and introduction to solid foods.
- Highchair to age-appropriate chairs and tables.
- Variety of toys and class options such as art and fine motor.
- Cribs to mats.
- Feeding themselves.
- Develop physically like grasping, sitting, mobility, and emotionally like self soothe, transition between teachers to parent and teacher to teacher.
- Emotionally handle change in the class between providers, recognize parents and teachers, songs and toys.

### **Wobbler Transitions**

The Wobbler classroom is from age 1 and up to age 2 depending on developmentally appropriate age of the child. Children are learning a variety of things at this age group. Some have learned to walk, feed themselves, and communicate in simple one word usage gestures, and sign language.

Examples include:

- Sleep mats instead of cribs.
- Chairs and tables instead of highchairs.
- Cups instead of bottles.
- Age-appropriate food and beverage. Textures and from formula to whole milk or others.
- Introduction to circle time and learning activities.
- Hands on art, writing, and coloring. Sensory such as play dough, painting, walking, balance, outside time, climbing and riding toys.

### **Toddler Transitions**

The toddler classroom typically serves children approximately two to three years of age, depending on developmental readiness. During this stage, children are developing stronger language skills, increased independence, and greater social awareness.

Examples include:

- Students were using regular cups instead of sippy cups, training silverware as well.
- Regular meals and beverages.
- Larger chairs and table for age appropriate.
- Age-appropriate environment.
- Independence with potty training, hand washing, and free art.
- Use of words coordinated play, communication skills.

## **Preschool Transitions**

### **Preschool 1**

The preschool classroom serves children approximately three to four years old of age, depending on developmental readiness. During this stage, children are strengthening expressive language, social interaction skills and independence.

Examples include:

- Problem solving with peers and beginning to follow multi step directions.
- Self-help skills such as toileting hand washing and managing personal belongings.
- Growing confidence and responsibility with the classroom setting.
- Learning to participate in structured group activities like circle time and table work while still engaging in play-based exploration.

### **Pre-K Transitions**

The pre-K classroom prepares children for kindergarten readiness by building independence, focus, responsibility and learning environment structured for them. Children are expected to follow routines, transition between activities with minimal support, and sustain attention during any instructional time. Social and emotional development remains a priority as children practice cooperation, respectful communication, problem solving, and self-regulation.

Examples Include:

- Follow directions.
- Help younger generations.
- Clean up classroom with labels and pictures as help.
- Take care of personal hygiene, bathroom, shoes.
- Independence in walking to class, bus, office.
- Individualism with communication and self-motivation.

If your child isn't transitioning into kindergarten, we can discuss other options such as developmental preschool, Head Start programs and ECAEP. If entering kindergarten, we can support parents with the information for registration and orientation, bus routes, expectations, open house, supply lists and other kindergarten related information.

## **ASSESSMENT PLAN**

**Purpose of children assessments (Emergent Based Assessment) :** Children are assessed 4 times a year using the Emergent Based Project Curriculum Program. Teachers use the Emergent Based assessment checklist to properly gauge where a student is in each area assessed. The assessment is used as a basis for teachers and parents as a guide for individual needs. Knowing where your child is developmentally allows the teacher to best prepare the environment and activities to help meet your child's needs and interests. Assessment results are shared 3 times per year. Ongoing Informal Assessments (teacher created assessments) are

completed individually by teachers within 90 days of a student starting care and at least three times a year and shared 3 times per year with parents. Formal assessment is Emergent Based Project Curriculum, completed within 90 days of enrollment and aligns with the Curriculum Alignment Tool. The combination of formal and informal assessments allows teachers to gather the most information to better assist the student in their individual needs. Formal assessments, informal observations, and documentation are shared 3 times per year through parent conferences. Information is shared through conferences and written correspondence and shared in the home language preference through translation tools.

**Purpose of children screenings (Ages and Stages ASQ) :** The Ages and Stages Questionnaire Screening (with consent) is completed within 45 days of enrollment and again in 3 months if we find that resources are needed, and then annually to gauge the child upon transition to the next class. The ASQ screening participation requires parent consent and signature which will be on file for each student. If a parent decides to opt out of completing the screening, the parent can give the child's teacher written permission to complete the questionnaire. Summaries of screenings are shared with parents three times a year. Information gathered from documentation and observations are shared through conferences, written correspondence, depending on parent discretion. Observations are recorded at least 3 times per week per child. Information is also shared in home language through translation tools. If a child is on an active IEP or an IFSP, they will not receive an ASQ screening.

**Timeline for Assessments and Screenings-** Emergent Based Project Curriculum Assessment will be used 4 times a year and the Ages and Stages Screening will be completed within 45 (by parent or lead teacher given permission by parent) days of a student entering the program and annually. If any concern is noted the assessment and screening can be completed upon parental request as needed. Results will be shared in home language through translation applications, in paper or electronic form, or translator (if available). The ASQ Learning Activity handbook also has activities we share with parents in areas of concern. Informal documentation and observations are completed by teachers at least three times per week for parents/ teachers to have to accompany the screenings/assessments/conferences. Observations aid in developing individual plans and for outside referrals. For students ages birth the three services are available through South Sound Parent to Parent. For ages 3 and up services are provided through Yelm Community Schools. **Resources:** If resources are needed based on assessment or screening findings by the teacher, we will provide a list of resources based on the students' individual needs and resources based on teacher and parent concerns or observations. Resources will be provided in the students' home language when applicable using translation applications. If a challenge has an active IEP or an IFSP, we would like the family to share this information with staff, to best serve the child. If a child qualifies for support in the classroom, we welcome and work closely with the professional who is serving the child on site. Sometimes families prefer on site therapy and support, so the child and parent are not traveling to important therapy during the day. It can be handled on site, when appropriate. Talk to the director about this option.

**Confidentiality:** These observations and assessments will only be accessed by the classrooms' primary teachers and will be kept in an area only accessible to the primary classroom teachers and center management. Your child's observations and developmental

checklist are only released to parental guardians unless the parental guardian signs a release form to share the information with a specified agency or person.

**Parent involvement:** Parents are welcome to request a conference to discuss assessments/developmental progress at any time. Parent conferences are also offered in September, January, and May each year. At this time the classroom teachers will meet with parents to gain input and carry over children's developmental goals to home as well as home goals to the classroom. Teachers and parents may also regularly discuss children's development throughout the year informally. Teachers will make notes of parents' suggestions, observations and comments to place with the child's assessment progress.

After a parent's conference your child's teacher may provide you information on referrals for formal developmental assessment if needed. At this time, you may sign a release to provide the assessor to view the child in the classroom, you may also sign a release for the assessor to view your child's developmental checklist and observations conducted by your child's teacher.

The program is committed to improving in assessment procedures and may update its policies and/or procedures as new research on best practice arises.

## **INDIVIDUALISM**

First Steps promotes individualism, to where instruction can be personalized to each child's individual situation based on parental request. We will partner with families to develop individual goals. Information gathered through questionnaires, formal assessments, informed observation and documentation help us support individualism and create goals. Individual goals can be altered as needed based on the process. First Steps Child Development Center will meet with families, share information, ask questions, share resources and ideas that will give teachers/parents the information needed on the child's strength and needs. Information gathered will help teachers and families develop an individualized plan tailored to meet the needs of the child. Information will be shared at conferences at the completion in an observation or assessment, and at any time warranted by teacher or parent. Conferences are scheduled during a time that works for the Family.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING**

All aspects of a family's culture, values, language, experiences, abilities and disabilities are considered in the development of a child. Teachers, Center Director and Health Coordinators collaborate in the communication and referral process to families. The following process occurs:

1. Teachers observe and document a child showing concerns up to the first 45 days of enrollment.
2. The Center Director and teacher conference with the family regarding documented concerns and offer available resources for a medical referral.

3. Results of the developmental screenings are kept in the child's file located in a locked file cabinet in the office. Authorized family members have access at any time.
4. Families may take copies of the developmental screening to a referral or sign a release of information for the center to send by mail or fax.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

When conflict arises between two or more parties, such as teachers and parents, the following steps will be used to resolve the issues:

- **The director will meet with all parties involved.** The director will let each party briefly summarize their point of view, without comment or interruption by the other party. This should be a short discussion so that all parties are clear about the disagreement and conflicting views. Intervention will occur if either party attacks the other party.
- **Each participant will describe specific actions they would like to see the other parties take that would resolve the differences.** Three or four suggestions work well.
- **All participants will discuss and commit to making the changes necessary to resolve the conflict.** Parties should commit to noticing that the other person has made a change, no matter how small. Parties are expected to commit to treating each other with dignity and respect. It is okay to have reasonable disagreements over issues and plans; it is never okay to have personality conflicts that affect the workplace or child's care.
- **The director will not choose sides and expects the individuals to resolve the conflicts proactively as adults.** If the parties are unwilling to do so, the director will be forced to take disciplinary action that can lead to dismissal of either parties or withdrawal of a child from care.
- **Both parties will be given every faith in the ability to resolve their differences and get on with their successful contributions within the center.**
- **A time will be set to review progress. If a parent or authorized pickup uses any aggression/threats/swearing on the premises or towards staff it will be immediate expulsion from the center.**

## WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATIVE CODE (WAC):

First Steps is a licensed Child Development Center that is governed by Washington DCYF. Their guidelines are known as the WAC. The WAC covers questions you may

have regarding childcare. If you do not understand something, please refer to the center's Center Director.

## **WITHDRAWING**

Two weeks' written notice is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within ninety business days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks.

## **JOB EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Employees must meet hiring requirements and complete training in the timeline specified by DCYF. On Site Early Learning Program leaders provide monthly job embedded professional development for at least one lead teacher per classroom to improve curriculum and teacher child interactions. JEPD strategies must be grounded in day-to-day teaching practices. The teachers must access and find solutions as part of constant improvement process. This training may occur shortly before or after practice takes place. JEPD can include mentoring one on one support in service training with follow up support for enactment, peer learning groups or feedback from observation.

## **TERMINATION OF CARE**

First Steps Child Development Center is committed to preventing suspension and expulsion whenever possible. We believe children benefit most from consistent relationships and supportive environments. If behavioral concerns arise, we will document the behaviors, partner with families to develop a written support plan, provide referrals to resources, and monitor progress through follow up meetings. Termination of care due to child behavior is considered a last resort and will only occur when reasonable interventions have been attempted and safety cannot be maintained.

First Steps Child Development Center reserves the right to terminate care when it is in the best interest of the child, other children in the program, staff, or overall safety integrity of the center.

### **Immediate termination**

Care may be terminated immediately without notice under the following circumstances

- Any unsafe, threatening, harassing, or aggressive behavior by a parent/family or authorized adult towards children, staff, or other families.
- Failure to comply with the First Steps Child Care's Centers health and safety regulations.
- Repeated refusal to follow center safety procedures.
- Nonpayment of tuition according to the tuition agreement.
- Any behavior that compromises the physical or emotional safety of the center environment.
- Immediate termination will be provided in writing from the director.

**Policy violations**

Care may be terminated in a family that repeatedly violates center policies outlined in the parent handbook. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Failure to follow arrival and departure procedures
- Disregarding illness policies
- Failure to maintain required documentation
- Chronic late pick up
- Repeated noncompliance with communication expectations.

Families will receive written notice and an opportunity to correct the concerned violation unless the violation involves safety.

**Child behavioral concerns**

If the child is exhibiting ongoing behavioral concerns that impact the safety, well-being, or learning environment of others:

- First Steps will document behaviors.
- Staff will communicate concerns with the family.
- The conference will be held to develop a written support plan.
- The center may recommend outside evaluation or community resources.
- Center may consult with an Early Achievers staff for additional insight and support.

**Notice of Termination**

Except in cases of immediate termination, families will receive a two-week written notice. Tuition remains due during the notice whether the child attends. Termination may be needed after reasonable interventions and collaborations are implemented and the behavior does not improve and continues to create an unsafe or disruptive environment. At this point, the family will receive a written notice of termination. Following the final termination the family will be given two weeks to secure alternative care. If staff are required to call parents to pick up due to behavior issues during the two weeks of transitioning out of the center, or authorized alternative will have one hour to arrive to pick up child from contact.

Please sign and return this page to staff.

I have read the parent handbook:

PARENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to read our policies and being a part of our First Steps family, We look forward to providing quality care for your children.