



Parent Handbook

It is at the heart of First Step's vision to offer a program that addresses the whole child. The mission of First Step is to provide a safe, loving, and encouraging environment that does not only meet children's developmental and academic needs, but also their spiritual needs.

PHILOSOPHY

It is important that children feel they are welcome not only in their own family, but also in their extended families (i.e., friends, school, daycare, etc.). Give them guidance and understanding and they will have the opportunity to explore their world in a safe and healthy environment. Moreover, parental involvement in the child's development is important. We encourage parents to ask questions regarding their child's activity, nutrition, growth, and progress.

CURRICULUM

First Step was established in 1989 as a private educational institution, offering quality education and guidance in a setting to foster emotional growth for children. First Step uses the play-based curriculum. The administration and teachers of First Step recognize that play is children's way of learning and understanding the world around them. The goal of this curriculum is to nurture in children a love of discovery and exploration, encourage curiosity, and develop a desire for life-long learning.

Play-based learning allows children to learn at their own pace through the process of play. They are given opportunities to engage in unstructured free play. During free play the children choose their activities and explore the materials around them individually or in collaboration with other children. The children regularly participate in guided play. They experience daily exposure to music, art, language, and creative movement activities. They also participate in tidying up and mealtimes.

Physical Activity

At our Center the physical activities are important because children need to have active times every day. Active play can happen indoors and outdoors. The outdoor playtime is scheduled twice a day, one in the morning and another in the afternoon if the weather permits. When the weather is bad, such as when there is rain, snow, substantial mud, ice on the ground, or the temperature is very hot (90°F and above) or very cold (32°F and below) their active play will be in the gym, classrooms, or covered space. If the child cannot go out due to health reasons, a doctor's note is required. The parents should consider the weather in choosing what clothes their children will wear (Refer to page 5 Clothing).

Field Trips

Field trips encourage broad awareness of the environment and develop self-assurance in children. They also provide opportunities to improve social skills and discover exciting new worlds. Children four years and older will periodically go on field trips including water activities. Notice will be posted at least twenty-four hours in advance.

When a class goes on a field trip, for safety and identification, each child must wear a school shirt. The attendance is checked from time to time. Transportation will be provided in school vans equipped with seat belts and driven by Center staff, a licensed driver. An adult will supervise each group. All riders will always wear seat belts. In case of minor injuries, a First Aid kit is available inside the school van.

When children go on swimming activities the Center strictly follows the measures below.

- The children under the age of 5 years use two-foot pool.
- There are lifeguards that are not included in the child/staff ratio.
- The staff (each can swim) is doubled depending on the age group.
- All children must be sun safe. They are required to wear hats and sunglasses. They should apply sunscreen of 30 SPF or higher on all exposed skin (including their nose, ears, and tops of feet) 30 minutes before going into the pool and reapply every 2 hours or after swimming and sweating. They should not stay directly under the sun between 10 am to 2 pm

Screen Time Policy

Tablets in the classroom are used for learning purposes. TV/video, computer, or video games may be used to extend education throughout the day. However, TV/ video, computer, or video games are prohibited for children under the age of two years. Children whose ages are two years or older can use TV/video, computer, or video games to supplement education if they are related to planned activities, age-appropriate, and do not exceed two hours per day.

The Center does not allow the use of cell phones for children. If the device is lost/stolen, the Center is not responsible for it.

TEXAS RISING STAR PARTICIPATION

To continuously provide high quality service and educational experience to our children, the First Step Learning Center participates in Texas Rising Star. Texas Rising Star is a quality rating and improvement system for Texas early childhood programs.

ENROLLMENT

Children may be enrolled for existing openings by completing the enrollment package and submitting the required fees. The enrollment package includes:

1. Enrollment Information;
2. Physician's Medical Statement;
3. Current Shot Record;
4. Emergency Contact Information Form;
5. Information and Authorized Contacts;
6. Tuition Agreement;
7. Parent Handbook Acknowledgement Form;
8. Food Program Enrollment Form
9. Social Media Consent and Release Form

Tour & Visitation

We welcome prospective families to tour our facility to experience our environment firsthand. To ensure an accurate representation of how your child will interact in our setting, we kindly ask that all children be present during the tour. This allows us to observe how they engage with the space, staff, and other children, ensuring a smooth transition into our program.

If a child is unable to attend the scheduled tour, we encourage families to arrange a follow-up visit before finalizing enrollment.

Trial Period (30-Day Adjustment Period)

To ensure that our center is the right fit for both the child and our program, all newly enrolled children will participate in a **30-day trial period**. During this time, our staff will assess the child's adjustment to the environment, daily routine, and interactions with peers and teachers.

If, at any point during the trial period, we find that our program may not be the best fit for the child's needs, we will discuss our observations with the parents and explore possible solutions or

alternative arrangements. Likewise, if parents feel that the program is not meeting their expectations, they may choose to withdraw their child within this period.

At the end of the 30 days, a formal review will be conducted, and families will be notified of their child's successful transition into the program.

Pre-Registration/Waiting List

Pre-registration for fall can be arranged several months in advance by completing the Enrollment/Application forms and submitting the required non-refundable fee. The registration fee is due every fall.

Children can be put on the waiting list at any time. Due to limited space, infants should be put on the waiting list at the earliest possible time. There is a non-refundable administrative fee for the waiting list. Children who are currently enrolled and their siblings receive priority.

Group Assignments

Children are initially assigned to a group based on their age, skills, and overall level of development as evaluated by the Director and the Teachers-In-charge. Normally, all children enrolled are advanced to a new class at the beginning of each "school" year in the fall. Interim class re-assignments may occur at other times when recommended by the Director based on reassessment of the developmental progress of the children and availability of space; followed by a consultation among teachers, parents, and Director.

After-Schooler Attendance Policy

If the after-schooler is suspended from school, he/she cannot stay at First Step the whole day. The after-schoolers can only be brought to the center at 3:30pm.

Termination of Enrollment

Enrollment will be considered terminated if:

- The Center receives one full month advance written notice of withdrawal, effective the last day of the month.
- Payment is delinquent beyond the 10th day of the month.
- The parent fails to comply with this Agreement, the Parent Handbook, or any other rules of the Center.
- The Center, in its sole discretion, determines that it is unable to meet the needs of the child, or that it is not in the best interest of the Center or other children enrolled to have the Child continue in attendance.
- There is serious illness or death of the child.

The Center and its staff retain the sole right and responsibility to determine any disputed factual matters regarding termination of enrollment.

PAYMENT/ABSENCE POLICY

The fees and tuition may be paid by check, cash, credit/debit card, or online through the Procure Connect app.

Weekly tuition is due on Monday of the current week. If tuition is not paid by 6:30 pm on Tuesday a \$30.00 late fee will be applied to your account. Enrollment can be terminated if payment is not received by Friday of that week.

If your child attends 0 to 1 day, you pay half of the tuition for that week. If your child attends for two days or more, the entire weekly tuition is due.

A supply fee will be billed every September and January and must be paid on the last Monday of the said months.

The annual registration fee (per family) is due and payable upon enrollment and every fall. A multiple-child discount will be given to the second and third child from the same family enrolled as full-time students; the discount is listed on the fee schedule.

The center is open from 6:00am to 6:30pm. If a child leaves the Center after 6:30 pm for any reason a late pick-up fee of \$10.00 will be charged per child for the first 5 minutes after the hour and \$1.00 per minute thereafter. The fee is payable immediately to the employee who is forced to remain on overtime. The late pick-up charges are calculated to the time the child physically leaves the Center.

All fees are non-refundable.

Each child is entitled to a one-week vacation during the school year from August to May. You will not be charged if your child is absent for one week during the said months.

When the child becomes absent for more than 2 weeks without notice, he/she will be dropped from the roll and will need to re-register when he/she comes back.

There are NO REFUNDS OR CREDITS allowed for time missed from school for any reason.

TUITION FEES

[Please see Tuition Fee Sheet.]

SCHEDULE/HOURS OF OPERATION

First Step is open year-round from 6:00am – 6:30pm, Monday through Friday.

Holidays and Closings

First Step observes nine (9) holidays and will be closed for the following days: (May change due to the dates they may fall on.)

- | | |
|------------------|------------------------|
| New Year's Day | Thanksgiving Day |
| MLK Day | Day after Thanksgiving |
| Memorial Day | Christmas Eve |
| Independence Day | Christmas Day |
| Labor Day | |

The Center may close due to inclement weather. The Center follows the closing guidelines of Desoto ISD and Lancaster ISD, however, there are times when we are open, and Desoto and Lancaster ISD are closed. Please call the center for confirmation.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children may not enter or leave the Center unless accompanied by an adult. An authorized adult will have to come into the building and sign the child in and the same procedure in the afternoon.

Parents/Guardians are required to ensure that children (including infants) are awake before drop-off. Sleeping children/infants will NOT be accepted.

Departing children will normally be released only to parents or other persons shown on the “Child Release Authorization List” form. Any person not on the list must **bring a written authorization with the parent signature** and show photo identification, otherwise, the child will not be released. Please call the Center in advance if someone who is NOT on the list is coming to pick up your child.

For early dismissal, when sending a child home for any reason, a photo of the child will be taken to document his/her condition. This photo will require verification with the signatures of two (2) staff members.

First Step is required to maintain daily attendance records. **Please be sure to sign your child “IN” and “OUT” each day on the computer located to your left as you enter the school.** Attendance sheets are used during evacuation drills to ensure all are present, safe, and accounted for.

Parents can use the Procure Connect App to sign their children in and out.

Arrival Time

For the convenience of our parents, First Step opens daily at 6:00am. **We ask parents to please have their child at the center by 8:30am. The only time a child should come to school after 8:30 am is**

with a doctor's excuse. There are several important reasons for this, all of which involve the welfare and happiness of all children.

Many of the most important activities on each day take place during the morning hours starting at 8:00am.

To avoid disrupting the class, please refrain from bringing your child into the Center during naptime. Please check the classroom schedule to determine this period.

Please inform the Center if you will be bringing your child to class late. In general, it is difficult for our teachers to properly plan and conduct their classes if children are allowed to “drop-in” at any time. Also, please notify us when your child is absent.

Saying “Goodbye” (Separation from Parent for Class time)

To help achieve the goal of allowing your child to become independent, emotionally healthy, and well-adjusted, we recommend the following practices with children aged two and older:

- If possible, children should be walked in, not carried.
- Present your child to the teacher on arrival. The greeting between the teacher and the child is invaluable. The teacher will then help the child participate in the classroom activity.
- Good-byes at school should be part of a normal, everyday routine every child goes through. Separation should be sweet and brief, with reassurance about the planned pick-up time.

CLOTHING

All children should wear appropriate clothing when they come to the Center. Flip flops are not allowed except only when they are in the pool. Sandals or any open-toe footwear are not allowed during class times.

Children should have extra clothes when needed for changing. Do not forget to put markings to indicate that your child owns extra clothes.

During outdoor activities the students must wear appropriate clothing based on the weather conditions (loose clothing during summer and jackets during winter or cold months). Make sure that they have insect repellants in their cubbies to protect them when they are outside the Center.

From Monday to Thursday, all full day children aged 2 years and up must be in uniform – top: polo of any color and bottom: black, navy blue, or khaki. They are dressed down on Fridays.

Jewelry/Valuables

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. The wearing of jewelry by children in First Step can present a potential hazard. Jewelry can easily get caught in equipment and clothing and can cause choking and tearing injuries. Moreover, **First Step will not be responsible for lost or stolen jewelry and valuables (including watches, cell phones, and other gadgets)**. It is the parents' responsibility to enforce this policy with their children. If a child comes to First Step wearing any jewelry, the parents will be required to remove the jewelry and take it with them. If possible, for the parent to return to First Step to remove the jewelry if it is only noticed after the parents leave, otherwise, the center will not be held responsible for the loss and/or injury of the child caused by it.

NAP TIME/SLEEPING RESTRICTIONS

Nap or rest time (for all children) lasts approximately 2 hours in the early afternoon. Each child is assigned an individual mat. The parents must provide blankets and pillows; they will be sent home on Fridays to be washed.

Infant Sleeping Restrictions

Below are the infants' sleeping restrictions implemented in the Center.

- All infants are to be placed on their backs when they sleep.
- The infant's head, face, or crib must not be covered at any time by items like blankets, linens, or clothing.
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat, he/she must be moved to a crib immediately.

- Soft or loose bedding such as blankets, quilts, or comforters, pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners or sleep positioning devices must not be placed in a crib.
- If an infant needs extra warmth, he/she can wear sleep clothing, such as sleepers or footed pajamas.
- Only one infant is placed in a crib to sleep.
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep, but it must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism.
- The infants are not swaddled for sleep or rest.
Only a fitting sheet is provided for the infant's mattress; you may bring your own, however, it **must fit snug to the mattress.**

MEALS AND SNACKS

Breakfast is served from 6:30am – 8:00am. Included in the tuition are nutritious meals (lunch and supper), afternoon snacks, milk, and juice. First Step will provide parent's choice formula for infants. Infants' parents will have to supply any other formula or baby foods that the center does not offer. A monthly menu is available and posted for the parents to review. The child's parents can notify the Director of any special dietary restrictions. All foods from home must be labeled with the child's name and the name of the food in the container. We will need a letter from your child's Doctor if he/she has allergies.

CACFP PARTICIPATION

First Step cares about good nutrition and participates in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

HOME LUNCH PRACTICES

If your child brings lunch from home, it is important that it has a variety of food from the five food groups each day. Please refrain from bringing any choking hazards in your child lunch pack like raisins; uncooked carrots and hard raw vegetables; whole grapes; chunks of meat; hard candies; lollipops; popcorn; and whole hotdogs or hotdogs cut in rounds. Cut grapes in half or fourths, chop chunks of food, and cut hotdogs lengthwise into quarters. Sandwiches or pizza should be cut into small pieces for ease of eating by the child. Quarter size works for sandwiches. This helps children eat well and swallow the food easily.

Parents, please pack the types of food that will make your child healthy. Nuts of any kind are prohibited from the center due to food allergies. You can go online at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au to find healthy eating ideas for packing food for your child's lunch. You can also pick up handouts from the center.

PARTIES

Birthdays and holidays are especially exciting time for young children and the Center will be pleased to help your child celebrate with classmates and staff. Parent participation is welcome but not required. Balloons are a choking hazard for young children and should not be brought into the Center. Since licensing regulations prohibit *any type* of open flame in the Center, birthday candles are not permitted.

If birthday invitations are distributed at the Center, **all children in the class should be invited.**

DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE

First Step has a philosophy of positive guidance, incorporating creative teaching and involvement to help children develop self-discipline and inner control over their actions. Positive guidance uses redirection, verbalization of misunderstandings, consistency, acceptance of feelings, firmness, and fairness.

Dealing with Children with Continuing Challenging Behavior

When a child in care at the Center displays a challenging behavior on a recurring basis, a Behavior Management program will be implemented for three (3) weeks. This intervention will be devised based on the individual needs of each child and will consist of the following steps:

1. The child's parent, the child's teacher, and the Director will have a meeting regarding the child's challenging behavior and to discuss ways to deal with the situation positively and consistently. The parents will be required to implement similar strategies from the program to reinforce positive behavior. The strategies used in the program will include:
 - a) praising good behavior,
 - b) listening to the child,
 - c) setting limits by choosing simple rules (explaining the rules to him and repeating them periodically), and
 - d) incorporating activities into the curriculum to reinforce good behavior, for example through role play; art and craft, reading favorite stories during story time, etc.The parents may be advised to refer their child to other professional services such as ECI (Early Childhood Intervention). These services can assist parents to identify if all their child's needs are being met and if they require any additional support. To complete a successful behavior management program, early cooperation of the parents in the program is required.
2. The Director will see that every effort is done to ensure that each child's individual needs are met while the program is being implemented. The staff will be supported, when necessary, in the room/area where the concerned child is present.
3. The teacher will record all minor and major incidents. The Director will assess the child's progress each week and discuss developments with the child's teacher and share with the child's parents. The utmost confidentiality will be practiced.
4. The parents whose child is displaying challenging behavior will be required to have a weekly meeting with the Director and the child's teacher to discuss their child's progress and to review the current program.
5. At the end of the trial period and if there is no improvement in the child's behavior, the staff will continue with the program for another two (2) weeks to observe improvements. The child's parents will be reminded by the Director that they may need to start looking for alternative childcare arrangements if there is no improvement.
6. At the end of the additional two (2) weeks into the program, the Director will inform the parents that their child has one (1) week to be sent to an alternative childcare arrangement.

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE CHECKLISTS & EARLY INTERVENTION SUPPORT OPTIONS

First Step uses formal assessments and checklists for the children enrolled in the center. First Step uses the *Infant & Toddler Development Checklist* for children aged 0 to 36 months and *CDC Developmental Milestone Checklists* for children aged four to five years old.

These assessments are given to the children bi-monthly. The results of these assessments will be shared with parents during conferences and parents' requests. The teaching staff will use the assessment data to plan for future lessons to ensure teaching improves unmet goals. The assessment data can also be used to support parents in identifying developmental delays for children ages 0 to 5 years and to assist with referrals if needed.

School-aged children will not be given any assessments.

ACCOMMODATION FOR FAMILIES

First Step supports families and children who may need additional accommodations, to include home language, differing abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Parents have the right to be informed of all procedural safeguards and rights of appeal in a language easily understood by the public and in the parent's primary language. Please notify the Director if you or your child requires accommodation, and we will assure you to do our part in ensuring your needs are met.

First Step will partner with families in the following manner:

- A space will be provided to accommodate sessions if specific therapies are needed during the day while the child is in the Center's care.
- If needed, First Step will participate in all comprehensive care meetings.
- First Step will provide materials and resources in parent's/child's primary language.
- First Step will provide cultural inclusiveness by hosting cultural events throughout the year.

CHILD MALTREATMENT

Child maltreatment or child abuse and neglect is defined as “non-accidental infliction or threat of infliction of physical, emotional, or mental harm to a child.” The Center will not tolerate child maltreatment in any form – physical, verbal, or sexual. The Center is required by law to report any apparent incidence of child maltreatment.

To protect the child in preventing and responding to maltreatment, the Center does the following actions:

- annual training of employees on the prevention, recognition, and reporting of child maltreatment; and
- reporting of suspicion that there is an incident of child maltreatment.

In case of emergency, call 911 and then call the DFPS Texas Abuse Hotline on 1-800-252-5400. Professionals such as teachers, day care employees and others who are either licensed by the state or work in a facility licensed or administered by the state and who have direct contact with children in the course of their job must make a report no later than the 48th hour after suspecting a child has been abused or neglected or is a victim of an offense. Failure to report suspected child maltreatment is a criminal offense.

Any staff member or parent that has suspicions of child maltreatment must report it to the Director. The Director will provide guidance, support, and assistance to the staff member or parent in reporting the incident to Child Protective Services.

The staff members and parents are required to review the Protective Services Mandated Reporter policies posted in the Center.

HEALTH

Immunization, Hearing and Vision Requirement

The Center is required to have on a child’s file a physician’s report verifying overall good health and required immunizations. Current information on immunization status must be maintained while the child is enrolled. Children who are four years or older are required to have vision and hearing screening.

Illness Exclusion

Children are to be checked upon arrival each day for any visible indications of illness. If a child appears ill while at the Center, parents will be contacted and asked to pick up the child immediately. The main reasons for excluding children from the Center are:

- an illness that may prevent the child from participation in routine activities;
- an illness that requires more care than the staff can provide without compromising the needs of the other children in the group; and
- a child’s presence poses an increased risk to other children and staff with whom the child may come in contact.

The Center cannot admit any child appearing to be sick without a written statement from a doctor or registered nurse certifying no contagious disease is present.

Children should be kept at home when they meet the following exclusion criteria:

- Rectal temperature of 101.4 °F or higher, ear/oral temperature 100.4°F or higher, or underarm temperature of 99.4°F or higher, in the past 24 hours;
- Conjunctivitis (“pink eye”), redness of the eye and/or lid, usually with yellow discharge and crusting;
- Bronchitis, which begins with hoarseness, cough and a slight elevation in temperature The cough may be dry, painful, and gradually becomes progressive.
- A rash that cannot be identified and has not been diagnosed;
- Impetigo: red pimples, which become small vesicles surrounded by a reddened area; When blisters break, the surface is raw and weeping. Look for signs in neck creases, groin, underarms, face, hands, or edge of diaper.

- Diarrhea three or more times within 24 hours (watery or greenish stool that looks different and occurs more frequent than usual);
- Vomiting within 24 hours (more than usual “spitting up”);
- Head lice: live contagious insects or their nits (egg sacs) that infest hair;
The children will not be readmitted without being free from live lice and nits, or must have written note from physician, local health authority, advance practice nurse, or physician’s assistant stating that they are no longer contagious and may return to school.
- A severe cold with fever, sneezing, and nose drainage;
- An unknown illness without obvious symptoms other than unusual paleness, irritability, tiredness, or lack of interest; and
- Contagious diseases, including measles, chicken pox, mumps, roseola, strep throat, etc.

Children may be brought into the Center if they have only a slight fever, mild cold, allergic rash, diaper rash, prickly heat, a loose bowel movement, and dietary or medication diarrhea. Children with a diagnosed bacterial infection may return 24 hours after being treated with antibiotic medication, and if they are able to participate normally in any class activities.

While we regret the inconvenience caused by strict adherence to these guidelines, our concern for all the children dictates a very conservative approach when dealing with health matters. Because of conflicting medical opinions about the advisability of re-admitting children receiving treatment who still appear ill, the Center will err on the side of safety when making such decisions and ask for your tolerance and understanding.

Should your child contract a contagious illness, please notify the Center immediately so other parents can be alerted to the possibility of exposure. Guidelines issued by the Texas Department of Health dictate re-admission criteria. Contact the office for details.

Administering Medication

Parents are encouraged to administer medication outside the Center. The Director and Asst. Director may administer the medication. Medication is administered only at 11:30 am and 2:00pm. The medication sign-in sheet must be filled out correctly and signed by the parent. The prescription medicine must be in the original container with an appropriate dispenser, directions for use, and the label must include the child’s name and physician. No over-the-counter medicine is allowed in the center. Only the prescribed medication with the pharmacy label giving directions on how to give the medicine is allowed. The child’s name and all doctors’ instruction must be placed on the medication by the pharmacy. The authorized adult must sign the medicine in the medication log binder and hand it to the Director or Asst. Director.

The Center and its staff accept no responsibility or liability for any error or omission regarding administration of medication.

Medical Emergencies

First Step employees are trained in first aid and CPR by an approved training facility. Refresher courses are given every year. In the event of an emergency, First Step will:

- quickly assess the child’s health,
- call 911 or another appropriate emergency help as needed,
- give first aid and CPR, if necessary, and
- contact the parents or the person listed on the emergency contact sheet.

For additional information on medical emergencies please read the Emergency Response Plan Handbook.

Protecting Children from Vaccine-Preventable Diseases

Each employee is required to receive each specified vaccine that the employee is not exempt from having. The center will verify whether an employee has complied with this policy by having a copy of the employee vaccination record in their file. The only way an employee could be exempt from having a required vaccination includes:

- Medical conditions identified as contraindications or precautions by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); or

- Reasons for conscience, including religious belief.

Exempt employees must protect children in the center from exposure to disease by using gloves and masks. The employees that do not comply with the policy will result in suspension of employment until they comply.

SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The following precautionary measures have been established to help ensure the safety of the children and staff:

- Emergency evacuation drills are held regularly without notice. The parents who are present should participate in the drill.
- Emergency exit plans are posted in every classroom.
- The daily attendance sheets are used during safety drills.
- All classroom staff and employees are trained in First Aid and CPR.

In the event of an emergency, the following will happen:

- A. The center director will be contacted.
- B. Children will be transported by van to Park Ridge Academy (415 E Parkerville Rd. Desoto, TX 75115)
- C. Children will be checked via roll sheet.

To the parent, First Step goal is to fix you peace of mind knowing that your child is in a safe, secure environment guided by a well-trained qualified staff.

For more information on safety and emergency preparedness please read the Emergency Response Plan Handbook.

GANG-FREE ZONE

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 penalties. We are in a gang-free zone.

PARENT COMMUNICATON/INVOLVEMENT/CONCERNS

First Step strives to assist parents in understanding the developmental stages their children experience, enabling them to contribute most effectively to the child's growth and enrichment.

First Step has an "Open Door" policy for parents with children enrolled. We recognize and support parents' desires to visit the classroom any time during the day to observe how their child interacts with the staff and other children during classroom activities, the building, the premises, and the equipment without having to secure prior approval. Parents are encouraged to visit the Center and brief conversations with teachers are always welcome, while longer discussion should be arranged by appointment.

The parents may also message their children's teachers on the Procure Connect App.

Parent/Teacher Conference

Participation in parent/teacher conferences is an important activity. This is a time of sharing, which benefits the child, the parent, and the teacher. First Step believes in a strong partnership between the home and the Center to assure the best experience for the children.

The teachers will invite you to participate in a parent conference twice a year to discuss your child's developmental progress. A parent or teacher may request a conference anytime as the need arises.

First Step is a special place that instills the joy of learning and encourages positive self-esteem.

Parent Notifications

Parents will be notified through memos on doors, parent's board, e-mail, text, Procure Connect, and newsletters that will be placed in the children's backpack.

Parent Involvement

Parents may act as volunteers during parties, field trips, annual carnival, and even fund-raising activities. They may attend parent-classes to learn various topics on parenting, childcare, and child maltreatment.

Handling Parents Concerns

If a problem exists, the Center wants to act as quickly as possible. This can only be achieved if it is identified immediately. Parents are asked to refrain from discussing their concerns with other parents; instead, parents with concerns should discuss them with the Director or Asst. Director.

Video Footage Viewing

First Step has security cameras that are installed in appropriate places within and around the facility and are used to help promote the safety and security of the people and property. Because we respect the privacy of all children, parents, and staff in our Center, the security cameras are for internal purposes only.

Parents/Guardians may request to view videos. The request should be made 48 hours prior to viewing. Only the Director, Assistant Director, and the legal parent/guardian of the concerned child are allowed to view the security cameras/video footage at the Center's office. Parents' phones or personal devices are NOT permitted in the room while parents are watching the video footage.

Breastfeeding

We provide a comfortable place with a seat in our center or within a classroom that will enable mothers to breastfeed their children. Mothers have a right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their children while in care. Bottled water is also available to keep the mother hydrated while at the Center.

WIC Program

First Step supports the WIC Program or the Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants, and Children. It is a nutrition program for pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and families with children younger than 5. WIC clients receive a lot of benefits. To provide more information about the program, First Step distributes the WIC flyer annually and a copy is always available at the office.

Building for the Future

First Step distributes the parental notification flyer (Building for the Future) annually to households and found in every enrollment packet.

EXPULSION POLICY

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we must expel a child from our program either on a short term (one to five days suspension) or permanent basis. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child/children) to prevent this policy from being enforced. The details of this policy are found below.

Immediate Causes for Expulsion

The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or him/herself.

Parents threaten physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.

Parents exhibit verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

Parental Actions that may Lead to Child's Expulsion

Failure to pay or frequently late in payments

Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records

Habitual tardiness when picking up the child

Verbal abuse of staff

Child's Actions that may Lead to Expulsion

- Failure of the child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time,
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts,
- On-going physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children, and
- Excessive biting

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called, and correspondence will be sent home indicating what the problem exists, and every effort will be made by both the Center and the parent to solve the problem. If, after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety, the behavior does not improve, and the Center finds that it can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to discontinue the child's class attendance. The parents have one week to find another childcare center if we choose to put their child out of the center. The parents will be given a minimum of one week's notice to find another center to provide care for this child.

CHILD-CARE REGULATIONS / NOTICES / CONTACT INFORMATION

The parents may review a copy of the child-care center's most recent Licensing inspection report and may have access to minimum standards online using the URL below:

hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/...

They may contact the local Licensing office and related agencies using the following information:

Texas Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-252-5400
Childcare Licensing Web Site	www.tdps.state.tx.us
Parent's Guide to Day Care	www.childsday.com/parguide.html

They can also use the following helpful resources for further information related to child-care:

The Family Place Domestic Violence Shelter

P.O. Box 7999 Dallas TX 75209
24 hours crisis hotline 214-941-1991

Breastfeeding

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Office on Women's health 800-994-9662

WIC Women Infants and Children

214-670-7200 at City of Dallas Health Department
Internet website: texaswic.org

Healthy Childcare Texas

Office of Program Coordination for Children and Youth
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Internet website: <http://www.healthychildcaretexas.org/index.htm>

Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Childcare, Second Edition

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Childcare and Early Education (2002).
Internet website: <http://nrckids.org/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

Internet website: <http://www.aap.org/>

Texas Childcare

Published by the Texas Workforce Commission
Internet website: <http://www.childcarequarterly.com/>

NON-DISCRIMINATION

First Step does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission to its programs, services, or activities, in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operation.

First Step is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

To implement inclusive practices, the Center accepts all children regardless of their abilities.

CHANGES TO THE PARENT HANDBOOK /POLICIES

The parent handbook is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. The parents may review and discuss with the child-care center Director any questions and concerns about the policies and

procedures of the child-care center. The Center, at its discretion, may change any policy contained in the Parent Handbook. The parents will be notified of any changes by written notice.

RECORDS

The Center is required to maintain the following records up to date for each child.

- Personal information form
- Daily attendance
- Health history/immunizations
- Medical authorization /release
- Individual development information

Parents can update their personal information on the Procure App under RECORDS.

We are excited about having your child in our Center, and will do everything we can to provide a safe, rich, and fulfilling experience. Thank you for your trust in First Step Learning Center.

Parents, please initial each blank and sign acknowledging you have read and understand the parent handbook. The handbook consists of the following topics:

- ____ 1. PHILOSOPHY
- ____ 2. CURRICULUM
 - Physical Activity
 - Field Trips
 - Screen time
- ____ 3. TEXAS RISING STAR PARTICIPATION
- ____ 4. ENROLLMENT
 - Tour & Visitation
 - Trial Period (30-Day Adjustment Period)
 - Pre-Registration/Waiting List
 - Group Assignments
 - After-Schooler Attendance Policy
 - Termination of Enrollment
- ____ 5. PAYMENT/ABSENCE POLICY
- ____ 6. TUITION FEE
- ____ 7. SCHEDULE/HOURS OF OPERATION
 - Holidays and Closings
- ____ 8. ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE
 - Arrival Time
 - Saying “Goodbye” (Separation from Parent for Class time)
- ____ 9. CLOTHING
 - Jewelry/Valuables
- ____ 10. NAP TIME/SLEEPING RESTRICTIONS
- ____ 11. MEALS AND SNACKS
- ____ 12. CACFP PARTICIPATION
- ____ 13. HOME LUNCH PRACTICES
- ____ 14. PARTIES
- ____ 15. DISCIPLINE & GUIDANCE
 - Dealing with Children with Continuing Challenging Behavior
- ____ 16. DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONE CHECKLISTS & EARLY INTERVENTION SUPPORT OPTIONS
- ____ 17. ACCOMMODATION for FAMILIES
- ____ 18 CHILD MALTREATMENT
- ____ 19. HEALTH
 - Immunization and Hearing & Vision Requirements
 - Illness Exclusion
 - Administering Medication
 - Medical Emergencies
 - Protecting Children from Vaccine-Preventable Diseases
- ____ 20. SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
- ____ 21. GANG-FREE ZONE
- ____ 22. PARENT COMMUNICATION/INVOLVEMENT/CONCERNS
 - Parent-Teacher Conference
 - Parent Notifications
 - Parent Involvement
 - Handling Parents Concerns
 - Video Footage Viewing
 - Breastfeeding
 - WIC Program
 - Building for the Future
- ____ 23. EXPULSION POLICY
- ____ 24. CHILDCARE REGULATIONS/NOTICES/CONTACT INFORMATION
- ____ 27. NON-DISCRIMINATION
- ____ 26. CHANGES TO THE PARENT HANDBOOK / POLICIES
- ____ 27. RECORDS

MOM PRINTED NAME & SIGNATURE

DATE _____

DAD PRINTED NAME & SIGNATURE

DATE _____

OLEMPIA GREEN
DIRECTOR PRINTED NAME & SIGNATURE

DATE _____