**Stepping Stones**

**Day Care Society**

**Parent Handbook For Day Care Families**



**School Age Program**

**7419 – 114 Street**

**Grande Prairie, AB**

780.532.7247 ext 3040

**Eastside Day Care**

**9614 – 100 Avenue**

**Grande Prairie, AB T8V 0T2**

**780.532.9684**

**Westside Day Care**

**10807 – 101 Street**

**Grande Prairie, AB T8V 2R6**

**780.882.8679**

**Serving Grande Prairie Families Since 1975**



**Welcome to Stepping Stones Day Care!**

At Stepping Stones we are very proud of our Day Care Programs, they were developed to ensure children feel safe, secure and comfortable while in our care. We take pride in ensuring that the programs provide an enriched learning experience for the children and that the environment is safe and healthy.

Our staff don’t do babysitting or child minding, but rather provide Early Learning & Child Care. We employ qualified Early Childhood Educators that provide the children with ongoing opportunities to develop their abilities. Each child will have the chance to explore through play the things that interest them. Emerging skills will be supported through a curriculum that is developed through staff observations of children. Lots of focus will be on literacy, science, mathematics and physical development presented in a playful, engaging format.

Stepping Stones Society is pleased that you have chosen to place your child in our program and we welcome you to drop in for a visit any time. We have an open-door policy and encourage your input and participation.

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Please note, **bolded** policies reflect Alberta Child Care Licensing Regulations. With regard to these policies the Society has no authority to adjust, amend or make exception under any circumstance.

1. **SOCIETY PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

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| **Day Care Programs**  Our Day Care Programs offer quality child care to families with children age 19 months and over in two separate child care facilities.  We strive to employ qualified Early Learning and Child Care staff. Our day care programs are accredited and provide children with a high-quality environment and activities that will promote optimal development.  Parents using the day care program may be eligible for assistance with their fees through the Child Care Subsidy Program.  We believe that all children and families need to be valued, respected and treated with kindness and compassion in all situations. | **Day Home Program**    Our Family Child Care Program offers quality child care to families with children birth to school age  Our day home programs are accredited and provide children with a high-quality environment and activities that will promote optimal development.  Parents using the day home program may be eligible for assistance with their fees through the Child Care Subsidy Program.  We believe that all children and families need to be valued, respected and treated with kindness and compassion in all situations. |
| **Inclusive Child Care Program**  The Inclusive Child Care Program works together with the parents and Early  Childhood Educators to ensure the inclusion of young children so they may achieve their full developmental potential.  If you have concerns about your child’s development or if they have an identified disability or delay come see us.  ***For more information on the Inclusive Child Care Program you may call their office at 780.532.9686*** | **ECRC - Parent Link**  We are part of a province wide network of Parent Resource Centers. We offer parent groups and supports and a toy lending library including books and DVD’s.  Family support staff are trained in Early Childhood Development and offer a variety of services to meet the growing needs of families and  Early Childhood Educators.  ***The ECRC- Parent Link Program is located at 10807 – 101 Street.***  ***For more information call : 780.882.8679*** |

1. **PROGRAM FRAMEWORK**

**2.1 Vision Statement**

Our vision is to provide the community with a variety of accessible human service programs and resources for the well-being of children and families.

**2.2 Mission Statement**

The Society is committed to the development of integrated community based programs. All programs and staff will receive the support necessary to ensure quality programming and promote the healthy development of children and families with diverse backgrounds, abilities, cultures and contributions.

**2.3 Philosophy Statement**

We believe in working with children, families and community agencies to effectively facilitate positive learning, which allows individuals the opportunity to grow in every area of their development. All children and families need to be valued, respected and treated with kindness and compassion in all situations.

**2.4 Program Goals**

* To create a nurturing and safe environment where each child’s individual needs are treated with respect and patience
* To plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program that allows each child to explore, discover, and enhance skills that are age and stage appropriate
* To work in partnership with parents and families to ensure the needs of the children are met and opportunities for growth and enhancement are available
* To encourage children to problem solve, make choices and express themselves through their daily experiences and opportunities

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1. **DAILY PROGRAM**

**3.1 Arrival/Departure of Children**

Children must be signed in and out by their parents/guardian each day using the Bright Wheel Application on the tablets located in each playroom. Upon arrival children must be taken by their parent/guardian into the playrooms. Ensure that your child’s teacher is aware of their presence before you leave the building.

Parents must notify staff when any alternate person will be picking up their child, if not notified staff will not release the child until parental permission is given. Any time staff does not know the person picking up they will ask for identification.

Children’s attendance records will be kept on premises for two years as per licensing requirements.

**3.2 Supervision of children**

Staff observe children’s play and behavior both indoors and outdoors and document needs and interests. Supervising staff are responsible to record arrival and departures of each child on a Daily Attendance Form. Anytime children transition both on or off program premises or in and out of a vehicle, staff are responsible to verify that all children are accounted for. Primary staff practice periodic checks (head count) throughout the day.

Parents may arrange the transportation of their child to and from the program. In the event that a child fails to show at the arranged time or location staff will immediately contact the parent and or emergency contact.

**3.3 Child Development** \* does not apply to children over the age of six

As part of our commitment to quality child care, we take a proactive approach to monitoring the development of the children in our program. For this purpose we use developmental checklists and the Nippising and Ages & Stages Questionnaire screening tools. These checklists and tools will identify children’s skills and areas that may need additional support. A screening tool is included in each child’s registration package and is to be completed by the parent. In the event that any concerns arise from the initial screening, the Program Coordinator will contact parents to discuss what supports are available to ensure that their child meets their developmental milestones. Ongoing developmental checklist assessments will be completed by room staff on an ongoing basis and shared forward when the child will be moving up to a new room.

**3.4 Program Planning**

Our program planning is based on the needs and interests of children.Their developmental stages and interests are considered and each day provides opportunities for all children to develop new skills. Our trained staff, knowledgeable of Early Childhood Development, ensure appropriate toys and activities are made available to the children. Weekly programming sheets are posted on the parent board.

**3.5 Family Involvement**

To incorporate families into our daily program, the center asks parents to provide a few family photos for their child. Each child will have an opportunity to showcase their family and life by participating in “Special Me” opportunities, these are found on the weekly planning. Not only will this help children feel at home but will ease their transition and enhance their social skills. Parents are welcome to bring in new photos anytime they wish.

**3.6 Child Discipline Policy**

**We must ensure that child discipline methods utilized in the program are communicated to the parents, staff, and children, where developmentally appropriate and that any child disciplinary action taken is reasonable in the circumstances.**

**Expectations and Guidelines**

1. State expectations in a clear and positive manner.
2. Discuss and problem solve with children using short positive verbal guidance.
3. Redirect the children to positive activities by offering two simple choices.
4. In situations where the child may have lost their ability to self-regulate and calm themselves, staff will provide the child with an opportunity for alone space and calm down time. Calm down time is not a punishment, there is not a predetermined place or chair, calming down time lasts as long as the child feels it is needed.

In the event that a child’s behaviour cannot be calmed using these techniques and staff determine that the child is at risk of injuring themselves or others the parent will be contacted and must return to the centre to consult with the Day Care Program Coordinator. Agency staff will support the family and may make referrals to the Inclusive Child Care Program and/or supports from other agencies. Should it be determined that the child’s needs would be better served by another program, agency staff will assist families to find alternate child care when possible.

**Prohibited Discipline**

**A license holder must not with respect to a child in the program**

* **Inflict or cause to be inflicted any form of physical punishment, verbal or physical degradation or emotional deprivation**
* **Deny or threaten to deny any basic necessity**
* **Use or permit the use of any form of physical restraint, confinement or isolation**

**3.7 Nap/Quiet Time** \* does not apply to School Age Program

Children under the age of three are encouraged to nap during the scheduled nap time. Optimal brain development occurs while children are sleeping and this age group is sensitive to this need. We understand that some children may not be having naps at home, however the center environment can be very stimulating and exhausting to children and they may require the nap. It is asked that children not arrive during nap time as it can be disruptive to the sleeping children. Parents are welcome to bring a favorite blanket or cuddle toy for their child during nap time. These items will be kept in the child’s cubby. Soothers and/or bottles must be labeled with the child’s name. Children over the age of three are encouraged to spend some quiet time on a mat. Children who do not nap will be provided with age appropriate toys or books to enjoy while those who need to nap are sleeping.

**3.8 Outdoor Play**

We encourage lots of outdoor play, weather permitting, time spent outdoors is adjusted daily depending on weather conditions and needs of the children. Please ensure your child has outdoor clothes for the season and the staff will ensure your child is properly dressed to go outside. Please label all your child’s items. Expect wet and sometimes muddy clothing to be a result of fun active outdoor play.

Your child should have a backpack with an extra set of clothes which will be kept in their cubby.

If you are providing sunscreen or bug repellent please ensure they are given to the staff, are a non-aerosol type and that you have signed the consent form.

**3.9 Toilet Training**\*does not apply to School Age Program

Toilet training may begin once your child is in the Toddler Room. If you feel your child is ready to begin the process of toilet training, please advise the staff and ensure that the child has adequate changes of clothes, especially underwear and pull ups for naptime. We can provide information on toilet training readiness to help you decide when to start.

**3.10 Field Trips**

Field trips will be pertinent to the program and used as an extension to children’s learning. Parents are invited and encouraged to join us on field trips. Details of field trips will be posted and parents notified in advance of where children are going and what times. Parent consent forms are required and children will not be able to participate in a field trip without a consent form signed by a parent or guardian. When leaving the premises staff will ensure that at least one additional staff accompanies the group. If transportation is required for a field trip Stepping Stones Day Care will use public transit and rely on the city to maintain the vehicle according to standards. Rules and guidelines will be followed as stipulated for the use of a bus. At no time will staff vehicles be used to transport children in their care.

1. **HEALTH & SAFETY – POTENTIAL HEALTH RISK**

**4.1 Sick Child Policy**

It is expected that parents will inform the Program Coordinator or Director if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. This will enable us to inform all staff and families.

If upon arrival a child appears to be sick, they will not be accepted if:

* The child has a temperature greater than 100.4 °F (38 °C)
* The parent indicates the child has had diarrhea or vomiting within 24 hours prior to arrival
* The child has not been taking a prescribed antibiotic for at least 24 hours
* The child appears too irritable and/or lethargic to actively participate in the program
* The child has yellow or green discharge from their eyes or nose, or red/pink eye color
* The child has any other illness or symptom that staff knows or believes may indicate the child poses a health risk to others

If a child becomes ill with any of the following symptoms parents will be required to remove them immediately:

* Vomiting and/or diarrhea
* Temperature greater than 100.4 °F (38 °C)
* A new and unexplained rash or cough
* Appears lethargic and unable to participate in the program
* Requires greater care and attention than can be provided without compromising the supervision and safety of the other children
* Displays any other illness or symptom that staff knows or believes may indicate the child poses a health risk to others

If you have been asked to remove your child from the Centre immediately and you take them to see a physician who indicates the child is well enough to return to the Centre, we require a note from the physician indicating this before the child will be accepted. Otherwise the child may return to care if they have been symptom free or on antibiotics for 24 hours. In the event that the parent fails to pick up their child immediately the emergency contact person will be notified and requested to pick up.

While waiting for pick up the sick child must be kept as far away from the other children as possible within the playroom and provided with a quiet comfortable place to wait. They must be supervised and monitored at all times by a Primary Staff member with a current first aid certificate. Parents/Emergency Contact will be required to sign an Illness Report form prior to leaving.

***We ask that parents respect the sick child policy to avoid the spread of illness through our centre.***

If we have a confirmed diagnosis of a contagious illness or infection, which may include but is not limited to the following; strep throat, pink eye, chickenpox, influenza, gastroenteritis, hand foot & mouth disease, scarlet fever and impetigo, parents will be notified by a memo posted on the front of the children’s sign in and out binders. Staff in all playrooms will be notified and given a fact sheet on signs and symptoms of the illness or infection.

It is not uncommon for children who are just starting at the center to become ill fairly frequently. Despite all the regular cleaning and sanitizing done at the center children new to the program do get infections in their first few weeks. Please be prepared for this possibility.

If an ambulance is required to transport your child to a medical facility, Stepping Stones Day Care Centre is not responsible for any charges incurred due to the transportation of your child.

**4.3 Medication & Herbal Remedies**

**We may administer medications or herbal remedies only where the written consent of the child’s parent has been obtained, the medication is in the original labeled container, and the medication is administered according to the labeled directions.**

Your child may require medication or herbal remedies to be administered while in care. In order to ensure this is done appropriately; staff will require parents to complete and sign a medication form. Prescriptions must include the date, child’s name and dosage. Expiry dates need to be checked. We do not administer vitamins.

***DO NOT LEAVE ANY MEDICATIONS IN YOUR CHILD’S BACKPACK OR CUBBY***

Only staff trained in first-aid are permitted to administer medications. Children who have severe allergies or emergency medications will be required to have a detailed Severe Allergy form completed.

**4.4 Inclusion Policy**

**All children are welcomed into our programs**

If your child requires specialized care, the Program Coordinator and staff will work together with your family to ensure a safe quality care environment is provided.

**4.5 Nutrition**

**Stepping Stones Day Care provides morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack for children. We ensure the service is at appropriate times and in sufficient quantities in accordance with the needs of each and in accordance with the Canada Food Guide. Infant nutrition provided by parents is clearly labeled with the infant’s name. (Under 19 months)**

School Age Program:

Morning Snack will be provided by the program before school and available until 9am for children in care for the full day. Lunch will take place at noon and is supplied by the family. Please ensure that items sent are healthy, nutritious and peanut free. Food items not found within the Canada food guide, those high in sugars and low in nutritional value, will be returned home and a healthy alternative offered from the programs supply. Afternoon Snack will be offered at 3:30 and is provided by the program.

**Menus for meals and snacks are posted on the Parent Board. The manner in which children are fed is appropriate to their age and level of development, children are seated while eating and drinking, and no beverages are provided to children while they are napping.**

Parents are provided with a copy of the Canada Food Guide as a resource upon registration. You are welcome to bring food from home if your child arrives early and needs breakfast, staff will store boxes of cereal or granola bars etc. Please ensure all food is labeled with your child’s name.

If you are bringing food from home we ask for healthy food choices. A list of suggestions is included in the Registration Package.

***Due to allergies, please do not bring any foods containing tree nuts or peanuts into the centre.***

**4.6 Accident Reporting**

**In the case of a serious accident or serious illness involving a child, we must ensure that the child’s parent is notified and that the child gets emergency medical care if needed.**

In the case of a minor accident, the child will receive first aid attention if necessary and the parents will be informed by a completed accident form. Parents are required to sign the forms indicating that they have read them. Staff are available to answer any questions you may have. Signed forms will be filed in the child’s file.

**4.7 Reportable Incidents**

**In this section, “incident” means a serious illness of or injury to a child that occurs while the child is attending a program, and any other incident that occurs while a child is attending a program that may seriously affect the health or safety of the child.**

Incidents will be reported immediately to the regional child care office using the prescribed form. The following incidents will be reported:

* An emergency evacuation
* Unexpected program closure
* An intruder on the program premises
* An error in the administration of medication by a program staff or volunteer resulting in the child becoming seriously injured or ill and requiring first aid, or results in the program requesting emergency health care and/or requires the child to remain in hospital overnight
* An illness or injury that requires the program to request emergency health care and/or requires the child to remain in hospital overnight
* The death of a child
* An unexpected absence of a child from the program (i.e. lost child)
* A child removed from the program by a non-custodial parent or guardian
* An allegation of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and/or neglect of a child by a program staff member or volunteer
* The commission by a child of an offence under an Act of Canada or Alberta
* And/or a child left on the premises outside of the program’s operating hours

A reportable incident will be immediately reported by phone, email or fax to our regional licensing staff. A completed incident form will be completed and forwarded to licensing within 48 hours of the occurrence. Staff will participate in the investigation of the critical incident report. Reports are kept on file and an analysis is done every 12 months to identify any issues, trends or patterns relating to staff, clients, equipment, premises that may have contributed to or caused the incident. The results of this analysis are recorded on the Incident Reporting Annual Summary and Analysis Report which is submitted CFS.

**4.8 Fire Drill Procedure**

Should an alarm sound, staff will evacuate all children from the building and muster in the parking lot. If the alarm is false the children can quickly and safely be returned to the center, parents will be informed of the fire drill when they pick up their children.

In the case of a real emergency the children will be moved to the locations listed below and parents will be contacted and informed of the situation as soon as possible.

Eastside Day Care - Pioneer Lodge @ 9508 – 100th Avenue

Westside Day Care – Rentco Toolshed @ 10016 – 108th Avenue

School Age Program- West Point Community Church @ 11305 Pinnacle Blvd.

**4.9 Cleaning & Maintenance**

As an ongoing measure to ensure the environment is safe and clean for the children in our care, continued cleaning is done to maintain the center, both indoors and out. An indoor safety checklist is conducted each morning by a staff member and an outdoor checklist done before going out each day to ensure the environments are safe for the children. All toys, equipment and materials are cleaned and sanitized each week. If we have a confirmed diagnosis of a contagious illness or infection, room staff will do an additional cleaning using a solution of bleach and water.

1. **CENTRE OPERATIONS**

**5.0 Hours of Operation**

The Eastside Centre is licensed to be open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We are unable to accept children before 7:30 a.m.

The Westside Centre is licensed to be open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We are unable to accept children before 7:30 a.m.

The School Age Program is licensed to be open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. We are unable to accept children before 7:30 a.m.

Children must be picked up before the closure times as indicated on our licenses. In the event that a child is left in care after hours and no emergency contact person is able to pick up the child, Child & Family Services will be notified.

\*we are unable to accept children into our care who are absent from school due to illness or suspension by the school

We are closed for statutory holidays.

**5.1 Centre Closures**

It may be necessary to close the Centre during days of extreme winter weather, power or gas outages or water supply issues. Closures will be announced on local radio or if during the day parents will be notified of the condition and asked to pick their children us as soon as possible.

**5.2 Termination & Withdrawal**

Stepping Stones Day Care Centre reserves the right to terminate enrollment for the following reasons:

1. Abuse of the policies outlined in the Parent Handbook
2. Inability of the program to meet the child’s or parent’s needs
3. Non-payment or late fees as set out in the fee schedule
4. Extreme behavioral issues that are unsafe or dangerous
5. Verbal or physical abuse or bullying towards staff by children or parents

We require a two-week written notice of withdrawal for each child prior to their last day in care. Full fees will be applied to accounts if the required notice is not provided.

**5.3 Smoking**

**No person is permitted to smoke while on the premises. No person is permitted to smoke at any time or place that children are being cared for.**

**5.4 Parent Feedback**

We have an open door policy for the families using our child care programs, you are welcome at any time. Your feedback is important to us and we use it for making decisions with our staffing and programming. All the policies and procedures related to the Day Care programs are reviewed regularly. You can share your ideas informally with staff and you will have a formal opportunity through our annual and exit surveys.

Contact information for the Program Coordinator is posted on the Parent Board as well as all Licensing and Health inspection reports.

**5.5 Children’s Files**

**Licensing requires that files will be kept for all children enrolled in the center. These files are confidential and are only to be reviewed by government personnel (upon request), the Director, ECE staff or Parents. Items required to be included are:**

* **Current and accurate registration form**
* **Copies of developmental assessments**
* **Letters or notes given by the parents**
* **Medication forms**
* **Copies of incident/accident reports**
* **Updates of subsidy notices**
* **Other pertinent information deemed important by the Director**

These items will be kept in the child’s file during their enrollment and for two years thereafter. Children’s files are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure all information is current.

**Parents are responsible to notify the Director of any changes relating to their child’s registration.**

**5.6 Child Care Fees**

As a non-profit agency all monies collected for child care are used for the day to day operation of the Day Care. In order to pay our staff and maintain our facility it is mandatory that child care fees are paid on time. Fees are due by the 5th of the month. If any portion of the fee remains unpaid by the 10th Stepping Stones Day Care Society will withhold child care services until the account is paid in full. Delinquent accounts will be sent to collections and legal action may be initiated.

**NSF payments will incur a $20 service fee**

Fees may be paid in one of the following ways:

1. Preauthorized Payment
2. Debit
3. Cheque – post-dated cheques
4. Cash

Payments may be made to administration staff between 8:00am – 5:00pm.

Parents who share responsibility for child care fees will both be required to sign a waiver indicating that they agree to our Child Care Fee policy and are jointly responsible for payment.

**5.7 Subsidy Information**

Alberta Government Child Care Subsidy may be available to families. Information on eligibility and application forms are available on-line at www.child.alberta.ca. If you have been approved by subsidy, it is your responsibility to ensure that the guidelines are followed. We are obligated to report any abuse.

**5.8 Parent Concern**

Parents are encouraged to address minor concerns directly with the staff. If you feel your concern needs to be addressed by the Program Coordinator please feel free to set up a meeting time that is convenient for you. Any serious concerns or situation that cannot be resolved, please complete the Parent Concern Form, available from Administrative staff. This will ensure a record is being kept and the concern is understood clearly. Completed forms will be reviewed by the Program Coordinator and the Executive Director. You will receive a written response to your concern and are welcome to speak to the Coordinator or Executive Director at any time. If you feel that the matter is unresolved, you may address this in writing to Stepping Stones Day Care Society, Board of Directors.

**5.9 Child Abuse & Endangerment**

If we suspect child abuse or endangerment, we are required by law to report this to Child & Family Services. We are not permitted to notify the parents or guardians of the report. It is the responsibility of the CFS to investigate and determine if the report is justified.

**5.10 Children’s Belongings**

Staff make every effort to care for children’s belongings, we are not responsible for lost or damaged belongings. Please ensure appropriate play-clothes are provided to avoid damage to good clothing. In addition, please label all children’s belongings to avoid loss and confusion.

**5.11 Use of Technology**

The use of technology is limited to educational purposes that will support and extend activities and opportunities for learning.

**5.12 Bottle Recycling**

If you would like to support the Society by donating bottles or can please do the following:

Sort items into bags – glass- plastic- tin

Label each bag securely with user **ID#1297-9685**

Drop off at any Recycle Plus Bottle Depots

You won’t have to wait in line, simply let the cashier know you are dropping off bags for the Stepping Stones Society or give them the User ID# 1297-9685.

Thank you for choosing Stepping Stones Day Care