



Stepping Stones

DAY CARE SOCIETY

Parent Handbook

Daycare Program Families



Stepping Stones Day Care Society
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Stepping Stones Day Care Society

Serving Grande Prairie Families Since 1975



Welcome to Stepping Stones Day Care Program

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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1. CHILDCARE PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

Day Care Program

Our Day Care Program offers quality child care to families with children aged 12 months to 5 years.

We strive to employ qualified Early Learning and Child Care staff. Our day care programs 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.

Out of School Programs

Our Out of School Child Care Program offers quality child care to families with children attending kindergarten to 12 years of age.

Our Out of School Program provide children with high-quality environment and activities that will promote optimal development.

Building on children's sense of community and belonging, this program offers a safe alternative for families who need before, after school and summer care.

Children have an opportunity to increase their independency skills in a safe nurturing atmosphere.

Day Home Programs

Our Family Child Care Program offers quality child care to families with children birth to school age.

Our day home programs provide children with a high-quality environment and activities that will promote optimal development.

Building on each child's curiosity and natural wonder, the staff implement a program that is magical, intriguing, and full of adventure.

Core curriculum opportunities for language, music, math, science, and physical development are woven into this cozy comfortable magical learning environment.



2.PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

2.1 Vision Statement

Our vision is to provide the community with quality early learning and childcare programming 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 and training necessary to ensure quality programming and promote the healthy development of children and families with diverse backgrounds, abilities, cultures and needs.

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 safe environment where each child's wellbeing and individual needs are treated with respect and understanding.
- To plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program that allows each child to explore, discover, grow and enhance their abilities.
- To work in partnership with parents, families, and children to ensure open lines of communication.
- To encourage children to problem-solve, make choices, and express themselves through their daily experiences and opportunities.
- To inspire a sense of self-worth and self-esteem in each child.
- To provide appropriate guidance.



3.DAILY PROGRAM

3.1 Arrival/Departure of Children

Children will be signed in and out by their educators each day. It can be very upsetting for a child coming into the program at rest time. We require parents to drop children off no later than 10:30 am. Children may be refused entry into the program past this time. 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 the staff does not know the person picking up they will ask for identification. If the alternate pick-up person is under the age of 18 years, they must be a family member and a minimum 14 years old.

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 App HiMama. 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. If a child fails to show up at the arranged time or location staff will immediately contact the parent and or emergency contact.

3.3 Child Development

As part of our commitment to quality childcare, we take a proactive approach to monitoring the development of the children in our program. For this purpose, we use developmental checklists and the 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. If 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. Special Me opportunities help children feel at home, will ease their transition, and enhance their social skills. Parents are welcome to bring in new photos anytime they wish.

3.6 Child Guidance 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. All disciplinary action taken will be reasonable in the circumstances

On occasion, Stepping Stones understands that severe behaviors will occur. Severe behaviors are classified as follows but not limited to:

- Severe defiance and disruption
- Verbal abuse to children or educators, including profanity
- Destruction of Stepping Stones property
- Physical abuse to children or educators
- Leaving the program boundaries or group of activity without permission
- Bullying or antagonizing behavior

Should severe behaviors persist, Stepping Stones reserves the right to limit or suspend a child from the program when the health and/or safety* of the child; other children or educators are at risk.

- ***Safety: reducing exposure to hazards, risk of harm, injury, or danger**

In the case that a child exhibits any of the above behaviors and all efforts have been made to follow child guidance strategies, the following guidelines will be followed.

1. 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.
2. If a safe calm down is ineffective, parents may be required to remove the child from the program until the following day.

If a child's behavior 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 for support 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 childcare when possible.

Prohibited Child Guidance

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

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 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 the needs of the children. Outdoor play will occur during winter months up to -20 degrees Celsius including the windchill. During the summer months outdoor play will occur up to +25 degrees Celsius including the UV Index.

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

Toilet training may begin once your child is showing interest. 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 of 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.

4.0 HEALTH & SAFETY – POTENTIAL HEALTH RISK

4.1 Sick Child Policy

It is expected that parents will inform the Program Supervisor or Coordinator 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 48 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
- The child exhibits any signs that Alberta Health Services deems a risk to others in the program

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 48 hours.

If the parent fails to pick up their child immediately the emergency contact person will be notified and requested to pick up.

While waiting to be picked 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 always monitored 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, impetigo, or symptoms deemed by Alberta Health Services, parents will be notified by a

memo posted on HiMama and parent board. Staff in all playrooms will be notified and given a fact sheet on signs and symptoms of the illness or infection. If more than two confirmed cases are within the centre, the proper agencies will be notified.

It is not uncommon for children who are just starting at the center to become ill frequently, despite all the regular cleaning and sanitizing done at the centre, 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.**

4.2 Communicable Disease Policy

When the Program Supervisor/Coordinator suspects that a child may have a Communicable Disease, the parent or emergency contact will be notified immediately, and the child must be removed from the day care as soon as possible. Parents will be informed of the concern and encouraged to seek medical attention.

It is expected that the parent will inform the Program Supervisor/Coordinator if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. This will enable us to inform other families.

A list of diseases and guidelines that require the notification of the local Public Health Centre is available at www.health.alberta.ca under the “Health Professionals” tab and “Manuals and Guidelines” section.

4.3 Medication & Herbal Remedies

Any medication that is prescribed by a physician, including emergency medication, will be administered only when 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 label directions. Medications must include the date, child’s name, and dosage. Expiry dates need to be checked.

Over the counter medications will not be administered unless a Specialized Health Care form has been completed by a Physician.

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 or Medical Alert form completed.

If ongoing medication is required, you will be asked to have your physician fill in a Physician’s Order and Request for Specialized Health Care.

4.4 Specialized Health Care

We may provide or allow for the provision of health care to a child only if the written consent of the child’s parent/guardian has been obtained or the health care provided is in the nature of first aid.

If your child requires specialized health care, you will need to ensure that the Educator is trained in the proper method of administering the type of health care required by the child. The Educator will require documented evidence of their skill or training and a record of such will be kept in the Educator’s file and the child’s file.

4.5 Inclusion Policy

Children are celebrated as individuals and accommodations/adaptations will be made within the program for those with diverse needs and abilities. Children who require more assistance than educators can provide will be given an individualized care plan to ensure their safety within the program.

Open communication with families and community partners is established to ensure the child is successful in the program. When a child needs outside support Stepping Stones program will work with those supports to ensure an inclusive environment.

4.6 Nutrition

Families are required to provide two nutritious snacks and a lunch for their child. If a child continuously brings unhealthy food items educators will supply the family healthy eating resource information.

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

4.7 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. Any Critical Incidents that occur will be reported immediately and a report filed within 48 hours to the regional Child & Family Services Licensing Officer.

4.8 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 reportable incident form will be completed and forwarded to licensing within 48 hours of the occurrence. Staff will participate in the investigation of the reportable incident. 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.

4.9 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 location listed below and parents will be contacted and informed of the situation as soon as possible.

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

4.10 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.

5.0 CENTRE OPERATIONS

5.1 Hours of Operation

The Day Care 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.

If a child is left in care after hours and no emergency contact person can 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.

5.2 Centre Closures

It may be necessary to close the Centre during days of extreme winter weather, power or gas outages or water supply issues or as deemed necessary by Alberta Health Services. When a closure occurs after hours, parents will be notified electronically with an email and posted on our Hi mamma app. If during the day parents will be notified of the condition and asked to pick their children up as soon as possible.

5.3 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.

5.4 Smoking and Vaping

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.

5.5 Parent Feedback

We have an open-door policy for families using our childcare 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.

5.6 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 Program Supervisor /Coordinator, Educators 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 Program Supervisor/Coordinator**

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 Program Supervisor/Coordinator of any changes relating to their child's registration.

5.7 Child Care Fees

As a non-profit agency all monies collected for childcare are used for the day-to-day operation of the Day Care. To pay our staff and maintain our facility it is mandatory that childcare fees are paid on time. Fees are to be paid by the 5th, 15th, or 20th of the month as per your finance agreement. If any portion of the fee remains unpaid by the 25th Stepping Stones Day Care Society will withhold childcare 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 \$40 service fee.

Fees may be paid in one of the following ways:

1. E-transfer
2. Preauthorized Payment
3. Credit
4. Cheque
5. Cash

Payments may be made to administration staff between 8:00am – 4:00pm.

Parents who share responsibility for childcare 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.

5.8 Subsidy Information

Alberta Government Child Care Subsidy may be available to families. Information on eligibility and application forms are available on-line at <https://www.alberta.ca/child-care-subsidy>. 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.

5.9 Parent Concern

Parents are encouraged to address minor concerns directly with the Educator. 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, which is available upon request from the program. This will ensure a record is kept and the concern is understood clearly. Completed forms will be reviewed by the Program Coordinator. You will receive a written response regarding your concern and are welcome to speak to the coordinator at any time. If you feel that the matter is unresolved, you may address this in writing to the Executive Director of the Society.

5.10 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.

Should a Court Order be in place and the family not follow the order accurately; the family will be asked to leave the program.

5.11 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.

5.12 Use of Technology

The use of technology is limited to educational purposes that will support, extend activities and opportunities for learning. If you require further input to use of technology and what this looks like within the program, speak directly to the Program Supervisor.

5.13 Bottle Recycling

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

Sort items into bags

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 Program**

After Hours Concerns: 780-532-9684 ext. 103