



**Stepping Stones Educational Therapy
Center, Inc.**

Parent Handbook
Policies and Procedures

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Thank you for choosing Stepping Stones Educational Therapy Center, Inc. We specialize in quality education emphasizing the total growth of each child. Parents, teachers, therapists, and support staff make up a team that is dedicated to helping each child reach his/her potential in life. Our staff is carefully chosen and certified to render the care, attention and guidance you provide at home. Each classroom consists of a teacher with a college degree and paraprofessionals with hours of training through Bright From the Start as required to meet the needs of each classroom. Through learning experiences your child will be headed for success and advancement in all areas of development. Parents and staff working together to make your child successful is our mission. Please feel free to discuss any concerns with your child's teacher and the directors. Our door is always open for suggestions and to address any concern that you may have.

The First Step program serves preschoolers with and without special needs from six weeks through five years of age. We also serve six to fourteen year old children with special needs in The Academy at Stepping Stones. We are open from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. with class time being from 8:30 – 3:30. Our school program runs from August through May. A detailed calendar showing our scheduled school days and our holidays can be obtained in the main office.

Prior to attendance, an enrollment package must be completed, registration fee paid, a parent intake interview completed, a billing interview completed, and an orientation completed. **Please note** it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to supply and maintain accurate required information. It is imperative we have current and correct information on your child's records.

Expectations

Parents may expect:

- their child to be cared for in a safe nurturing environment.
- to visit with the program director about concerns related to their child.
- to be informed about any misbehavior on the part of their child as well as the accomplishments of their child daily.

The staff may expect:

- fees to be paid on time. See explanation on page 10
- the child's record to be kept up-to-date.
- the child to be picked up on time. See explanation on page 11
- all policies to be followed as explained in this document.
- to be notified if the child will not be attending the program for any amount of time.
- attention to be given to any communications, letters, or correspondence that might be coming home with the child, whether it is regarding behavior, teacher notes, sick notices, etc...
- Because tuition covers just over half of the actual cost to educate a child at Stepping Stones we expect families to volunteer, assist with fundraising, and participate in all activities relating to their child.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance

- 1.** Parents are welcome at Stepping Stones at any time. However, we request your cooperation in not disrupting classes.
- 2.** If your child will be absent or late coming in, please notify us as soon as possible. We begin planning early in our day for classroom participation, breakfast, lunch and snack.
- 3.** If a preschool child is absent for one consecutive week without prior notice, the child will be considered withdrawn.
- 4.** In the Academy program children are allowed 10 unexcused absences per year.
- 5.** Your child is here on a trial basis. New surroundings can sometimes be overwhelming; if your child is not adjusting we reserve the right to dismiss your child if you or he/she is not complying with the policies adopted by Stepping Stones. In addition we might discover that we are unable to meet the needs of a student and again reserve the right to dismiss your child.
- 6.** We ask that you give us a two week notice before withdrawing your child from the center.
- 7.** We make every attempt to place children in classes by age. It is important that children interact with same age peers. Therefore, we strive to keep the children with groups that will begin public school at the same time.
- 8.** Because forming a bond with a caregiver is so very important to the healthy development of children we make every effort to keep children in the same group with the same staff for the entire school year.

9. In the Academy program children are allowed 10 absences per year. Being tardy (after 8:30) on three occasions is equal to one absence. When a child is absent 5 days the parent will receive a phone call and a plan will be put in place to help the student be present for crucial learning time. If the student exceeds the 10 absences they will no longer be eligible for scholarship. In addition, out of respect for the students and teachers it is important to limit interruptions during the school day. Therefore, we ask if your child is tardy that you sign them in at the office and a staff member will take your child to class.

Health and Welfare

10. When you pick your child up be sure to sign him/her out in the front office.
11. A valid picture ID must be shown for your child to be released with anyone other than parent and/or legal guardians. Their name must also be listed on your child's information sheet with your signature.

Feeding

12. Menus will be posted on the front entrance information board. Exceptions can be made only where allergies and special diets prescribed by doctors apply. Children will be encouraged but not required to eat all foods.
13. Infants and toddlers who are bottle fed must have an infant feeding plan on file and be provided with labeled bottles. This includes child's full name and date.

14. We encourage families to come eat with their children. Stepping Stone cannot provide the meal but feel it is an invaluable learning time for you to be able to share that time with the child.
15. Breakfast snack will be served during the hours of 7:30 – 8:00 a.m.
16. Lunch will be served during the hour of 10:50 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.
17. Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are provided at a cost of \$1.25 per day.
18. Only the nutrition staff is allowed in the kitchen area.
19. Birthdays are special!! If you wish to have a birthday celebration on your child's birthday, please notify the teacher one week prior to this special event. Many of our students are on restrictive diets. Please be considerate when you plan the food for parties.

Clothes

20. Infants and not yet potty trained children must be provided with disposable diapers.
21. Bright From the Start requires that children wear complete sets of clothing that is comfortable and easily cleaned. Closed toe shoes are required at all times.
22. Be sure to bring extra labeled clothing for your child for times when the fun spills on them or an accident occurs.

Sickness

23. In the interest of every child's well being, only healthy children will be allowed at the school. We ask that your child be free of fever for **24 hours** after an illness before you bring your child to Stepping Stones. When in doubt, remember the Golden Rule – “Do unto to others...” If a child has symptoms of illness such as elevated temperature, rash, common cold, vomiting, or diarrhea, parents are requested to keep them at home. If symptoms of illness are observed at the center, the child will be isolated in an administrative office, and a parent notified to pick up the child as soon as possible.

24. Because we are making every effort to keep every child at Stepping Stones healthy we will call you to pick your child up if

- the child has a fever of 100 degrees or higher. The child may return to school when he/she is fever free for 24 hours.
- the child has 2 loose BMs in 30 minutes. The child may return to school 24 hours after the last occurrence.
- when a child has a continuous cough and/or green runny mucus from the nose. The child may return to school when the cough has subsided and there is no more flowing mucus.
- the child has a rash that is spreading, itchy, or not going away after a period of time of observance. The child may return after being seen by a health care professional and released to return to school.

- the child is suspected of having pink eye. The child may return after being seen by a health care professional and no longer contagious.
- the child is suspected of having lice or scabies. The child may return after being seen by a health care professional and parent provides proof of treatment.
- the child vomits during the school day. The child may return 24 hours after the last occurrence.

We are aided by Bright From the Start's "Common Infectious Illness" chart. (included at the end of this document) Please understand that we are trying to keep your child and the other children at Stepping Stones as healthy as possible.

25. Biting is a common occurrence in a preschool setting. It is very painful and can be dangerous to the person receiving the bite. We therefore abide by the following guidelines.

- If a child bites 2 times the parent s are called in to create a behavior plan to instruct the child that this behavior is hurtful and inappropriate.
- The behavior plan will be constructed by the parents, classroom teacher, administrator, and therapists working with the child.
- The behavior plan will be strictly followed both at home and at school for 2 weeks. If after that period the child continues to bite the parent will be asked to pick the child up and set up an appointment with the administration to determine further action.

26. If your child is on **any** type of medication you **must** complete a medical administration form. The medicine must be in the original container and labeled with your child's name.

27. No medication will be given without this form. You will be notified immediately if any adverse reaction takes place and it will be noted on the medical administration form.
28. Bright From the Start allows use to administer over the counter medication for three consecutive days only.
29. **Medications have to be locked up in classroom or nurses station. No medications left in diaper bags.**
30. No person shall be allowed into the center that knowingly has, or presents symptoms of any contagious disease. Anyone suspected of communicable diseases shall be reported to the local health department and not be allowed into the school without proper written medical authorization.
31. If any child is exposed to a notifiable communicable disease we will post it on classroom door.

Safety

32. Our staff is trained in first aid and CPR. This training will provide assistance when necessary. In extreme injuries and/or emergencies, an ambulance will be called and your child and a designated staff member will be transported to Spalding Regional Hospital. The parent will be notified immediately, a staff member will stay with your child until your arrival.

- 33.** An Incident Report will be sent home in cases of minor accidents such as scraped elbows or knees, paper cuts, etc. This will explain how the accident happened, what treatment was given and be signed by a staff member. A copy will be kept on file in the Program Director's office for future reference.
- 34.** Outdoor activities are provided daily; therefore, send hats, coats, sunscreen, insect repellent when needed.
- 35.** When water activities are planned parents will be notified. If the activity involves water more than 2 feet deep a written authorization forms will be obtained before the child can participate in the activity.
- 36.** In case of severe weather our schedule will coincide with the Spalding County School System. Listen for notification in your local area. Please do not call the school at this time because we will be extra busy caring for children. Emergency weather plans are located on our front information board, including fire and tornado routes.
- 37.** In the event Stepping Stones has a physical plant problem such as power failure that affects our ability to control the climate of the building, prepare meals, or adequately care for your child we will announce over the local radio stations our procedures. If this problem occurs after the children have arrived at school the parents will be telephoned. If the parents cannot be reached the emergency contact will be called.
- 38.** Please note state emergency plans have been developed and are posted for parent viewing on the front information board. Individual routes and plans are posted in each room.
- 39.** Stepping Stones does not provide private transportation to and from Spalding County Schools, private homes or field trips.

Fees and Payments

- 40.** The registration fee is non-refundable.
- 41.** Tuition is pro-rated so that you will pay the same amount when your child is here a full month as when we are closed for holidays.
- 42.** Tuition is to be paid monthly or yearly. Please make arrangements with the program director
- 43.** There is a multi-child discount of \$10.00 per month.
- 44.** Tuition is due by the first of each month. A late fee of \$50.00 will be added to the amount due if your tuition is more than 10 days late.
- 45.** All children need to be picked up by 5:30. A late fee will be added to your monthly bill if your child is picked-up late. At 5:35 - \$10.00 will be added. For each additional minute - \$1.00 will be added.

Description of Afterschool Program

Stepping Stones Afterschool Program is for children 6 years -14 years. Our goal is to provide a quality resource for parents that must work outside the home after the school day is over. Our mission is to provide a nurturing, safe environment where your children can relax with their peers after school. During each day, children will fill their afternoon with outdoor play, snacks, and playing with friends. The hours are 3:20-4:30pm and the cost is \$35.00 per week and \$1.00 per every minute late.

Stepping Stones afterschool program is not licensed and is not required to be licensed by the state.

Bright From the Start
404-463-0001
www.dec.state.ga.us

Before/After-School Policy and Procedures

Purpose: The purpose of Stepping Stones Afterschool Program is to provide a quality resource for parents that must work outside the home after the school day is over. Our mission is to provide a nurturing, safe environment where your children can relax with their peers after school. During each day, children will fill their afternoon with outdoor play, snacks, and playing with friends.

Ages: The ages of the children are 6 years to 14 years

Hours: The hours of operation are 7:30 AM-8:00AM and 3:20 PM – 4:30PM Monday through Friday on days that school is in session.

Forms: Please get a form from the office, fill it out and give back to the office for your child to attend before/after-school program at Stepping Stones. The before and after-care program is not licensed and is not required to be licensed by the state.

Fees: Fees are \$35.00 per week and \$1.00 per every minute late.

Supervision: We are always with the children. We do a count of children at the beginning of the afternoon and match it to the number of children signed in. We do a count any time we move locations. A child must ask permission to use the rest room. Staff is with children at all times.

Behavior Policy: Stepping Stones believes in respect for each other. We will only speak to your child with respect when we need to provide discipline. Should there be a problem, your child will be given two verbal warnings to correct a behavior. If behavior is not corrected your child will be asked to sit by the teacher to work out a solution. We will work hard with you and your child to ensure their success, but respect and kindness is imperative.

Accidents/Illness / Emergency: When a child becomes ill or is injured during the after school program, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. If the parent cannot be reached our staff will adhere to the emergency contact information on your child's registration form. Please notify us immediately if changes occur in addresses, phone numbers or emergency contacts for your family. Should we not be able to reach anyone, we will call 911 for transport to needed medical facilities.

Releasing a child: When a child is released, the authorized person must sign the child out on our sign out sheet. No one will be released to anyone that is not on the registration form as to who may pick your child up from Stepping Stones Afterschool.

Late arrivals: Stepping Stones Afterschool closes at 4:30PM. If you will be later than 4:30PM please call the school number (770-229-5511) and notify staff and a \$1.00 per minute fee will be added to you bill.

Snacks: Your child will receive a snack around 3:30pm.

Questions: Any or all questions may be directed to the Director of Stepping Stones.

Field Trips

46. When field trips are planned Stepping Stones will obtain a written authorization form before a child can participate in the field trip.
47. Because of new state regulations, all students will need to be transported to and from field trips by a parent or other family member over the age of 18. Parents need to stay with their child on the field trip.

Discipline

48. When discipline is necessary it will be appropriate to the child and the situation. At no time, will cruel or unusual punishment be used – not even at the request of parents. Positive example by teachers will be given as well as behavior modification techniques, time out, isolation within the classroom, and removal from class with supervision and parent notification.
49. If a child becomes so aggressive that teachers or other children are harmed, the parents will be called in for a conference to develop behavior management strategies.

Curriculum

Academy will use the Unique Learning and Touch Math curriculum.

Preschool will use the Investigator curriculum.

Testing and STEP

50. After your child is established at Stepping Stones and is comfortable, the classroom teacher will test the child using one of the following tests

Infants – 3year olds	Developmental Checklist
Lottery Funded Pre-K	WSO Work Sampling Online Aligned with GELDS
Academy students	Unique Learning Strategies Monthly Pre-Test & Post Test
Marcus Model Classroom	(ABLIS) Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills

51. The procedures for administering the test will be unique for each of the tests and can be found in the testing manual.

52. From this information a baseline of skills and knowledge will be obtained. This information will be used to develop a Student Teacher Education Plan. These should be written, signed by team members and on file in the Program Directors office before the fall break.

53. The education team consists of the parents, teacher, teacher assistant, and therapists. Follow up testing and check sheets will be completed on every child through out the year.

54. Parent/teacher conferences should be conducted in the fall, winter, spring, and as needed throughout the school year.

Grievance

55. We strive to be fair and equitable to all of our children and their families. The Executive Director and the Program Director have an open door and listening ears if there are concerns that should arise. If however you have a grievance of any kind the following procedure may be used

*schedule a conference with the person you have a grievance with.

*if you are still not satisfied, schedule a conference with the Program Director to plan a strategy to resolve the conflict.

*if you would like to pursue the issue still further you are welcome to schedule a conference with the Executive Director.

56. We value your opinions and feelings. If you have comments about anything going on at Stepping Stone please leave them in the comment/payment box in the office.

Withdrawal and Dismissal

57. If your child is absent for one consecutive week without notification, the child will be considered withdrawn.

58. We ask that you give us a two week notice when withdrawing your child from the school. If no notice is given that month's tuition cannot be reimbursed.

59. All children are placed on a trial basis. If at any time we feel that we cannot meet your child's needs we will ask that your child be withdrawn.

60. If tuition is not

61. paid in full by the end of each calendar month, your child will not be able to continue attending Stepping Stones until the matter is cleared up.

Dress Code

62. Because the age of our students is increasing each year it has become necessary to instate a dress code for the Academy students. The following items are specifically prohibited: sundresses, miniskirts (shorter than finger tip length), short shorts (at least to finger tips), tank tops, leather or leather-like material, spandex/stretch material, clothing with holes in it.

Common Infectious Illnesses (Communicable Disease Recommendations)

adapted from *Common Infectious Illnesses poster—2000 edition*
Georgia Department of Human Resources and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

Disease, Illness, Organism	Incubation period	How is it spread?	When is child most contagious?	Return to school?
Chicken pox * # (<i>Varicella</i>)	10-21 days	Airborne or direct contact with droplets from nose, mouth and skin lesions of infected individuals	From 2 days before rash, until all lesions are dry and crusted	When all lesions have crusted (usually 7-8 days)
Cold Sore (<i>Herpes Simplex</i>)	2 days-2 weeks	Direct contact with infected oral lesions or secretions	While lesions are present	After lesions are scabbed over
Common Cold (upper respiratory infection)	1-5 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth—virus can live in environment 24 hours	Variable—from day before symptoms, until symptoms resolve	No exclusion, unless fever, or child too ill to attend
Conjunctivitis (<i>Pinkeye</i>) (may be viral, bacterial or allergic)	Variable, depending on cause	Contact with secretions from eyes, or contaminated surfaces	Variable—(allergic conjunctivitis is not contagious)	When cleared by physician, after 24 hours treatment if bacterial
Croup (viral respiratory infection) causes "barky" cough	Variable Usually 2-6 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth	Variable—usually from day before symptoms and for 3 days of illness	When breathing comfortably, cough improved, and no fever for 24 hours
Diphtheria *	2-5 days	Contact with discharge from nose, eyes, mouth or skin lesions	Onset of sore throat until 4 days after treatment begins	After 2 negative cultures are obtained
Ear Infection (<i>Otitis media</i>) <i>Sinusitis</i>	Variable	Not contagious	Not contagious	No exclusion unless child too sick to attend
Fever (100.4 degrees or higher) no specific reason known or identified	Unknown, until illness diagnosed	Unknown until illness identified, safe to assume it may be spread by contact with any secretions	Unknown, assume child is contagious while fever is present	After 24 hours without fever, and child behaving normally
Fifth Disease # (<i>Parvovirus</i>) "Slapped cheek" appearance and a lacy rash	4-21 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth	During the week before the rash develops	No need to restrict once rash has appeared

Disease, Illness, Organism	Incubation period	How is it spread?	When is child most contagious?	Return to school?
Poison Ivy <i>(not infectious) Reaction to sap on leaves of poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac</i>	2-3 days after contact with sap	Child is not contagious, only direct contact with sap may cause rash	Sap may be on clothes or skin for 12-24 hours after contact with leaves, or until child bathes	No exclusion
Ringworm <i>(Tinea capitis, corporis, pedis) Fungal infection of scalp, body, or feet</i>	Unknown	Direct skin contact with infected people or animals, or with surfaces contaminated with fungus; scalp lesions from contact with barber clippers or shared brushes	From onset of lesions until treatment begins	After treatment begins—scalp infection usually requires medication by mouth, others may be treated topically
Scabies <i>(mites which burrow under the skin, causing severe itching)</i>	Usually 4-6 weeks, 1-4 days after re-exposure	Skin contact with infested individuals; contact with bedding or clothes of infested person	From up to 8 weeks before skin rash appears until it has been treated	The day after adequate treatment begins
Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever <i>(Group A Streptococcus) Scarlet fever is a strep throat infection with a rash</i>	1-5 days	Contact with droplets from nose and mouth	From onset of symptoms until 24 hours after treatment begins	After at least 24 hours of antibiotic treatment and no fever for 24 hours
Tuberculosis	Some infected persons do not develop disease, but risk is highest 1-2 years after exposure	Airborne or contact with droplets from nose and mouth of infected person (children usually contract TB from close contact with an infected adult)	Children with TB usually are not infectious to others	Only when Health Department gives permission
Whooping Cough * <i>(Pertussis)</i>	5-21 days	Contact with droplets from nose, eyes or mouth of infected person	Most infectious before cough onset (with onset of runny nose), continuing until child is on antibiotics for 5 days—is infectious for 3 weeks after cough begins, if not treated.	After antibiotic treatment for 5 days

* These diseases should have been vaccinated against, if immunizations are up to date. Chicken pox may still occur, but usually in a milder form.

These diseases may be of concern to staff members who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant. Follow up with obstetric health care provider is recommended after known or suspected contact.

Exceptions to the exclusion/return to school guidelines listed on this chart may be made by local health department personnel on an individual case-by-case basis.

Adequate hand washing facilities, policies and practices in the school are the keys to excellent hygiene that will eliminate or minimize transmission of these diseases and keep students in school.

Registration form for before/afterschool program

Child's name _____

Parent's name _____

Phone number you can be reached at _____

Circle the days your child will be in the before/afterschool program

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday ALL

Name of those who can pick up your child _____

Emergency contact information _____

I am aware that the before/afterschool program is not licensed and is not required to be licensed by the state.

Signature _____

Date _____

I have read, understand, and agree to the policies and procedures for the before/afterschool program.

Signature _____

Date _____

Parental Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have read the policies and procedures of the Stepping Stones Parent Handbook. I understand and agree to adhere to the terms and conditions of this document.

Signature_____

Date_____

