



NURSERY SCHOOL AND DAY CARE CENTER INC.

The First Step Nursery School and Day Care Center, Inc
1350 15th Street, Fort Lee, NJ 07024
firststep7.com
201-944-9642



PARENT HANDBOOK

Dear Parents:

Welcome to The First Step Nursery School & Day Care Center.

This booklet will help you to understand how our center operates. We believe the strongest partnership in a child's life is between the child's parents and the school in which their child attends. The goal that we strive to achieve is for our staff to team up with parents to make this experience an excellent one for your entire family.

Our center is a warm, supportive place where your child can grow and develop socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. The programs that our center provides are individualized, and our staff sets goals for the children based on each child's stage of development and concurrent needs. Careful structuring of our environment provides space and time for each child to explore and develop.

We are glad that you came to visit. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call us.

We look forward to starting your child in our tender, loving childcare program.

Sincerely,

Mary Jo Iorlano/Director

Mission Statement / Purpose / Vision

Our **mission** is to maximize each child's potential by providing an active, collaborative learning environment where children, families, and educators become empowered for social, emotional, and academic success.

Our **purpose** is to provide a quality childcare program for all children ages 0 - 13. We encourage the development of self-esteem, discovery, and problem-solving skills in our warm, caring, and nurturing environment. The "homelike" atmosphere and "open-door" policy that we provide helps to comfort both parents and children.

Our **vision** is a world where every child meets their maximum potential.

Government Licensing Information

The First Step Nursery School & Day Care Center, Inc is licensed by the State of New Jersey, Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing. Parents may request a copy of the minimum standards at any time.

You may contact the licensing office at 877-667-9845 or in writing at PO Box 717 Trenton, NJ 08625-0717

Enrollment

Enrollment at The First Step Nursery School & Day Care Center is open to children from 8 weeks to 13 years of age. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, or gender.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon a visit to the center along with the completed enrollment application, signed contract, signed fee agreement, registration fee, deposit, immunization records and signed Parent Handbook receipt.

The First Step reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

Continued enrollment at The First Step is contingent upon the parent's emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures of The First Step as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition. Parents are required to notify TFS immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment, or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being disenrolled from the program and forfeiture of any deposit or fees.

Enrolled spots will not be held for children who withdraw for the summer months. Should parents choose to withdraw; they will have to put the child(ren) on the wait list if applicable.

The First Step keeps enrolled children in the same class for the entirety of the school year unless a change is made by the Director. The exception to this is in our Infant Room. Children who turn 18 months throughout the school year will be moved into our Tots & Two's classroom.

Hours, Days & Months of Operation

The First Step is open year-round from 7:30 am - 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except for specified holidays. The First Step offers a full-time and part-time program.

A full-time program is 3, 4 or 5 days per week and more than 4 hours per day. A part-time program is 3, 4 or 5 days per week, four hours or less per day. Parents have the option to sign up for either full or part time; but a minimum of 3 days per week is required.

Tuition

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign a Parent Contract Agreement (included in this handbook), upon enrollment of their child at The First Step. Parents are required to indicate to whom all billing information and correspondence should be addressed.

There is no tuition credit or refund for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations, pandemics, inclement weather or acts of God. Any child who spends extra time at the center other than what they are enrolled for will be charged by the hour for that time.

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at The First Step; however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Director immediately.

The First Step offers a 10% tuition discount for two or more sibling children attending the center at the same time. This discount will be deducted from the children's combined tuition for each month. There are no discounts on registration fees or deposits.

Contracts, Fees, and Deposits

The SmartCare Parents Program ACH (bank account or credit card) is our preferred way to pay tuition. A Credit Card Contract Form must be submitted at the time of registration (Included in this handbook). There will be a \$35.00 fee charged from tuition payments returned from the

bank. Parents will be responsible for providing a new ACH payment method if their account is declined.

Each year upon a child's date of enrollment, an annual Registration Fee of \$100.00 is collected. This fee is nonrefundable.

For new students registering for The First Step, one full month's tuition must be paid upon enrollment. This deposit will be applied toward the child's last month's tuition at The First Step, with an appropriate withdrawal notice, one month in advance in writing. *There will be no refunds given for deposits.*

Payment Schedule

Tuition payments are due on the 1st of each month and shall be paid by either the ACH program (via bank withdrawal or credit card), check or cash. For any family who pays by credit card, a 3.5% processing fee is added to your monthly tuition.

A \$35.00 fee will be charged for returned payments. Parents will be responsible for payment and fees. If at any time in the future, the bank returns a parent's payment, future tuition payments must be limited to a certified check, cash or money order with a \$10.00 monthly processing fee.

Tuition does not include fees for field trips and other special events.

Late Payments

A \$35.00 late fee will be charged for any tuition withdrawal or payment that is not made by the 5th of every month. An additional \$10.00 fee will be charged if payment is not received by the 12th of the month. A \$35.00 processing fee will be charged for any returned payments. If tuition is not received by the 15th of the month, your child may not attend school until tuition is paid. Please notify the director if you need any assistance.

Subsidized Care

The First Step accepts childcare subsidies through the Office for Children and Work First, NJ. The appropriate documents must first be approved by The First Step and all registration forms and contracts signed by the parents.

Confidentiality

Within The First Step, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of TFS, your child's physician(s), therapists(s), and/or student interns or volunteers who have a "need to know" in order to care for your child appropriately and safely.

Confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as The First Step strives to protect everyone's right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or health-related information about anyone associated with The First Step. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees at The First Step are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

Parents are **NOT** allowed to discuss **any child** or **employee** through private email, social media or group forums. This type of conversation will **NOT** be tolerated and could result in the family's dismissal from the center. Our confidentiality policy protects every child's and employee's privacy. If a parent has a concern regarding another child or employee, they should contact the Director directly to discuss those concerns.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of The First Step are considered mandated reporters, under the law. The employees of The First Step are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of the suspicious marks, behavior, or conditions prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse and neglect. We at The First Step take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interests of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of The First Step cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith". Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate restraints (e.g., car seats, seat belts, etc.)

- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals, including a drink, for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to special needs of a disabled child
- Sending a sick child to school having been medicated to hide symptoms for an illness that would typically requires the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

Parent Code of Conduct

The First Step always requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of The First Step is to provide the most appropriate environment in which children can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of The First Step but is also the responsibility of every parent or adult who enters our center.

Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters the ideal environment. **Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on The First Step property thereafter.**

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. If a parent should witness another child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, the parent must direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or the Director.

Entry Door Safety

For the safety of all the children, we have a secured door. Only authorized people can enter the building while children are present. When families enroll, they will receive the door code. This code will allow parents to enter the building when they arrive. Be sure to COMPLETELY close the door when entering and exiting the building. This procedure is designed to protect the welfare and best interests of our staff, children, and families of The First Step.

Policy for Handling Parent Concerns

If a parent has a concern, they should first discuss it with the child's teacher. If the teacher and parent cannot resolve the concern together to the satisfaction of both, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Asst. Director or Director.

Social Media

The social media policy applies to parents, staff, and children of The First Step.

No photographs taken within the center, special events or outings with the children, are to be posted for public viewing, except those of your own child.

Parents do not have the right to photograph anyone else's child or to upload photos of anyone else's children.

If parents name The First Step on any social media platform, they must do so in a way that is not detrimental or derogatory to the center.

Parent's Right to Immediate Access

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in the care of The First Step, as provided by law. In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order), The First Step must be provided with a **Certified Copy** of the most recent order and all amendments. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) request a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In cases where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by the order of the court, both parents must sign the request to get a more liberal interpretation of the order.

In absence of a court order on file with the First Step, **both** parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by the law. The First Step cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If the situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, The First Step suggests that the parent keep the child with them until the court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. The First Step will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Dismissal

Every effort is made to resolve differences. However, circumstances that can result in a child/family's dismissal from the center, include, but are not limited to:

- Behavioral aspects of a child:
 - Any child who is not yet ready for the group experience or whose needs cannot be met in a group setting (i.e. cannot get along with other children, unable to follow class rules and teacher instructions, requires one-on-one attention from the teacher for most of the day)
 - A child who continually places the safety of him/herself, other children or staff members at risk.
 - A child with behavior problems so severe that they cannot be accommodated within the scope of the regular program and regular staff-child ratio.
- Parental disregard for Center policy:
 - Tuition is 30 days overdue and there is not a written plan for payment of back tuition,
 - Failure to pay tuition according to the written plan,
 - Consistent disregard for the hours of operation,
 - Failure to treat The First Step staff and children with respect.

Withdrawal

One month written notice, by the end of the previous month, is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper written notice is given, the security deposit on file will apply to the last month's tuition. The Security Deposit will not be refunded; any overages will be credited to your account.

Arrival Procedures

Upon arrival at The First Step, the parent or adult dropping the child off must remove the child's shoes and put on INDOOR shoes. Parents are required to help the child put away their personal belongings and be escorted to their designated classroom.

Upon arrival, parents are required to let staff know of any injuries or special instruction, alternative pick up person, health issues over the previous night which needs to be observed, or any general issues of concern which teachers should be aware to best meet the needs of the child throughout the day.

Parents are also required to follow the Medication Policy if a child must receive medication during the day. The First Step does not provide breakfast. Parents can bring their child breakfast before 9:00 am. Breakfast WILL NOT be served after 9:00 am.

Notification of Absence

Parents are encouraged to inform the Center when their child will be absent or will be arriving late on a scheduled day.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify us not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables us to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our center. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share that diagnosis with us, so that parents of children in the center may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Only communicable disease information will be shared.

Center's Right to Refuse Admission

The First Step reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause.

Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. Lack of staff to maintain appropriate Staff to Child Ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations.
2. The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
3. Staff deems the child too ill to attend.
4. Domestic Situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled at The First Step, if the child were to be present at the center.
5. Parent's failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
6. Parent's failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.
7. Parents' failure to follow the tuition policy as outlined previously in this handbook.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

Pick-Up Procedures

Parents and other authorized adults picking up a child, are solely responsible for supervising their child while on The First Step's premises. The parent may NOT allow a child to wander about the hallway, bathrooms, or other classrooms. Parents are required to handle all business issues or concerns prior to picking up their child from the classroom and exiting the building.

Parents or persons designated to act "in place of a parent" are required to sign any incident/accident report from that day at pick-up time. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or another authorized adult at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap time if the parent is unable to meet at the center during the day.

Late Pick-Up

Please be considerate of our teachers by picking up your child at the appropriate time. You will be charged \$3.50 **per child per minute** for late pick-up. This fee will be paid in cash, directly to the teacher who stayed with your child. Please note that The First Step closes promptly at 6:00 pm, therefore late fees will accrue up until the family **leaves the building**.

Persons Appearing to be Impaired by Drugs and/or Alcohol

The staff at The First Step will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff of The First Step, to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access to their child even if the parent is, or appears to be, impaired. However, The First Step staff will delay the impaired parent as long as possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police, and/or Child Protective Services.

Emergency Contact & Authorized Pick-Up People

At enrollment, parents will be required to include any and all persons who may at any time, be asked to pick up their child from The First Step. In an emergency, the child's parents will be called first. If they cannot be reached, staff will call the emergency contact and/or one pick-up person. State regulations require each family to have at least one emergency contact (other than a parent) and one authorized pick-up person.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the list. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.



The First Step Nursery School and Day Care Center

The persons listed on the admission information will be required to provide a government issued photo ID prior to The First Step releasing the child. There will be NO exceptions to this rule.

All changes and/or additions to the admission information must be made in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes and additions to this form.

Emergency Closing, Pandemic, and Inclement Weather

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by a message left on our centers answering machine (201-944-9642) and through Class Dojo. (Parents WILL NOT be called at home)

Should the school need to close during school hours, the staff will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange for pick-up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the person listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick up arrangements can be made.

In the event of an evacuation, the staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person of the location to pick up their child. Parents or emergency contact persons should report to the emergency location if one is indicated.

The First Step follows the Fort Lee Public School System's decision to close on dangerous weather and/or snow days. The center's director also has the right to close the center even if the Fort Lee Schools are not closed. We understand that this is an inconvenience for many parents, but the safety of our children and staff is our main concern.

Should the school need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced. If the closure extends for 15 school days or more, the administration will decide if there should be a reduction in tuition.

Pandemic Emergency Response

In the event of a pandemic, The First Step will follow guidelines and directions implemented by the Center for Disease Control & Prevention, Federal and Local Governments, and the New Jersey Health and Human Services. (Child Care Licensing).

To ensure the safety of our children, families and staff, the school will monitor the situation and take into account the guidance and suggestions from the authorities. Decisions made by the center will consider the safety of children, families, and staff. Decisions may include:

- Closure of the center
- Length of closure to be determined by the Director, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Federal and Local Governments, the New Jersey Human Services.
- Adjusted hours of services
- Daily health checks of children and staff
- Limited entry into the building
- Limitations on what the child may bring into the center. Such as blankets, toys, stuffed animals, etc.

The First Step will communicate these plans through a variety of methods such as mass emails and Class Dojo.

Tuition policy during a School Closure

Should The First Step need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than 15 days. After 15 days, all decisions are at the discretion of the Director. Please remember that tuition is not determined by attendance but by enrollment status.

Discipline and Guidance

Discipline at The First Step shall be:

- individualized and consistent with each child.
- appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- directed toward instructing the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

Positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control and self-direction shall be used, including:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing on only unacceptable behavior. Redirecting behavior using positive statements.
- Using brief supervised separation from the group, which is limited to one minute per year per age of the child.

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child.

Items From Home

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in their toys from home unless it is Wednesday, Show-N-Tell day. Only on this day children can bring a toy, not anything violent, no guns, knives, etc. Books are always encouraged. Your child should not bring candy, toys, or money from home.

The following items should be kept in school or brought daily: (All items must be labeled with the child's first name and last initial).

For Infants

Bottles and caps, baby food, diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream, infant crib sheet, 2 - 3 complete changes of clothes, bibs and pacifiers.

For Toddlers, Just for Two's, Nursery School & Pre-K

Sleeping bag (must be taken home and washed on Fridays), at least one complete change of clothes (including socks), Lunch box and containers (all individually labeled) smock and sippy cup.

Dress Code

Children

Children are engaged in various activities during the course of the day: some activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable clothing.

Coats, hats, and gloves must be provided in the winter months. Sunscreen and hats are recommended during the summer months.

Parents

Parents are required to remove or cover their shoes prior to entering any of The First Step classrooms. This will help to maintain clean floors and rugs.



Special Activities

The First Step occasionally supplements the in-class curriculum with special activities.

Field Trips

Notification of a field trip will be posted in our monthly newsletter, with all pertinent information including destination, date, time, cost and mode of transportation. The field trip permission slip will also be included in the newsletter, and it must be filled out completely, and all trip costs must be paid in advance for your child to attend. Parents may also attend the field trip by filling out the portion on the permission slip asking for parent participation.

Water Activities

During the summer months, water activities will be allowed which may include splash tables, spray bottles and other creative ways to stay cool. At the beginning of the summer the center will inform parents which day their child's class water day will be scheduled via school newsletter, additional memos in children's lunchboxes.

Parent Participation / Volunteers

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their children's school activities. Parents can participate and volunteer at the center in many ways. Parents may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, and participate in their child's birthday celebrations, holiday celebrations and any special projects.

Pre-Enrollment Requirements

Each child is required to complete a registration packet of information. This packet is to be returned to the center's office prior to the child's first day of attendance.

Per licensing requirements, all children are required to have a complete, up to date immunization record on file at The First Step. ALL CHILDREN MUST BE IMMUNIZED TO ATTEND The First Step. NO EXCEPTIONS. A physical exam is also required for each child.

Information is kept confidential and is only shared on a "need to know" basis. Classroom teachers are always informed of emergency contacts, emergency releases, and allergy information.

Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a "Severe Allergies" form provided by the Director, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment. This form must be filled out by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated when needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician's orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child's allergy.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in its original container with the child's name and expiration date and dosage to be given. The First Step reserves the right to exclude any child with severe allergies who do not have up-to-date medication in their classroom. Attendance can resume once the proper medications are provided and accompanying paperwork for the medication is complete.

Health Regulations

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached but cannot pick their child up within 45 minutes, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's Emergency contact form. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once the parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Children MUST present a doctor's note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. The First Step reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if a staff member or the director believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

Children will be excluded from the program or sent home from the program when they exhibit any of the following:

- Fever - 100.4 degrees or higher
- Abdominal pain, nausea, or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Rash or inflamed skin
- Inflammation of the Eyes
- Enlarged Glands
- Persistent Cough
- Sore Throat
- Earache

The center WILL CLOSE in cases of head lice, chicken pox, or any other ailment that can spread through the center. Parents and/or guardians will be notified prior to the center closing in this case.

Dispensing Medication

The First Step will only dispense un-expired, over the counter, age appropriate and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers; and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. Medication will be stored in a dedicated classroom medication box or refrigerator if necessary. Medication may not be stored in a child's cubby, lunch box, or backpack.

Parents or teachers are not allowed to administer any kind of vitamins or medications by adding them to the child's bottle, cup, or thermos.

Fire / Emergency Drills

The First Step conducts monthly fire drills and bi-yearly lockdown drills. Parents, staff and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of the drills. In the event of a real fire or lock down situation, the Director or Assistant Director or designated staff member will inform each classroom teacher that the center is closing. At this time, all parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone or Class Dojo of the situation. Children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the notification.

Alternate Safe Locations

Should the children and staff evacuate, they will be going to the nearest safe location, the FORT LEE COMMUNITY CENTER, which is the building located directly behind the center. The address is 1355 Inwood Terrace Fort Lee, NJ. Once the children are assembled there, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of notification.

Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the course of the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. This report will be left in the classroom for the parents to sign at the end of that school day. The report will then be signed by the Director and placed in the child's file. A copy of the report will only be made for the parent upon request.

Food Policy

All meals are enjoyed family style, with the children and staff sitting at the table promoting good manners, eating habits, and socialization skills.

Peanut / Nut Free

Due to extreme nature of some allergic reactions to peanuts/nuts and products containing peanuts and/or nuts in some children, The First Step classrooms are NUT FREE. When sending food items to school for your child, it is important to remember to read the label of every food item you send to school with your child.

All Age Groups

All food items must be labeled with your child's name. TFS does not permit children to share or exchange food items. For the safety of the child, parents are required to provide notification, in the form of a doctor's note, of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instructions for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction. Parents are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions (i.e. lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets).

Infant Classroom

Children enrolled in the infant room must have all food items labeled each day. This includes formula/breast milk bottles, baby food, snacks, etc. If breast feeding, milk must be labeled with child's name, date, and date the milk was expressed. Prepared bottles will be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. No bottles will be microwaved. All bottles must be taken home by the parents each night to be washed.

Toddlers to Pre-Kindergarten

At The First Step, parents provide breakfast. We will feed your child breakfast before 9:00 am. No breakfast will be served after 9:00 am. Lunch is also provided by parents and will be served daily at 11:30 am. During all meals, the children will sit at tables to promote good manners, eating habits and socialization skills. Staff will encourage children to eat their main entree first, followed by healthy snacks.

Parents are required to provide a sensible lunch for their children each day. Lunches should include a sandwich (or main entrée items) and healthy sides such as fruit, vegetables, etc. Parents should limit sweets. All food items provided in your child's lunch must be labelled with your child's name. Simply labeling the child's lunch box is not sufficient.

The First Step will offer snacks sent from home at 2:00 pm & 4:00 pm daily.

Programs / Schedule

The First Step's sessions consist of both half and full days. Half days are 4 hours or less per day, while full days are 4 hours or more per day. Parents can choose 3-, 4-, or 5-day programs with full or half days. Hours can be flexible.

At TFS we understand that flexibility is an important part of good childcare. That is why we work with you to vary hours according to your schedule.

Group Schedules:

7:30 - 8:30	Arrival/Breakfast
8:30 - 9:00	TV Time/Toilet
9:00 - 9:30	Work Time in Selected Area*
9:30 - 10:00	Music & Movement/Physical Education**
10:00 - 10:30	Circle Time
10:30 - 11:15	Lesson of the Day***
11:15 - 11:30	Toilet/Diaper Changes
11:30 - 12:00	Lunch
12:30 - 2:00	Nap Time
2:00 - 2:30	Snack/Toilet
2:30 - 3:00	Work Time in Selected Areas*
3:00 - 3:30	Music & Movement/Physical Education**
3:30 - 4:00	Lesson of the Day***
4:00 - 4:30	Snack/Toilet
4:30 - 5:00	Story Time
5:00 - 5:30	Work Time Selected Area*
5:30 - 6:00	TV Time/Departure

*Work Time Areas: Dress Up, Blocks, Manipulatives, Puzzles, Legos, Games, etc.

**Physical Education: Dancing, Yoga, Parachute, Play, Scooters, Potato Sac Races, etc.

***Lesson of the Day: Science, Art, Letters, Numbers, Holiday Themes, Drama, Socialization, Numbers, Finger Plays, Etc.

Holiday Schedule

The First Step is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, year-round except for the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve Day - Open till 2:00 pm (may close due to low enrollment)
- Christmas Day
- Day After Christmas
- New Years Eve Day - Open till 2:00 pm (may close due to low enrollment)
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (and the day before or after depending what day it falls on)
- Friday of Labor Day Weekend - (this is the centers clean-up day for the new school year).

It is the Director's discretion to close the center on a day before or after a holiday if the enrollment is low or if the holiday falls on a weekend. Parents will be notified in advance.



Illness

When the seasons change and winter is upon us, the children at the center are prone to getting sick. Parents are obligated to follow the centers “Health Regulations” listed in this handbook. All parents must understand that the center is NOT licensed to care for sick children. Keeping this in mind, it is important that you keep your child home when they are sick and/or pick them up from the center immediately. Please be considerate of the other children in your child’s class and of the other parents who stay home with their sick children to make them feel well again.

A staff member must be informed by the parent in the morning if a child is not feeling well. Any child who has been sick, especially with a fever, must be checked by a staff member to be sure that the child is fever free. If the child has a fever, the parent must remove the child from the center and keep them home until they are fever free for 24 hours without medication. If a child is absent for 3 or more days or upon the request of the Asst. Director or Director, a doctor’s note is required for the child to return to the center. The note must state the illness, what medication is needed (if any), and if the child is no longer contagious and can return to school.

We here at TFS are concerned about keeping the children safe and healthy throughout the school year. Parent cooperation is appreciated.

Expulsion Policy

Any child at any time may be expelled from the center for the following reasons:

- Continued problems with behavior, biting, hitting, hurting others,
- Continued sickness,
- Outstanding tuition,
- Not treating staff with respect and professionalism,
- Not following the centers rules and regulations,
- Parents mistreating other parents or children.

Expulsion is not limited to the listed provisions. If an Expulsion occurs, the parent will be notified in writing or by telephone. The child will then have to leave the program immediately WITH NO TUITION OR DEPOSIT CREDIT REFUNDED.

Each parent MUST sign below and return this portion of the page showing that you read the expulsion policy and accept its terms.

I, _____ parent of _____ have read
(Parent's Name) *(Child's Name)*

and understand the Expulsion Policy and except the terms of its agreement.

Use of Technology and Social Media Policy

Our center uses the following social media/networking and/or other websites:

- Center Website: www.firststep7.com
- Facebook: facebook.com/thefirststepdaycare
- Instagram: instagram.com/thefirststep7/

Pictures and videos are taken by staff and/or the Director and posted on the center's "Class DoJo"/Facebook/Instagram with parental permission ONLY. Any staff member who posts pictures and/or videos of any child or other adult without permission will be immediately terminated.

Methods used to communicate with staff and parents

The Director, and only the Director is permitted to communicate electronically (text message, center website, and center's social media site). Both the Director and staff are permitted to communicate with parents through the Class DoJo site.

Devices used by center staff to communicate with parents

Each classroom has a tablet for use of pictures and video taking for the center's DoJo site. The pictures/videos taken are posted for the parents view on a daily/weekly basis. No other devices should be used without prior permission from the Director.

Information that the center may communicate electronically to parents

- a. Illness/accidents/injuries*
- b. Requests for records/supplies
- c. Behavioral concerns
- d. Child's daily updates
- e. Community information
- f. Emergency closures
- g. Photographs
- h. Unusual incidents
- i. Evacuation
- j. Other

Most of the parent communication is done electronically by the Director. In the absence of the Director, a designated staff member may communicate.

* Injuries – certain instances (head injury, a fall from a height, a bite that breaks the skin, or an injury requiring professional medical attention) a telephone call along with an electronic communication maybe necessary.

Parent Contract Agreement with The First Step Nursery School & Day Care Center, Inc.

AS A PARENT ENROLLING MY CHILD IN THE FIRST STEP I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. My child must have ALL the immunizations required by his/her age upon enrollment along with a physical exam.
2. My child MUST be kept home if he/she shows any of the medical symptoms listed in the Parent Handbook. My child MUST be symptom free 24 hours without medication, before returning to the center. If my child is absent for 3 or more days, a doctor's note MUST accompany his/her return.
3. I agree to pay a Late Fee of \$3.50 per minute after 6:00 pm pick up of my child.
4. I agree to pay tuition on or before the 1st of every month unless other arrangements have been made with the Director. I agree to pay a Late Fee of \$35.00 extra every week when tuition is late.
5. I understand that there is **NO CREDIT** given for Holidays, Vacation, Snow Days, Sick Days, or Expulsion.
6. I agree to read and sign the "Expulsion Policy" and all-other-items-listed-in the-Parent Handbook and return it with all the Registration Forms.
7. I understand that a SERVICE CHARGE of \$35.00 will be issued for a bounced check and if two (2) checks bounce, tuition can then only be paid by cash, certified check, credit card or money order.
8. I agree to pay a SECURITY DEPOSIT OF ONE MONTH'S TUITION which will be credited to the last month of my child's attendance at the center. This credit will ONLY BE GIVEN WITH ONE MONTH'S WRITTEN NOTICE OF WITHDRAWAL.
9. I agree to supply diapers, wipes, lunch, snacks, formula, bottles, sleeping bag, pack n play (infants only), bibs, smock, and a complete change of clothes for my child.
10. I agree NOT to send candy, gum, or any food containing an excessive amount of sugar to the center for my child. Birthday celebrations can be arranged.
11. I agree NOT to send my child to the center with toys unless discussed with the Director or teacher or on designated Toy Day or Show-n-Tell days.
12. I understand that the center is allowed to administer medication to my child ONLY IF permission is given by the parent and the medication book is signed and dated in advance. The medication MUST be in the ORIGINAL prescribed bottle or container, and the child's name must be on it along with the dosage to be given. Nonprescription medication will ONLY be administered if accompanied by a doctor's note.



The First Step Nursery School and Day Care Center

13. I understand that I will be notified in advance of any school trips. A permission slip must be signed and returned with payment prior to the trip.
14. I agree to pay a YEARLY NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE of \$100.00 annually, on my child's start anniversary date, to help cover some of my child's insurance expenses for that school year.
15. I agree to CALL the center when my child will not be attending school for an illness or any other reason.
16. I agree to notify the center both verbally and in writing of any person other than the parents, who can pick up my child from the center.
17. I agree to IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY the center of any changes in our work or home address and telephone numbers or any other important information regarding my child.
18. I agree (if divorced or separated) to supply the center with a COURT ORDER restraining the other party from visiting or picking up my child from the center.
19. I understand that the center is closed on all of the holidays listed in the Parent Handbook. Any holiday that falls on a weekend, we may close on that Monday.
20. I understand that The Division of Youth and Family Services may be called if I do not pick my child up in a timely manner when they are sick or and the end of a school day.

I have read, understand, and agree to all the above rules and regulations of The First Step Nursery School and Day Care Center, Inc.

I will sign the bottom portion of this contract and return it to the center with all the Registration Forms. A copy of this agreement will be made for me upon request only.

Parent Name _____
Parent Signature _____
Date _____

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