

STEPPING STONES II

CHILD CARE CENTER

Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center
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Special Events

These do not include shut down days.

September:

Family Dine Together

A national holiday in which all parents and caregivers are invited to participate in a wonderful ziti dinner provided by Stepping Stones II master chef “Mike”. Do not miss it, it is a wonderful way to spend the night with your family and you do not have to cook!

School Pictures

School Pictures will be taken of your child during these days. Please submit all picture forms by their due dates. Thank you.

October:

Costume Day

It is Costume Day at Stepping Stones II! Come and participate with your child in a costume parade during their school day. More details will follow.

November:

Harvest Luncheon

All families are invited to join us for a Harvest celebration with all the fixings! Please join your child in their classroom for a harvest lunch. Times will follow.

Scholastic Book Fair

Please come in and browse our selection of children’s books. Books and other products will be available for purchase the entire week at low prices. This is a wonderful opportunity to add to your child’s library at home or to start your Holiday Shopping!

December:

Special Visitor!

Can you guess who it is? Hummmmmmm.....

February:

Mardi Gras Celebration

Classrooms will have activities and/or crafts for Mardi Gras – parents are encouraged to participate

March:

Read Across America

We will spend this month learning about early childhood authors. Parents are invited to read to their child's classroom on this day.

April:

Week of the Young Child

This week we will be celebrating all the wonderful things your children do! Please, come in, look around at all their artwork, and participate in some of the activities we will have planned with them. It sure will be a packed week of fun!!!

May:

Teacher Appreciation Week

Let your child's teacher know how much you appreciate them by saying "thank you" for the great job they do!

Mother's Day Breakfast

Moms do not fret. We will provide a wonderful relaxing breakfast for you this morning! Please come and have breakfast with us.

June:

Father's Day Breakfast

Hope you didn't think we'd forget! Dads are invited to have breakfast at the center to celebrate their special day!

Pre-Kindergarten Graduation

It is hard to believe it is that time of year! Bring your tissues there is sure not to be a dry eye! What a wonderful evening this will be! Family and friends are encouraged to attend our moving up day for your children! Do not forget your cameras!

STEPPING STONES II EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center first opened its doors for children at 300 Valley View Boulevard in North Greenbush in September 1996. The center provides full-time quality childcare programming for children aged six weeks through pre-kindergarten. Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center is licensed by the Office of Children and Family Services and has been recognized as a childcare program of excellence by the Child Care Coordinating Council.

GENERAL INFORMATION

SCHEDULE

The center is open five days a week, year round, from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with the exception of the following holidays:**

Labor Day
Columbus Day
Election Day
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving
The day after Thanksgiving
Christmas
The day after Christmas
New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Day
President's Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day

**Two staff training days per year, the dates are announced as far in advance as possible

AGE GROUPS

The center provides care for children ages six weeks through pre-kindergarten. The children are grouped into the following age groups:

Infants: 6 weeks to 18 months of age
Toddlers: 18 months to 3 years of age
Preschool: 3 and 4 years of age
PreKindergarten: 4 and 5 years of age, the year before attending Kindergarten

MEALS

The center serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack each day. Weekly menus are planned by a registered dietician and prepared by on-site kitchen staff. In addition, the center offers formula and baby food for infants. Please ask for more information.

PROGRAMMING

Programming for the center is based on the Creative Curriculum and incorporates child-directed and teacher-initiated activities in the classrooms, meets the children's needs at the appropriate age level, and provides a range of activities to challenge the children. Teachers plan weekly lesson plans around a theme, keeping in mind the individuality of each child.

PROGRAM POLICIES

ENROLLMENT

Children are enrolled on a first come, first serve basis. Each applicant will be entered on an eligibility list in the order in which the application arrives. Priority on the waiting list is given to employees and siblings of children already enrolled. The following are needed before a child may be enrolled:

- *A \$50 non-refundable registration fee
- *A deposit in the amount of one week's tuition
- *The first week's tuition
- *A tuition contract signed by the parent
- *Emergency consent form and emergency contact information, which must be updated, signed, and submitted annually.
- *A copy of the child's current physical examination and immunizations

PLEASE NOTE: Proof of physical examination and immunizations must be submitted at two months, four months, six months, nine months, twelve months, fifteen months, eighteen months, two years, and annually thereafter. This is required by New York State. There is no exception to this rule unless the center is provided with a document that exempts the child from immunizations. All children must meet the standard schedule for immunizations to remain in the program.

TUITION

A current copy of the tuition cost will be provided to the parent at the first visit. There will be a \$10 per family discount for families with more than one child enrolled. If a family is enrolling two or more children, they have the ability to split the total security deposit over four consecutive weekly payments.

The deposit paid at the time of enrollment will be held in a separate account and will not be applied to tuition. However, it may be credited to the amount owed for the last week's tuition provided the center is given the required two-week written notice that the child is being withdrawn from the program. Without the two-week written notice the deposit will be forfeited to the center.

Tuition must be paid by Monday for the current week's childcare. **IF TUITION IS NOT RECEIVED BY 5:30 PM MONDAY, A \$15 LATE FEE WILL BE CHARGED. The overdue balance and late fee must be paid by 5:30 PM Friday of that week or you will forfeit your child's spot and your child will not be accepted Monday morning.**

****If the center is closed on a Monday, tuition is due no later than 9:00 AM Tuesday morning.**

The center requires full tuition payment regardless of the child's actual attendance. Parents are required to pay the same weekly fee regardless of holidays, vacations, or illness. Checks, Money Orders, and Bank Checks are made out to Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center. VISA and MasterCard payments can be made at the front desk or over the phone. Cash payments are not accepted. All payments should be dropped off at the front desk.

A \$20 FEE WILL BE IMPOSED ON ALL RETURNED CHECKS. Check writing privileges will be revoked if more than two checks are returned by the bank. If this occurs, the center will only accept Money Orders, Bank Checks, or credit card payments. Failure to comply with the terms of the payment contract may

serve as notice of intent to remove the child from the program. This may result in the child's slot being given to the next appropriate applicant.

Good attendance is very important for children whose tuition is subsidized through the Department of Social Services. DSS requires children to attend programming at least 6 hours a day. If a child is not in programming for at least 6 hours a day, DSS may not provide reimbursement. If a child's absences exceed twelve per quarter, the parent may become responsible for the tuition payment. Additionally, if your child is absent three days in a row or more, DSS requires a doctor's note to be provided to the county or they will not pay for those dates and the parent will become responsible for the payment. It is the parent's responsibility to submit a doctor's note directly to SSII upon return to school.

FINDER'S FEE

Any current family who recommends SSII to a new family that enrolls in our center will receive a \$50 finder's fee.

ARRIVAL

At the beginning and end of each day it is sometimes necessary to combine like age group classrooms. Upon arrival at the center each day, please take your child to his or her classroom, put their belongings away, and sign in on the sign in/out sheet located just inside each classroom's door, then take your child to the welcoming classroom for their age group if their classroom is not staffed yet. Your child will enjoy some time in the welcoming classroom until all staff have arrived.

DEPARTURE

Each child needs to have a completed Emergency Contact form on file. This form enables parents and guardians to authorize others to pick up their child. Children will only be released to people listed on the Emergency Contact form. We will ask to see photo identification of anyone picking up your child.

When picking up your child we ask that you check your child's cubby or mailbox for any notices, memos, or papers to be taken home.

For the safety of all children attending the center, please make sure children are properly restrained in child safety seats or seat belts. All staff persons are required to notify the local police if they see a child arriving or leaving the center not properly restrained.

The center closes promptly at 5:30 p.m. Please arrive in a timely manner, allowing our staff to leave promptly at 5:30 p.m. **The center has a strict "late pick-up" policy. We will impose a late fee of \$15 for every fifteen minutes, or portion thereof, when a child remains at the center after the official closing time of 5:30 p.m. (i.e.: pick-up at 5:35= \$15, pick-up at 5:46= \$30)** Excessive "late pick-up" may result in disenrollment from the center.

If a pick-up person arrives and appears to be the influence of alcohol or drugs, we will ask the pick up person to call another adult listed on the child's emergency card to pick up both the child and adult. If the pick up person is unable to understand that he/she is not in the condition to drive, becomes aggressive or threatening towards the child and/or staff, we will call the police for assistance.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The center makes every effort to remain open during inclement weather. However, sometimes it may be necessary to close. If the center is closed, it will be listed on the local television stations as: **Stepping Stones II**. It will also appear on our website. SSII Early Learning Center is NOT closed or delayed if the screen states: CEO Head Start closed/delayed or HS/EHS closed/delayed. This is referring to other programs within the agency.

POLICIES REGARDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Every day a health assessment of each child will be performed by a trained staff member. The assessment shall include the following:

- *Changes in behavior or appearance from those observed during the previous day's attendance.
- *Skin rashes, itchy skin, or itchy scalp.
- *Increase in temperature, determined by taking the child's temperature, and if there is a change in the child's behavior or appearance.
- *Child's complaints of pain or not feeling well.

Information to complete the assessment may be obtained by direct personal observation of the child, by querying the parent or legal guardian, and/or by conversations with the child.

EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency, we will make every attempt to contact the parent(s) or guardian. **It is important that the center be kept informed of any changes in the parent schedule or telephone number.** The center will secure emergency medical care for the child. All accidents are recorded and placed in the child's permanent record and a copy of the form is given to the parents/guardian.

ILLNESS

Children who become "actively ill" during the school day will be cared for at the discretion of the classroom teacher and the Center Director. A child is considered "actively ill" when he/she is unable to participate in the regular routine and program activities. If a child is too ill to remain in school, the center will contact the parents or guardian to pick up the child. Due to the spread of germs, we ask that parents/guardians arrive within one hour of notification. We will make every effort to keep your child as comfortable as possible until you arrive. **Please be sure to keep your work/class schedule and emergency contact information updated in our office in the event it is necessary to contact you.**

Children may be excluded from programming with the following illnesses or symptoms:

- ***Temperature** - Oral, 101 degrees or greater; Axillary (armpit), 100.4 degrees or greater. If a child is excluded because of an elevation in body temperature, he/she cannot return to the program until he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours **without fever reducing medication.**
- * **Uncontrolled diarrhea** - Three or more watery stools during a 24-hour period. If diarrhea is diagnosed as Giardia (beaver fever), Shigellosis, or Salmonellosis, the program will follow the Rensselaer County Health Department protocol for reporting, treatment and exclusion.
- * **Vomiting** - Two or more times in the previous 24-hour period. Children may not return until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours.
- * **Rash** - With fever or behavior change until the child's medical provider determines that the illness is non-communicable. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Purulent conjunctivitis** - Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge, eye pain, redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye. Exclusion is in effect until child is checked by a medical provider and 24 hours have passed since medical treatment began. **(Doctor's note required.)**
- * **Head Lice** – The center has a "no nit policy." If *live lice or nits* are present, the parents or guardian is notified and the child is excluded. Children may not return until 24 hours following treatment and there is no evidence of *live lice or nits*. If there are four or more occurrences of **live lice and/or nits** within a four week

period, the child will be excluded and must have a note from his/her primary care provider stating that the child is free of **lice and nits** and may return to the program.

- * **Scabies** - until 24 hours after treatment is given. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Ringworm** – Until 24 hours after treatment begins. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Impetigo** - Until 24 hours after treatment begins. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Strep throat** - Until 24 hours after treatment begins and the child has been fever-free for twenty-four hours without fever-reducing medication.
- * **Varicella (chicken pox)** - Until six days after onset of rash or until all lesions have dried and crusted (whichever comes first).
- * **Signs of possible severe illness** - Including unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or uncontrolled coughing. **(Doctor's note required for difficulty breathing and uncontrolled coughing)**
- * **Tuberculosis** - Until the child's medical provider or the Rensselaer County Health Department states the child is non-infectious. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Pertussis (whooping cough)** - Which is laboratory confirmed or suspected based on symptoms and/or contact, until five days of appropriate chemical treatment has been completed and the medical provider confirms that re-entry is appropriate. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Hepatitis A virus infection** - Until one week after onset of illness or until after immune globulin has been given to those children and staff in the program who are identified as needing this treatment, as directed by the Rensselaer County Health Department. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Mumps** - Until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Measles** - Until six days after the rash appears. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Rubella** - Until six days after the rash appears. **(Doctor's note required)**
- * **Coxsackie Virus** - Until the fever is gone and the child is able to participate in normal activities. Skin lesions may still be present.
- * **Fifth Disease** - Need not be excluded as the infectious period precedes the rash.

We ask that you assume responsibility for keeping your child home if there is any doubt about his or her health or ability to participate in the center's activities.

Whenever your child is exposed to a communicable disease, please report this to the program staff. The program staff will inform parents of any communicable diseases that may be present at the center.

If your child is hospitalized for illness, surgery, or injury, he/she must have a doctor's note verifying that return to the program is allowed. Any restrictions or limitations must be discussed with the program staff and must be put in writing by the medical provider.

REMINDER - Children may return to center when:

- * Temperature is normal for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication,
- * They have not vomited in the past 24 hours,
- * They have not had a loose stool in the past 24 hours,
- * Any infectious diseases have been treated for 24 hours or as outlined above.

ALLERGIES

Please inform the center immediately of any allergies your child may have. It is important that we are made aware of any specific allergy symptoms/reactions so intervention may begin immediately. If any allergic symptoms require the administration of medication, a note and instructions from your child's medical provider are required.

Any food allergies or sensitivities must be documented by a medical provider and a list of appropriate substitutions provided. The staff will make every effort to accommodate special diets.

MEDICATIONS

Only Medication Administration Trained (MAT) certified staff can administer prescription or over-the-counter medication with a signed MAT consent form from your doctor on file. This is following the medication regulations for New York State. OCFS licensing regulations prohibit the center from administering any prescription medication unless prescribed by a physician. A MAT Prescription form must be completed and signed by both the child's parent/guardian and medical provider. All medication brought to the center must be in its original container and prescription medication MUST have a pharmacy label attached. All medication is kept out of children's reach at all times.

The center can administer over-the-counter medications providing there is a completed MAT form, signed by the parent or guardian AND the child's medical provider. All over-the-counter medications must be in the original container, labeled with the child's first and last name, and cannot be expired. Sunscreen and topical ointments (diaper creams) are the only exception to this policy; these require parental consent only.

Many CEO Early Childhood programs have a nurse on staff, who acts as a consultant in matters of health and safety. In cases of emergency, 911 will be called.

HEALTH/HYGIENE MAINTENANCE

Children should arrive at the center clean, dressed, and ready to start the day. To minimize the spread of infection, children and staff wash hands before and after meals, after using the bathroom facilities, and after coming into contact with bodily fluids. In addition, staff members wear non-latex gloves whenever they are exposed to bodily fluids.

CLASSROOM SANITATION

Staff is required to disinfect tables and chairs before and after each mealtime and activity. Infant/toddler teachers wash and disinfect toys on a daily basis. Preschool teachers wash and disinfect toys in accordance with the weekly cleaning schedules. Cribs and cots are disinfected weekly. Staff are trained in Universal Precautions each year. This includes child and adult hand washing procedures, diaper changing procedures, and contact with bodily fluids.

CHILD PROTECTIVE REPORTING PROCEDURE

Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center is a mandated reporting agency for child abuse and neglect. If any staff member suspects child abuse or negligence, he or she will bring the information to the attention of the Center Director who will assist the staff in calling the Central Register to make a report. Every effort is made to assist the family in improving parenting skills and family conditions. We work with local child protective services personnel toward this end.

FIRE DRILL PROCEDURE

Emergency procedures are posted in each classroom and all offices. We have monthly fire drills in accordance to Licensing Regulations.

EXCLUSION POLICY

At times, it may be necessary to suspend or exclude a child. All options are exhausted before suspension or exclusion. Criteria that warrant such action include:

- * The health and safety of the child or other children in the classroom cannot be assured.
- * The child is repeatedly physically abusive to staff members.

The agency will continue to offer the family support in accessing services and an alternative placement for the child.

BITING POLICY

The center follows Creative Curriculum ideas on giving children and teachers the strategies to prevent biting. The following are some reasons why children may bite:

- * Needing control
- * Teething
- * Experimenting
- * Trying to interact with another child
- * Exploring cause and effect
- * Feeling frustrated or angry
- * Seeking attention
- * Feeling threatened

When biting occurs, we have three main responses:

1. Care and help for the child who was bitten.
2. Help the child who bit learn other behaviors.
3. Work with the child who bit and examine our program to stop the biting.

Our teachers express strong disapproval of biting. They work to keep the children safe and to help the child who bit learn different, more appropriate behavior. When there are episodes of ongoing biting, we develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to address it. We do not and will not use any response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

We give immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid to children who are bitten. We offer to put ice on the bite if the child is willing. If the skin is broken, we clean the wound with soap and water.

When children bite, their parents are informed personally and privately the same day. When children are bitten, their parents are informed personally that day and given a copy of our incident report. When we experience ongoing biting in a room, we develop a written plan with specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to work on the problem. This written plan is shared with all parents in the room.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident report. It is completed and signed by a teacher and an administrator. It must also be signed by the parent. As with other incidents, one copy is given to the parents and the other copy is kept in the child's file.

We keep the name of the child who bit confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to give our teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

PHILOSOPHY

SSII sees each child and family as individuals with varying strengths, interests, and needs. We believe the parents are the child's first and most important teachers. As a result, we feel parent involvement in all areas of the program is essential for the program to be effective. Staff and parents work as a team in the best interests of the child. We recognize the home as a learning environment of major importance, especially for young children.

We believe that a quality early childhood program is one which is child-centered and focuses on development of the whole child -- physical, social, emotional, cognitive and language. In order to stimulate children's growth and provide opportunities for success, it is important that the program be individualized and developmentally appropriate. Young children learn by doing and through play. Teaching opportunities are embedded in purposeful play.

A child's self-concept is of major importance and has an effect on his/her success in learning and in developing relationships with others. In coming to terms with who they are, children need to be aware of the similarities they share and the ways in which they differ from others. Our ultimate goal is for the children to accept their differences and respect the differences of others, whether these are based on characteristics of gender, culture, physical make-up, and/or ability.

OUR GOALS

- * Provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children entrusted in our care.
- * Provide a program that is developmentally appropriate for each age group.
- * Become an extension of the families we serve.

CREATIVE CURRICULUM

The Early Childhood Division has adopted a research-based curriculum called "The Creative Curriculum". This curriculum is designed to provide a clear understanding of what children should be learning and is depicted in "goals and objectives." The curriculum also provides an understanding of the developmental steps that children go through in mastering each objective. A large portion of the curriculum is based on observing children each day to formulate an understanding of what children have learned and to establish goals for future learning. Last of all, the Creative Curriculum assessment tool summarizes what children have learned so that teachers and parents may cooperate to make decisions that will help each child grow and learn.

The goal is to provide an educational environment that meets the needs of individual children. Our teaching staff uses a variety of tools to help meet this goal, including:

- * Lesson plans - created weekly by teaching staff
- * Individual goals - set for each child
- * Anecdotal records - maintained to record observations
- * Daily Health Log - maintained to record illnesses
- * Parent Contact Form - maintained to record conversations with parents
- * Weekly Newsletter - created to inform parents of classroom events
- * Parent/Teacher Conferences - held to discuss development
- * Incident Reports - used to record any injuries
- * Development and Behavior Screenings - used to determine if further evaluation or referral for Special Services is necessary.

DISCIPLINE

We believe that children develop respect for others when adults set an example by demonstrating respect for the child's individual needs and are consistent about applying rules and protecting each person's right to safety and individuality. Caregivers use their knowledge of child development and their understanding of individual

children to anticipate potential problems to enable them to take steps to prevent them from occurring. This may include adaptation in the schedule and/or room arrangement, number and placement of materials, as well as verbal preparation and directions.

The following techniques are used in the classroom on an ongoing basis to build positive self-worth, develop self-discipline, and ensure safety in the classroom:

- * **Positive Reinforcement:** Pro-social behavior is acknowledged through body language (a wink, smile, pat on the back, etc.) or words of praise. Some negative behaviors are ignored.
- * **Offering acceptable choices:** Limits are clearly defined and the daily routine is consistent. Children understand these limits and, within those limits, are offered choices that are acceptable.
- * **Redirecting:** When a child's behavior is no longer acceptable for an activity, her or his attention is redirected to a new activity. This action helps children maintain their feeling of self-worth while helping them develop self-discipline.
- * **Time to rest:** There are times when a child needs to withdraw from a situation, regain composure, and prepare to return. This is not considered punishment. The child may return when he/she feels ready. After the child has regained self-control and is ready to join the group, an adult and the child discuss the situation that led to the behavior. The child is helped to identify and understand the inappropriate behavior without damaging his or her self-esteem.

SEPARATION

It is not unusual for young children to have difficulty separating from one or both parents during their first days and/or weeks at childcare. It is a natural developmental challenge that all parents and children face at one time or another. Separation anxiety may be eased when parents and teaching staff work together to help the child through difficult times. The following are some suggestions:

- * Be honest with your child. Tell him/her what will happen in language he/she will understand.
- * Make advance preparation whenever possible. An advance visit to the center can help ease many aspects of the separation process.
- * Provide a photograph of family members that your child can keep at the center.
- * Help the child choose a meaningful blanket or toy to bridge the gap between home and school.
- * Make your child's caregivers aware of your child's likes and dislikes, habits and routines to enable them to comfort your child when necessary.
- * Reassure your child you will return and build your return into his/her life structure -- "When I get back, we will go to the store."
- * Establish and follow a routine for arrival and departure.
- * Always remember the important hug and kiss good-bye. Even children who have been in childcare for a long period of time may have difficulty separating without a special good-bye hug and kiss.
- * Discuss with the teaching staff the possibility of staying with your child on the first day.
- * Know that the caregivers are here to support you. We know it is very difficult to leave a crying child. In most instances, your child will stop crying as soon as you are out of sight!
- * Be assured your child is receiving love and quality care from trained professionals in your absence.

NUTRITION POLICY

All food served to children, as part of the program must be prepared on the premises. **Parents may not send in food with their child.** The menus posted in the center are planned carefully to provide your child with a well-balanced selection of nutritious food. Our food is ordered fresh and prepared naturally, without sugar, additives, or preservatives. Accommodations are made for children with special dietary needs upon parental request and/or documentation by their medical provider. SSII participates and complies with the Federal CACFP (our food program) regulations.

Due to life-threatening allergies, Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center is “nut-free.”

Children are served meals family-style and are given the opportunity to serve themselves. This helps develop their social, language, and cognitive skills.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are an important event in children’s lives! Because of our nutrition policy, we ask that parents send in a boxed cake mix, eggs, and frosting and the child’s classroom will make the cupcakes for the celebration. Any planned birthday festivity must be coordinated with the child’s teachers. Latex balloons are not permitted due to choking hazards.

TRANSITION

Transition of children to the next age group is dependent upon the child’s readiness, his/her chronological age, and the space available. Infants transition no earlier than 18 months of age, toddlers may begin transitioning at 33 months if there is space available in a pre-school classroom.

Preparation for transition occurs before the actual move. Caregivers begin to talk to the child about the new room. The parent is encouraged to observe the new classroom with the child, meet the new teachers, and observe the routine of the new room.

Before the final transition, the child will visit the new classroom. This allows the child to acclimate before entering the room full time. Families will be given a transition schedule the classrooms will follow during this period.

Parents and guardians may make “room requests” but we cannot guarantee placement in a particular room. In addition, a child will not be “held back” in their current room until placement in the parents requested room is possible.

Around transition time, a child may experience separation difficulties and his or her behavior may change slightly. Such reactions are not unusual and rarely last long. Children need time to feel comfortable with the new caregivers, new peers, and new surroundings. It may also take the parent some time to adjust to the new room, too. Parents are always welcome to visit at any time. Parents/guardians of a child in transition may want to spend a few extra minutes at drop-off and pick-up so they can become acquainted with the new caregiver and ensure their child feels secure in the new class.

INFANT PROGRAM

GENERAL

Children ages six weeks to eighteen months are cared for in the infant rooms. Each infant's day is planned around his or her personal rhythms and routines. Parents are encouraged to speak to the caregiver daily so the staff will understand each infant's current needs. A log of the child's day is given to parents/guardians at the end of each day. It includes information on what the child ate, time and length of naps, diaper changes, and information about the child's activities and moods.

Trust, attachment, exploration of the senses, language, and mobility are fostered throughout the day. The selection of materials in each infant room takes into account the child's total development as well as the range of ages within the infant room.

MEALS

Because the feeding of infants is very individualized, parents need to provide expressed milk, formula, and/or baby food. However, the center can provide two types of formula. Please check with the center as to the formula currently provided. If you wish to use the center-provided formula, you must bring in empty bottles for your child. Once your child transitions to baby food, we provide cereals, vegetables, fruits, and meats. If you choose to provide your child with baby food, it must be brought in original, unopened containers. **ALL BOTTLES (INCLUDING CAPS) AND FOOD CONTAINERS MUST BE LABELED WITH THE CHILD'S FIRST AND LAST NAME.**

Any formula and/or food brought from home is placed in the infant room refrigerator each morning. Empty containers and bottles must be taken home each night to be washed and refilled.

Meals are provided for those infants who are eating table food. A monthly menu is sent home and parents/guardians are asked to examine the menu and inform their child's caregivers which foods their child has already been exposed to. Parents are expected to complete the food questionnaire regarding a child's transition to table foods. New foods must be first introduced at home.

SLEEPING POLICY

SSII respects the individual rest schedules of each infant. Each child is given the opportunity for a nap based on his/her sleeping patterns at home and their individual rest needs. Each infant is assigned his/her own crib. Crib sheets are laundered at least once a week and, of course, more often if needed.

Annual training on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is provided to all Infant Staff. This training includes placing infants on their backs to sleep and checking sleeping infants continually.

ITEMS SUPPLIED BY INFANT PARENTS

Parents are responsible for providing the following items:

ALL ITEMS NEED TO BE LABELED WITH THE CHILD'S FIRST AND LAST NAME.

- * Filled bottles (enough for one day) OR
- * Empty bottles if using center-provided formula
- * Infant food in jars
- * Disposable diapers, wipes, cream, etc.
- * At least two complete changes of clothing (including socks, undershirts, etc.)
- * A crib-sized blanket
- * A family photo

TODDLER PROGRAM

GENERAL

The toddler groups include children ages eighteen months to three years. Because of the vast developmental range for this age group, the program for toddlers is individualized. Materials available cover both ends of the developmental spectrum. Unlike the infant program, this group has a predictable sequence of events. Blocks of time are designed to give toddlers many opportunities to play freely, become involved in active play both indoors and outdoors, and eat and rest.

Toddlers are served breakfast at 8:30 AM, lunch at 11:30 AM, and an afternoon snack at 3:15 PM. The schedule is adapted for individual toddlers who may need more rest or who need to start rest time before the others in the group.

EDUCATION

Toddlers are beginning to develop a sense of autonomy. They are much more “physical” in their behavior and need space to climb, run, push, pull, ride, and carry. Like infants, they continue to explore their world through all of their senses. Toddler caregivers support toddler learning through guidance and support. Materials are rotated within the toddler rooms to stimulate new interests. In addition, the caregivers introduce special activities throughout the day -- stories, music, creative movement, etc. Because toddlers are still in the process of developing a sense of themselves as an individual, group experiences are a choice. Toddlers are welcome to join in these activities but may come and go as they please, following their own interests.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Toddlers are beginning to develop self-help skills. The caregivers encourage children’s independence, yet allow them to grow at their own pace. At meal times, the toddler staff joins the toddlers at the table, modeling table manners and helping the children when needed. A variety of safe, nutritious foods are served and menus are sent home as well as posted at the center.

Toilet training usually begins during the toddler period. The caregivers and parents work together and share observations regarding a child’s interests and success at using the potty. Strategies for potty training success are shared. The parent should not be discouraged if the child is not toilet trained before reaching three years of age, as it is not uncommon for children to enter the preschool program not fully trained. It is often better to step back and give the child an additional month or two if the first efforts are unsuccessful.

Toddlers are assisted with washing their own hands before and after they eat, after a diaper change, and after using the potty. We also encourage tooth brushing after meals.

CLOTHING

Since active indoor and outdoor play is a regular part of the day, toddlers should be dressed in clothing suitable for running and climbing. Sneakers or shoes with rubber soles are recommended. Flip-flops or rubber thongs (open-toed shoes) should NOT be worn.

Children need to be prepared to go outdoors each day and clothing suitable for weather conditions (rain, snow, and cold) is to be provided. Because toddlers also begin to work with paint and sand, they should be dressed in clothes that can be easily laundered.

ITEMS TO BE SUPPLIED BY PARENTS

Parents are responsible for providing the center with the following items. **All of the child’s belongings are to be labeled.**

- * Disposable diapers and wipes.
- * Diaper cream
- * Two complete sets of clothing (pants, shirts, underwear, socks, and shoes).
- * Crib sheet for their cot.
- * A small blanket and/or a favorite cuddly toy.
- * A picture of a parent and/or the family.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

GENERAL

The Preschool program is for children age three through the summer before they enter kindergarten. Children in this age group like to make decisions and do for themselves. They become less attached to adults and more interested in their peers. Their play becomes more imaginative and more complex. The Preschool program is designed to provide opportunities for playing both individually and in groups. The caregivers create their lesson plans to include time for quiet and active play, as well as both child-initiated and teacher-initiated play. During the day the children create, problem solve, and practice newly acquired skills. They are introduced to concepts such as colors, numbers, and the written word through materials, activities, and conversations with adults. Play is the important medium through which they learn.

Preschoolers eat breakfast at 8:30 AM, lunch at 11:30 AM and an afternoon snack at 3:15 PM. They participate in outdoor play or indoor active play every morning and afternoon. Music, creative movement, and stories are worked into their daily experiences.

Preschoolers have rest time every afternoon. Some children will nap, others will not. Everyone is expected to rest for a period of time, those children not napping will be provided with appropriate quiet activities until the end of rest time.

EDUCATION

Preschoolers are beginning to refine skills already learned, and are beginning to learn information that is more academic. Following the Creative Curriculum, weekly lesson plans are written to include reading, art, sensory experiences, math, science, and music activities. Parents are informed of these activities through weekly newsletters and daily notes home.

Caregivers use the activities they plan to make observations of each child's development. These observations are used to complete two different developmental assessment tools. We use the Early Screening Inventory-Revised when your child first enters our program, typically in the fall so that we know what skills are needed to be built upon. Yearly assessments are summarized for you and gone over with you during the parent-teacher conferences we hold twice a year. The assessments are available for parents to read if requested.

CLOTHING

Since active indoor and outdoor play is a regular part of the day, preschoolers should be dressed in clothing suitable for running and climbing. Sneakers or shoes with rubber soles are recommended. Flip-flops or rubber thongs (open toed shoes) should NOT be worn.

Children need to be prepared to go outdoors each day and clothing suitable for weather conditions (rain, snow, and cold) is to be provided. Because preschoolers participate in many activities, some that could be messy, they should be dressed in clothes that can be laundered easily.

ITEMS SUPPLIED BY PARENTS

Parents are responsible for providing the center with the following items. **All of the child's belongings are to be labeled.**

- * A complete set of clothes to be kept at the center (pants, shirt, underwear, socks, shoes).
- * A small blanket (or soft toy) for rest time.
- * A crib-sized sheet for their cot.
- * A picture of a parent and/or the family.

PARENT'S ROLE WITHIN THE CENTER

VISITING

Parents are welcome to visit at any time. When visiting, please keep our policies regarding food in mind. Only food prepared by our kitchen is allowed in the classrooms, and while in the classroom, adults may only eat when children are eating.

ADULT CONDUCT POLICY

Adult behavior directly affects the children in Stepping Stones II. The adults at the center are the role models. Therefore, adults must behave appropriately and promote an attitude of respect towards staff, children, and other families.

*Loud voices, foul language, negative comments, uncontrolled public anger, and/or any physical contact by any adult is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

*Smoking is prohibited within view of the children.

*Carrying of weapons, guns, knives, etc., by any non-police personnel is not acceptable.

*We will not tolerate the discussions about the behaviors, words, or actions of any child or adult within SSII. If you have a concern, please speak to your Center Director.

*Being under the influence of any controlled substance or alcohol is prohibited on any CEO property and at any events.

*Anyone found not following our Adult Conduct Policy will be asked to leave the center and will need to meet with the Early Childhood Division Director and Center Director before returning.

PARENT MEETINGS/FAMILY FUN

Parent meetings and family fun activities provide an opportunity for parents to become acquainted with the staff and other parents. Meetings offer a way to share ideas and suggestions for the program for both the parent and child.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year, in the fall and spring. The goal of these conferences is for staff to discuss with parents the individual child's growth and development. Informal conversations take place daily at drop off and pick up and through notes and newsletters. If there is a particular topic a parent would like to discuss with the director or caregiver an additional conference can be arranged.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We consider all information about the child, the parent, and the family to be confidential. This includes written information, information gained through direct or overheard conversations, and personal observations.

PARENTAL INPUT

We value input from our families and use this input to help improve our programs. Some ways in which families may provide their input are:

* Deposit suggestions in the "Suggestion Box" located at the front desk.

* Schedule a meeting with the Center Director.

GRIEVANCE

For grievances, please contact:

Morgan Storms
Director of Early Childhood Program

2328 Fifth Avenue
Troy, NY 12180

Telephone: 518-272-6012, ext. 304

Danielle Waring
NYS Office of Children & Family
Services

52 Washington St, 309 South
Albany, NY 12210

Telephone: 518-486-5168

OCFS regulations are posted on the parent bulletin board and copies are available in the Center Director's office.

STAFFING

CEO's Human Resource Department is responsible for the recruitment, selection, and retention of all staff employed by SSII.

Each Early Childhood Division classroom is staffed in accordance with requirements of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulations for staff qualifications, staff/child ratio and group size. Staff/child ratio is as follows:

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Maximum Group Size</u>
Infants 1:4	8
Toddlers 1:5	12
Three-year-olds 1:7	18
Four-year-olds 1:8	21

All Teachers are required to have a minimum of an Associates degree in Early Childhood Education and/or a Child Development Associate. All Teacher Assistants are required to have a minimum of a high school diploma.

In order to ensure a safe environment for young children, a pre-employment screening process is in place. This includes:

- * Three character/work references, which are checked to confirm past work experience and integrity of the applicant.
- * A criminal background check including fingerprinting and a conviction statement signed by the applicant.
- * A current physical and PPD (tuberculin test) and drug screen.
- * Clearance by the New York State Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment.
- * Approval by New York State Office of Children and Family Services licensor, as applicable.

Cooking staff are required to have a high school diploma. They receive training in food handling, kitchen sanitation, menu planning, and preparation and have knowledge of all CACFP guidelines.

All staff receive on-going training, as mandated, to keep them abreast of NYS and CEO Policies and Procedures and the latest research in their respective fields.

Thank you for choosing Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center for your child! We understand the difficulty of leaving your child with someone else. At Stepping Stones II Early Learning Center you will find a home away from home. We like to think of ourselves as part of your extended family!