

PARENT HANDBOOK

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1.0 WELCOME

We are pleased that your family has joined The Second Step for your before and after school care needs. We are fully committed to your child's care and well being in our center. Please read this handbook carefully and return all appropriate registration forms.

1.1 HISTORY

The Second Step is a family owned and operated before and after school program. Each partner is committed to your child's success and plays an active roll in operating the center. The owners have a combined 20+ years of childcare experience, as well as being parents themselves.

1.2 PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Staff and Management are dedicated to the well being of each child attending The Second Step. We realize that children are individuals, and each child's needs will be met to the best of our ability. The center is staffed by caregivers who are genuinely interested in providing an environment that will assist in the growth and development of your child. Ample opportunity will be allowed for frequent interaction among caregivers as well as with other children, and to develop a sense of belonging at The Second Step. Children will be given obtainable goals to achieve and then to exceed. Positive guidance will be given to achieve these goals. Your child will be encouraged to participate in group activities, but will be allowed to observe quietly, or given alternative choices. Children will always be welcomed into a warm and secure environment daily by our caregivers.

Redirection or time out will be used as disciplinary measures for inappropriate behavior. Every effort will be made to understand the causes of any inappropriate behavior and to assist the child in learning to change the negative behavior into a positive one. Persistent or serious discipline issues will result in a write up and further disciplinary actions, such as a suspension or possible termination of your child's care. Parents will be informed of any consistent disciplinary problems.

The Second Step staff will maintain a clean, bright, and interesting room to enhance your child's growth and development. The center will provide sufficient equipment and toys, which will be age appropriate for each specific group of children. A current Lesson Plan will be posted to keep you up to date on classroom themes.

Our staff has designed a curriculum program to encourage developmental progress and to promote a positive self-image for the children. We encourage creativity and imagination through hands on experiences. Our children's work is their play. Through play, the children learn the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs to develop into happy and well-adjusted children.

2.0 ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

The Second Step enrolls school age children from kindergarten through fifth grade. We

provide early morning care, after school care and full time care for teacher work days, school breaks and summer.

2.1 REGISTRATION FEES

There is an initial registration fee of \$50 to register your child in The Second Step. The fee is non-refundable and will hold a spot for your child for a period of two weeks. There will be an annual registration fee of \$35 due on the anniversary month of enrollment.

2.2 APPLICATION PACKET

Once a parent or guardian accepts a slot at The Second Step, he/she will be given a parent handbook and child's application packet. The following will be included in the child's packet:

- Application Form to be completed with parents work numbers, emergency information, two local alternate release contact people, and the names of any other person who has permission to pick up your child. These names must be on the Application Form. Changes to this information must be updated immediately.
- Immunization Form: An up to date shot record must be maintained at all times.
- Emergency Information Form lets the center know who should be contacted in the event of an emergency. It lists the child's physician, dentist, as well as other pertinent information, which would be needed if an emergency should occur.
- Discipline Statement and Policies should be signed and dated with your child's name, parent signature, and director/management signature. A copy of the Discipline Statement is included in the handbook for your records.
- Travel Authorization is required to be completed for each child. This form gives us permission to take your child out of the building for field trips, as well as for emergency situations.
- Receipt of Parent Handbook is a statement requiring your signature.
- Emergency Evacuation Consent explains our evacuation procedures.

2.3 FEE SCHEDULE

The Fee Schedule for The Second Step Tuition is as follows:

School Age Care	\$80.00 Before and After School Care \$15.00 per day for full days during the school year \$45.00 Before School Only \$60.00 After School Only \$125.00 for Summer Care and Full Weeks
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2.4 TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition is due on each Monday for the upcoming week. Tuition payment is preferred by check to The Second Step. Check payments should be placed in the Tuition Box inside

the front door. For security and accounting purposes, we will not accept cash. Payment must be made in the form of a check or money order.

Tuition can also be paid in advance bi-weekly or monthly, however there is no discount for early payment. Tuition is always due in advance, not in arrears.

2.5 LATE FEES

There will be a late fee of twenty dollars (\$20) charged to all accounts that have not paid tuition for the week by the close of the day on Tuesday.

There will be a late fee charge of one dollar (\$1) per minute due upon your arrival after 6:30 PM, or after 3 PM on days when the center closes early for a holiday. Payment for the late pick up should be made to the staff member remaining with your child that day. Please make every possible effort to arrive each day prior to 6:30 PM.

2.6 RETURN CHECK FEE

There will be twenty five dollar (\$25) charge for any checks returned to the company. Cash payment must be made for the returned check and returned check fee. If two checks are returned to The Second Step, all further payments will be required in the form of cash or money order.

2.7 VACATION POLICY

Families are allowed one week of vacation time annually for which tuition will not be charged. Vacation time is to be taken in five consecutive working days. Your child must not be present at the center during this time. Families are eligible for one free vacation week after having been enrolled at The Second Step for one year. There must be a twelve month period between free vacation weeks.

If you would like to use a vacation week, please notify Management one week in advance, so that a credit can be added to your account.

2.8 WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Should it become necessary for you to withdraw your child from The Second Step, a two week written notice will be required. All parents will be charged two weeks of tuition at the time the written notice is received by Management. If you choose to leave prior to the conclusion of your two week notice, full payment is still due. Please be advised that if you withdraw your child from care for a short period of time that we cannot guarantee your child will have a spot in the future.

In the event that either the parent or child does not show the ability to conform to the rules and regulations of The Second Step, we will require the parent to withdraw his/her child from the center. This measure will only be necessary after reasonable efforts have

been made to correct the situation. The Second Step may give you a two week notice to find alternative care, unless the situation which has occurred becomes harmful to your child or to others. The Second Step reserves the right to have a child withdrawn from the program immediately.

3.0 ATTENDANCE

In order for your child to fully benefit from our curriculum and daily activities, it is important for your child to attend on a daily basis. If your child will be absent, we ask that parents call the center so that the teachers may be made aware of the situation.

3.1 CENTER DROP OFF/PICK UP POLICY

Parents are to bring their child into the building and take their child to the appropriate classroom by 10:00 AM on full days. **Children are not to be dropped off at the center after 10:00 AM** unless prior approval has been obtained from Management. Please be sure that your child arrives on time when field trips are scheduled.

Children **MUST NOT** be dropped off at the entrance of the building and left to enter on their own. Parents are to escort their child to the classroom and be sure that the caregiver is aware that the child has arrived. An **ADULT** must bring in and pick up each child daily. Children are **NOT** to be dropped off prior to 6:30 AM.

If someone other than the parent is going to pick up the child, the center must be notified in writing or by phone. The party picking up the child must show valid identification before the child will be released.

3.2 BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Currently, The Second Step provides service to and from Cleveland Elementary and Polenta Elementary.

Children who attend Polenta are lined up and then led to the van by the driver. The driver supervises the children boarding and checks to be sure seat belts are secured. Children are dropped off at curbside at a specified point at the school.

In the afternoon, the driver arrives at the specified pick up location at Polenta. The children are checked off the roll call sheet to assure that all of the children riding that day are accounted for. **A parent should notify the center no later than 2:00 PM, so that the driver will not wait for a child not riding that day.** The driver will depart from the school after seat belts have been checked and everyone is accounted for.

Each van will have a copy of your child's emergency release information. Each van is equipped with a first aid kit. Parents will be notified immediately if there is ever an incident/accident involved with the van while children are on board.

The Second Step will pick up for early release, or inclement weather as soon as possible. There will be an additional charge for these days.

Children who attend Cleveland Elementary are lined up and then led through the parking lot to the curb where they are supervised while waiting for the bus. Children are then bused to Cleveland Elementary. They will be dropped off at the curb near our mailbox in the afternoon. A staff member will be waiting for the bus to arrive each afternoon.

Please be aware that if your child is suspended from the bus, The Second Step will not provide transportation for your child. It will be your responsibility to provide transportation to and from school for the duration of the bus suspension.

Please also be aware that if your child is suspended from school, The Second Step cannot provide care during school hours for your child. It will be your responsibility to provide alternate care for your child during regular school hours for the duration of the suspension.

A copy of our discipline policy is included in your child's application packet.

Care will be provided for teacher workdays and school vacations for an additional fee.

3.3 HOLIDAYS

The Second Step observes the following holidays each year during which the center will be closed:

New Year's Day

Good Friday

Memorial Day

July Fourth

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day and the Day After, and closing at 3 PM the Wednesday before

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day **or** closing at 3 PM Christmas Eve and closed for Christmas Day and December 26th

Closing at 3 PM on New Year's Eve

If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the center will be closed on Friday. If the holiday falls on a Sunday, the center will be closed on Monday.

Full tuition prices will apply during holidays for which the center is closed.

3.4 ABSENTEE POLICY

Please notify the center if your child will not be attending for any specified time. Full tuition is still required for the week, unless your child is not present for five consecutive days and you wish to use your vacation week.

4.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

4.1 STAFF

The quality of care your child receives at The Second Step is a direct reflection of its staff. The Second Step will only employ state qualified staff who are genuinely committed to providing quality care. Our staff is dedicated to promoting the physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth of your child. Please bring any concerns you may have about our caregivers to Management's attention.

4.2 HOURS OF OPERATION

The Second Step is open Monday through Friday 6:30 am to 7:45 am and 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm during school days and 6:30 am to 6:30 pm when school is not in session. Please refer to the Holiday Schedule for days the center will be closed. Our staff may arrive prior to 6:30 am to prepare for the day, however we begin caring for the children at 6:30 am. **DO NOT** leave any child in a room unattended by staff. **DO NOT** drop children off prior to 6:30 am.

4.3 INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The Second Step is in business to provide childcare in all weather conditions. It is our intention to be open for business regardless of weather conditions.

However, if the weather becomes so severe that we cannot open or that it would be dangerous for our staff to travel, or if the building is without electricity, parents will be notified through local radio and television stations. If notification has not been made, it is to be assumed that the center will operate on a normal schedule. Please call The Second Step or Little Stepping Stones (779-3800) if you have any questions regarding the opening of the center, or tune in to WRAL for updates.

If The Second Step must close due to inclement weather or a power outage, we will contact you to pick up your child. If neither parent/guardian can be reached, we will then contact those individuals listed as Emergency Contacts. Please be sure that all emergency information is updated regularly.

No adjustments are made to tuition when closings are due to inclement weather.

5.0 MEALS AND SNACKS

The Second Step will provide an afternoon snack for the children upon arrival at the center. Your child may bring a simple breakfast on the morning, as morning snack is not provided due to time constraints. Please be aware that the children are lined up for departure at 7:45 AM.

The Second Step will provide two snacks and a hot lunch for the children when school is not in session. Children will be served family style in their classroom and will be encouraged to feed themselves and to use proper table manners. All children will be encouraged to try a variety of foods, however children are not required to eat all of the food on their plate.

Typically, morning snack will be served at 8:30 am, lunch from 11:30 am - 12 noon, and afternoon snack from 2:30 pm - 3:00 pm. Please be sure your child has already had breakfast if he/she will be arriving after 8:30 am.

The menu will be posted near the kitchen on a weekly basis for daily reference. Menus are planned in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture meal patterns approved for use by the Child Day Care Commission.

Information concerning children with food allergies is posted in both the kitchen and the child's classroom. Please make staff aware of any allergies your child has. Food substitutions are allowed only when a child is diagnosed with food allergies and a physician's documentation is provided.

Non-nutritional food items can only be served for special occasions and must be supplemented with nutritional food items.

6.0 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Your child's health and safety are our primary concern. The policies of Little Stepping Stones regarding health and safety are in place to protect each child in our care. Our policies are designed to keep in accordance with North Carolina state laws governing early childhood centers.

6.1 PARKING LOT SAFETY

Our parking lot can be a very busy area, especially at drop off and pick up times. To insure your safety, as well as your child's safety, we ask that you adhere to the following practices:

1. Please pull your vehicle into a parking space.
2. Be sure to escort your child to and from the vehicle.
3. Do not allow your child to run through the parking lot.
4. Never leave children unattended in any vehicle.

6.2 SICK POLICY

If your child has a temperature of 101 degrees or higher, is vomiting or has diarrhea, we require you to keep your child home or we will contact you to come pick up your child. We appreciate how difficult it can be for parents to take time off from work to care for a sick child, but The Second Step does not have the facilities to care for sick children. If a child is unable to participate in the daily activities of the center, including outside play,

the child should remain home. Children are unable to be moved to an alternate classroom to avoid outside time.

If your child is sent home sick, he/she may NOT return to daycare for a **full 24 hours** after the sickness/fever has subsided. For example, if your child is sent home with diarrhea at 9AM, he/she may not return to the center until 9 AM the next morning, provided that your child has not had any further incidents. This not only provides your child with the opportunity to become completely well again, but also protects the other children in your child's class from becoming infected.

The following is a list of some common childhood diseases and infections. Unless marked by an asterisk, children are not permitted to return to The Second Step unless treated by a physician, or symptoms are no longer apparent after twenty-four hours. This is only a partial listing, so please check with Management if there are any questions concerning your child or other children in the classroom.

Chicken Pox	Conjunctivitis (pinkeye)
Diarrhea	Fever of 101 or higher (with or without a rash)
Fifth Disease	Impetigo
Scabies	Lice
Scarlet Fever	Strep Throat
Vomiting	Whooping Cough
Measles	*Hand Foot and Mouth
*Thrush	*Cold
*Roseola	*Ringworm

6.3 MEDICATION AUTHORIZATION FORM

All medicine for children enrolled in The Second Step must have specific instructions and written permission for administering any medication. Instructions must be completed by either the child's parent or physician and must include:

1. Who the medicine is for
2. How much is to be given
3. What time the medicine should be given (slip **cannot** say "as needed").
4. How often the medicine is to be given
5. For what length of time; medication slips are good only for a one week period of time

Prescription Medicines:

1. Must be the original container, bearing the original label
2. Must have complete instructions on the label or be accompanied by written instructions from a health professional which include 1-5 above
3. Must be administered only to the person for whom it was prescribed (Siblings may not take the same medication unless written orders from a physician are given)
4. Can not be administered after its expiration date

Over the Counter Medicines:

All information under 1-5 of the above instructions must be followed, as well as:

1. A doctor must give instructions about dosage if the dosage conflicts with the instructions on the medicine bottle. However, a parent can write a statement that identifies the doctor who was contacted, the date the doctor was contacted and gives specific instructions about the dosage from the doctor.
2. Medicine can be kept and given to a child only for the length of time noted on the instructions, and never after its expiration date.
- 3.** Medicine should only be left at the center while the child needs it.

6.4 SCHEDULE OF CLEANING DUTIES

In an effort to help prevent the spread of germs, the following cleaning duties will be performed in each classroom:

The following will be done throughout the day as needed:

1. Clean tables, chairs, and high chairs with disinfectant.
2. Sweep floors and mop up spills immediately.
3. Keep books and toys straightened.
4. Keep cabinets, closets, and drawers organized and neat.
5. Clean and disinfect toilet area.

The following will be done daily at quiet time:

1. Take out trash and replace the liner.
2. Clean counters and sink area.
3. Wipe off cubbies, shelves, and other equipment.
4. Windows must be washed at least once a week, inside and out, and daily if needed.
5. Shades should be dusted and wiped clean.
6. Wipe off window sills.
7. Clean baseboards.

Cleaning the tables, sweeping the floor, wiping down restrooms and carrying out the trash will be done each evening before leaving.

6.5 INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORTS

When a child receives any bump, scrape, bruise or cut while under the care of any staff member of The Second Step, an Incident/Accident Report must be filled out. The child's name, date and time must be written at the top of the report. The nature of the injury will be written down and the circumstances of the accident will briefly be described on the report. The teacher will then sign the report and turn it over to a member of Management. Management will review the report, sign it and return it to the teacher. Upon the arrival of the parent for pick up, he/she is given the report and asked to sign it. The original report is kept in the child's file, and a copy of the report may be taken home by the parent.

6.6 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency, your child will be transported to the pediatrician of your choice, or to the nearest hospital. Every effort will be made to contact you for instructions prior to leaving. If you are unavailable, we will transport your child to the location most appropriate under the circumstances. The emergency form from your child's packet will be taken with your child. A member of Management will contact the doctor or hospital to inform them of the situation and our pending arrival. We will continue to attempt to reach you to inform you of the incident/accident and where you should meet your child.

6.7 DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

There is a copy of the discipline policies and procedures in your application packet. It is also given to each member of our staff. Please keep this copy for your records. Corporal punishment by the staff or Management will **never** be used. Teachers must maintain control of the children at all times. Thoughtful planning and preparation will help maintain control and helps to prevent discipline problems from occurring. Activities are carefully planned to prevent children from becoming bored or having idle time on their hands. Transitional periods can also be a difficult time for children, therefore the teacher will let the children know what is expected of them ahead of time. Finding fun ways to change from one activity to another helps keep the children's attention focused in a positive way.

Teachers will be aware of potential problems. Close observation will allow them to stop a problem before it starts.

Indirect guidance will be used as a preventive measure. The environment will be arranged to prevent misbehavior. Children's seats and places in line will be arranged so that those children who get along with each other are close together. Children who are frequently disruptive will be mixed with more cooperative children.

Direct guidance will flow as follows:

1. The desired behavior will be stated in a positive way on the first offense
2. Time out will be used on the second offense
3. The appropriate behavior will be reinforced as soon as possible after time out

Time out is used when a child's behavior becomes so disruptive that it interferes with the normal flow of activities. Time out should be used as a last resort or when a child's behavior endangers the child, classmates or environment. If a child throws or hits with an object, or bites, the child should visit the time out area immediately.

If Time Out must be used, the child will be seated away from the other children, but where the child can still be easily supervised. The child will be told why he/she is being placed in Time Out. The duration of the Time Out is based on the child's age.

When a child fights with objects, their attention will be redirected to something positive to divert the hostility. We will not respond to other children's tattling. We will only

intervene when a negative behavior is observed. We will investigate the incident without making accusations.

CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY! We will always try to remain consistent with each child.

The following steps are followed:

1. We will non-verbally discourage negative behavior.
2. We will verbally remind the child of the classroom rules.
3. We will reposition the child near staff, away from the distractive situation.
4. If there continues to be a problem, we will have the child sit in the time out area.

6.8 SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

It is our responsibility to care for all of the children at The Second Step and to keep their best interest in mind at all times. Therefore, any suspected child abuse will be documented and reported to the Department of Social Services by a member of Management.

7.0 CHILDREN'S BELONGINGS

Children in the School Age Program are not permitted to bring toys from home, including gameboys. The Second Step provides ample toys for playtime and ample reading materials for quiet time.

ALL children should be dressed in weather appropriate clothing, as outside play is part of their daily schedule. The N.C. state law requires centers to take all of the children outside each day, weather permitting. If the temperature is between 35 and 95 degrees, we will take the children outside each day. Please label your child's jacket, hat, gloves, etc.

7.1 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Birthday celebrations are an important part of your child's life. We welcome you to celebrate your child's Birthday at the center. Please notify the center one week in advance of your plan.

If you are inviting **ALL** of the children in the class to an outside party, we will be happy to distribute the invitations to the class. We cannot release addresses or phone numbers without parental consent.

7.2 HOLIDAY AND SPECIAL OCCASION PARTIES

We like celebrations, and ask that you help make them possible. There will be sign up sheets for donations of special treats for your child's classroom posted outside the class. We ask for you to sign up as early as possible to allow for teacher planning.

8.0 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

We are strong advocates of parent involvement at The Second Step. From time to time we will ask for your participation in various events at the center. Such events may include fund raising for new equipment, donations for families in need, and your support with new changes and policies. Your help and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

8.1 OPEN DOOR POLICY

As a parent you are welcome at The Second Step at any time. We do not mind you visiting your child at any time during the day. Please keep in mind that some children have a hard time adjusting to another separation during the day. We all have your child's best interest at heart and certainly do not want to expose your child to any unnecessary anxiety during the day.

You are also welcome to call during the day to check on your child. A member of management will always check on your child and give you an update. Please be advised that it is not always possible for your child's teacher to leave the room to speak with you on the phone, but she will be given the opportunity to return your call during quiet-time if necessary.

WE APPRECIATE ANY AND ALL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE SECOND STEP!