

Parent Handbook



**Little Steps Childcare Parent Handbook
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Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to Little Steps! We understand that the responsibility of raising children is the parent's. Our role is to assist you in your great responsibility. Our part is by providing a loving, caring and spiritual environment for your child while you work so that you may instill in them values and character in the home. We will strive to provide your child with a safe, loving atmosphere and allow you to have peace of mind.

We are a ministry of Port City Stroudwater Baptist Church and are unashamedly Christian. We have a long history of children's ministry and a big heart for helping children to develop into thriving, fulfilled adults. Again, your child's spiritual development is the responsibility of you, the parent. We simply desire to be the support system that you can trust.

We are here to serve you and are thrilled to be given the opportunity!

Sincerely,

Pastor Perry & Linda Jones

Little Steps Childcare

About Baby Steps

Our History

Little Steps is the fulfillment of a long sought after dream. I have been working with children since graduating from Pensacola Christian College in 1986. My husband and I have been in the Gospel ministry since 1991 and I have served and worked with children wherever our journey has led us. When we moved to Maine in 2009 to start Port City Baptist Church, we also dreamed of the day we could start our own childcare and Christian School. It breaks our heart to hear of what is going on in some day-cares and schools. Our future is in our children. Children deserve a safe place to learn and grow. Children need love and structure to thrive. We thank God for that dream realized. Now, the real work begins with each precious soul that comes through our doors. Each life is a journey that begins with... Little Steps!

Sincerely,

Linda Jones, Director

director.littlestepschildcare@gmail.com

Scope of Operation

Little Steps will have quality child care for children ages 36 months through 48 months. We can serve up to 12 children daily. Little Steps is open to all children, regardless of race, nationality, or creed, who may benefit from our program.

All teachers participate in a continuous program of in-service education and studies for professional advancement in order to remain alert to the ever-changing needs of today's families and to the findings of current research.

Hours of Operation

Little Steps opens each day at 7:00 am and closes at 5:30 pm Monday - Friday each week throughout the year, January - December. Late fees will apply for children picked up after 5:30PM, please see fees section for more information. There is a \$10.00 immediate charge for late pick-ups and \$1.00 a minute every minute past 5:35 pm. Little Steps will not be accepting any part time students at this time.

Arrivals and Departures

Little Steps will not permit children to enter or exit without an adult escort. When delivering your child or children to Little Steps, parents of the child or those persons authorized to drop off the child will personally deliver the child to his/her teacher or Little Steps staff person in charge. If you are going to be late, due to traffic, doctor appointments, or any reason, please call the childcare and let them know.

When picking up children from Little Steps, parents of the child or those persons authorized to pick up the child will personally come into Little Steps or into the drop off area and receive the child from his/her teacher or Little Steps staff person in charge.

At no time will the parent leave the child at Little Steps without first making his/her presence known to Little Steps staff, nor will the parent take the child from Little Steps without notifying Little Steps staff.

Releasing Children to Authorized Persons

Children will be released ONLY to those persons designated on the Authorized Pick Up List. Please keep this information current. Parents must let the childcare know in advance and in writing if another person is to pick up the child. The person picking up the child will be asked for a picture I.D. before the child is released if the staff does not know the person.

Holidays

Little Steps will be closed for the following holidays (Your regular weekly tuition will be charged during these holidays):

- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents Day
- Patriots Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous People's Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving (Thursday & Friday)
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas

If these holidays fall on a Saturday or Sunday, the childcare may be closed on either the preceding Friday or following Monday. We will notify parents in advance if this applies.

* Little Steps will be closed the first week of July annually.

Inclement Weather, Physical Building or Fire Problems

Emergency plans have been developed and are posted for parent viewing. In the event of severe weather and Portland Public Schools close, Little Steps will also close. Please be alert to the television and radio to listen for such announcements. After the announcement is made for such closings, please make plans for your child to be picked up immediately. If Little Steps is closed for a prolonged period of time and/or the closing is a result of *direct physical damage* to the property that is caused by catastrophic weather or war, no charges will be issued.

Licensing

We are a private, faith based child care center, serving children 36 to 48 months. We are licensed and regulated by the State of Maine. All employees have had state mandated training on child safety and first aid, mandated reporting, and other emergency responses.

Curriculum

We are excited to offer hands-on learning! We focus on the development of the *whole child*: mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally & socially. Your child will participate in a variety of activities such as: working with paints, clay, crayons, blocks, and other manipulative materials; enjoying stories, poetry, dramatizations, films, videos, and books; learning to share take turns, plan, work, and play with others; learning to respond rhythmically to music, singing new songs, and listening to different kinds of music; and acquiring good health and cleanliness habits. Our staff are trained to do their best to monitor your child's development. For further information to assist in your child's development, please refer to the State of Maine's website for developmental screening. <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/support-for-families/child-development/developmental-screening>

Enrollment and Attendance

Registration

Parents must complete an enrollment application for each child they wish to enter the program. All information must be accurate and updated regularly. If the child is living with both parents then both parents need to sign the enrollment applications. Each application must include the registration fee and the current immunization record. Once the registration fee is paid and the child's enrollment packet is

submitted, your child's spot will be held for 30 days and then a new registration fee is required.

Payment Options

Parents need to make the first tuition payment no later than the first day of enrollment. All accounts are to be set-up through Procare Solutions. This program is a secure bank draft program that allows parents a paper free mode of payment. Accounts are accessible online and payment methods are easily updated through this program. Late fees are charged for payments with insufficient funds. No account will be allowed to become more than 2 weeks past due. If this happens, the child's space will be forfeited and the child will not be allowed to return to Little Steps.

Weekly Tuition Rates

Rates are current as of Spring 2023, however, they are subject to change and changes to tuition are announced 4 weeks in advance. Tuition is reassessed annually in January.

Full-time hours are 7:00 am – 5:30 pm.

- Toddlers (ages 36 to 48 months): \$225 per week

Statements and Fees

Little Steps will provide a yearly statement of childcare fees paid upon request. Receipts for other types of payment are provided upon request.

Returned Check Fee: - \$25.00 per check plus bank fees.

Registration Fee: \$100 (renewed annually in August)

Late Pickup Fee: There is a \$10.00 immediate charge for pick-ups 5:30 and before 5:35PM, plus \$1.00 for every minute past 5:35 pm

Refund Policy

No refunds will be granted if a child/family is dismissed on the basis of the expulsion policy, or if the parent withdraws the child during the billing cycle without the required notice. This is because tuition covers the weekly space reserved for each child, not the actual hours of attendance.

Absences and Vacations

If your child will be out for more than one day, a call would be appreciated. There will be no reduction

in fees, because you are paying for the space reserved for your child, not based on attendance. See page 23 under Termination of Services for information on extended absences.

Little Steps does not discount tuition for absences, holidays, or other days (weather events, illness that prevents adequate staffing, etc.) on which Little Steps is closed. After one year of enrollment, each child will receive one week of vacation at no charge as long as your account is current. Please notify Little Steps in writing two week in advance of any vacations. (This also applies during Christmas holidays).

Procedures and Guidelines

Clothing

Children's clothes should be comfortable and able to get messy. Each toddler must have at least one extra change of weather appropriate clothing at Little Steps labeled with the child's first and last names, including underwear, socks and shoes, placed in a Ziploc bag. These are to be left in their cubby and changed out for appropriate weather wear as the seasons change. NO diaper bags or book bags should be left at the childcare. Amber necklaces are not permitted and are a choking hazard in group care settings.

Rest Time/Nap Time

An afternoon rest time or nap time is scheduled for children. Each child will have his/her own mat or cot and bedding. Children may have a favorite blanket and travel sized pillow from home, but must be marked with the child's full name. Blankets must be taken home every Friday for cleaning and returned on Monday. Mats are cleaned daily and labeled for each child's use. Please make sure to provide a child-friendly storage bag labeled with their name and be sure the blanket is small enough to fit in your child's cubby. Storing the blankets in bags separately helps with prevention of contagious diseases and other nuisance conditions.

Toddler Daily Schedule

7:00-9:30 – Free Play

9:30-9:40 – Bathroom / Hand Washing

9:40-10:00 – Snacks

10:00-10:20 – Circle Time

10:20-10:40 – Crafts or Sensory

10:40-11:20 – Outside Time
11:20-11:30 – Bathroom / Hand Washing
11:30-12:00 – Lunch
12:00-2:30 – Nap Time
2:30-2:40 – Bathroom / Hand Washing
2:40-3:00 – Snacks
3:00-3:50 – Outside Time
3:50-4:00 – Bathroom / Hand Washing
4:00-5:30 – Free Play

Clothing

Children will be allowed to play outdoors except during inclement weather. Make sure your child comes dressed in suitable PLAY clothing each day. Clothing should be comfortable, washable play clothing that will get messy or dirty. Please do not send children in fancy, important or valuable clothing. Art and other potential projects are an integral part of the learning program. We will do everything we can to avoid staining on clothing. However, accidents can happen, so we recommend that you not send your child in clothes that you wouldn't want to run the risk of it being stained by paint, food, play dough, marker, etc. Straps, complicated buttons, tight fitting zippers, and belts that cause frustration for the child in dressing himself/herself, must be avoided. Please be cautious of using small or loose hair bows and hair ties that can be easily swallowed. All children need a complete change of clothing left at Little Steps, including underwear, socks, and shoes in case of an accident. All must be marked with the child's first and last names. If we have to dress him/her in some of our clothing, please launder this clothing and return it to us. Please label all children's outer garments.

Toys

Since it is difficult for young children to share personal toys, we ask that children NOT bring toys from home. They could get damaged or lost, and we are not responsible for replacing them. A stuffed animal can be brought for comfort at nap time only and will be stored in their cubby during non-napping hours.

Meals and Snacks

Wholesome snacks must be provided for the morning and in the afternoon and should include a variety of fruits, veggies, carbohydrate, and/or proteins. Children will be encouraged to taste new foods but will not be forced. When a child requires a modified diet for religious reasons, a written statement to

that effect from the child's parents and family's religious leader (i.e., Pastor, etc.) shall be on file. Each toddler should bring two sippy cups to be left at the Daycare: one for water and one for milk.

Outdoor Play

All children will be participating in outdoor activities daily, weather permitting. Children need to run and play, rather than stay inside all day. Please dress or send appropriate clothing for your child for outdoor play, regardless of conditions forecasted.

Spiritual Guidelines

We will help your child to develop a habit of giving thanks through prayer for things enjoyed in life; to help him/her become aware of the ways that God has planned for one to be happy; to help increase the child's ability to make choices between right and wrong. Activities will include Bible stories, religious songs, pictures, prayer and Bible verses which will help him/her understand his/her daily experiences.

Health & Safety

The safety and well-being of each child is of utmost importance. All precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of your child with regards to the physical building, fire hazards, furnishings and equipment. If the program must evacuate due in response to an emergency our in-neighborhood site is across the parking lot at Grace Baptist Church (same physical address). Our out-of-neighborhood relocation site is: 1729 Congress Street, Portland, Maine.

Medications

The Childcare will NOT administer any routine oral medication. The childcare will administer topical ointments (OTC and prescription), breathing treatments, inhalers or an Epi-Pen. These types of medications will require a doctor's prescription and a signed medication form kept in your child's file. All rescue medications must be active and NOT expired at all times. We will continue to administer breathing treatments, inhalers, Epi-Pens, and/or any antibiotic ointment creams. We must have a Care Plan on file to administer medications. No child can attend the program without a Care Plan and unexpired medications on site. Please do not leave any medication in your child's classroom, cubby, diaper bag or backpack, as this violates regulations of the State.

If the child experiences an adverse reaction to a prescribed medication during the day and the reaction

warrants professional medical attention, the parents shall be notified immediately after contacting 911.

Allergies

Please let the Director know of any food or medical allergies.

Immunizations

The Maine Health Department requires that the most current proof of immunization be kept on each child enrolled. This should be on file with the office on the child's first day and updated at every medical appointment where vaccinations are administered..

Upon entrance to Little Steps, evidence of age-appropriate immunizations or signed and submitted verification of medical exemption from a licensed medical provider must be provided. If children are on an alternative vaccination schedule a contract with the licensed medical provider must be provided with anticipated timeframes for completion. Failure to follow the immunization schedule could be ground for discontinuing care as these requirements are a DHHS rule and state law. Immunization requirements for childcare can be found at: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/documents/Childcare%20Immunization%20Standards.pdf>. Request completed medical exemption forms from your child's doctor or health department. It is required that all children attending Little Steps have their immunizations. Every immunization record has an expiration date - a new immunization certificate must be completed each time it expires even if you think your child is not due for shots. Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing current certifications.

No child shall continue enrollment in Little Steps for more than thirty (30) days without a current immunization record on file. If a child is unable to receive immunization due to illness, a statement from your child's physician must be on file until immunization can be received. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to maintain these records.

Illness

If your child shows signs or symptoms of runny nose (persistent greenish, yellowish mucus), sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, skin rash, congested coughing or fever (of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer) - *PLEASE* keep them at home.

We will make *every effort possible* to protect the health & safety of all the children. However, cooperation from the parents is imperative! Knowingly sending your child to school not feeling well,

hoping he or she will feel better, exposes every other child in the classroom to a potential illness. Children should be symptom free without the aid of medication for a period of 24 hours before returning to the Little Steps.

Exclusion of Children with Communicable Diseases

The DHR's communicable disease chart recommendations resource used for exclusion of sick children from Little Steps is Managing Infectious Disease in Child Care and Schools and the Maine CDC, and their recommendations for readmission shall be followed. A copy of this chart is Steps available for review. The child care facility will have final determination about a child's eligibility for readmission. Parents shall notify Little Steps of their child's possible exposure to a communicable disease. If a communicable disease exposure occurs at the childcare de-identified notification will occur, protecting the confidentiality of the involved individual. When a child is free of disease, a physician's note to that effect must be submitted to the Director. Only then shall the child be readmitted. Any suspected case or cluster of notifiable communicable disease will be reported to the Maine CDC as required.

Exclusion of Sick Children

If a child comes to Little Steps when she/he is not feeling well, he/she will be more vulnerable to infections. A child needs to be well to be able to participate actively in the program. Often children may ask to come to school even though they are ill. Although the child may be disappointed, please keep him/her home if he is sick.

A child shall not be accepted nor allowed to remain at Little Steps if the child has the equivalent of 101 F or higher oral/ear/forehead temperature and or another contagious symptom, such as, but not limited to, a rash, diarrhea, a sore throat, vomiting, or nuisance diseases such as head lice, etc. The child will be isolated from well children, but supervised by staff, until the parent arrives. Please do not delay arrival if you have been contacted because you child is ill you must come immediate to prevent further spread to children/staff present in the program. Further, the child may not return to the childcare until 24 hours after the child is well without medication.

Parents, if your child has a fever please do not give them Tylenol at home before bringing them to Little Steps as this masks the fever causing your child's health and welfare to be in danger as well as others. This could be grounds for termination of enrollment. Please do not send Tylenol with your child

if they woke up with a fever. Please keep them home. Parents of any child who becomes ill shall be notified immediately of any illness requiring professional medical attention, or any illness which may not require professional medical attention, but which produces symptoms causing moderate discomfort to the child, such as, but not limited to, any of the following: elevated temperature, vomiting, or more than two abnormal stools in one day.

AFTER A FEVER, A CHILD'S TEMPERATURE MUST BE NORMAL (98.6) FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE HE/SHE RETURNS TO Little Steps.

Health Checks & Sanitization

We perform health check screenings before anyone enters the building, and outside visitors are not permitted during operational hours. We are a private facility regulated by the State. As such, at this time, your child is NOT required to wear a mask. We follow CDC guidelines. Our building is cleaned and sanitized weekly.

Health Concerns

Parents are to share any information regarding known allergies, other physical limitations, mental health disorders, mental retardation or developmental disabilities which would limit the child's participation in Little Steps' program and activities with the Director. If special procedures need to be followed in caring for the child, the parent shall notify the Director. We will work to accommodate your child's needs to the very best of our trained abilities.

Injury

Parents of any child who is injured shall be notified immediately if any injury requires professional medical attention. If a child is injured during the day and the injury does not warrant professional medical attention or causes less than moderate discomfort to the child, the parent's shall be notified of the injury by the end of the day on which the injury occurred. Little Steps will give appropriate first aid to an injured child using Little Steps' first aid supplies. The program will ask parents to sign a written incident report within two business days of the occurrence as required by rule. All serious injuries, requiring a medical consultation, and child deaths will be reported to DHHS children's licensing within 24 hours as required by rule. If a decision is made to seek medical attention for an injury sustained at childcare please notify the Director the following business day.

Health Regulations

Emergency Medical Care:

Should a child become ill or suffer an accident of any nature during the time he/she is in our care, Little Steps shall undertake the following steps:

- Parents shall be called immediately.
- A decision to call Emergency 911 (or transport the child to a health care facility) will be made by the childcare and/or parent, if necessary.

In the event Little Steps is unable to reach the parent immediately, Little Steps shall be authorized to secure such medical attention and care for the child as may be deemed necessary.

The childcare would transport the child to:

Emergency Room, Maine Medical Center (207) 662-0111

22 Bramhall Street, Portland, Maine 04102

Center staff members will contact the person listed on the Emergency Medical Information Form if the parent is unable to be reached. A staff person will remain with the child until a parent arrives.

Parent Communication

Contacting the Childcare

In the event you have an emergency when you need the director or your child's teacher, please call the Front Office at (207) 239-6248. We ask for everyone's email and cell phone number - in addition to work phone numbers - in order to reach you as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Biting, Injury and Behavior Communication

We recognize that as children play, accidents are prone to happen. If your child is hurt more than a minor bump/bruise or receives an injury to the head or face, we will contact the parent immediately. All injuries will be recorded with a parent's acknowledgment of receipt within two business days as an "Accident Report". This is a detailed report from the teacher that witnessed the incident. Please see our Injury procedures in the *Health and Safety* section for additional information.

Likewise, if there is a biting, object throwing or other age appropriate incident occurs an "Incident

Report” will be created and a copy will be sent home, as well as guidance about the behavior. A phone call to the parents of both children involved will follow, all children’s confidentiality will be maintained in those conversations-it is a protection for all children. If your child did this, you may not want that shared with other families so we give other families the same courtesy. Behavior Incidents occur when a child causes disruption to the class, or harm to another child. We will call parents of both children involved (if applicable) and include a “Incident Report” from the teacher. A copy of all reports sent to parents are kept in the child’s file. If a child bites another child and breaks the skin, that child is sent home immediately for the day. Please see our procedures in the *Disciplinary Action and Behavior Policy* section for additional information.

We understand that children at our childcare come from all walks of life and that each child requires an individual discipline approach. However, we cannot allow any child to disrupt the classroom environment, or to cause harm to another child, on a consistent basis. Little Steps reserves the right to dismiss a child due to repetitive biting, fear inducing or injurious behavior incidents.

Parent Meetings

The childcare Director and teachers will want to talk with you from time to time about your child. These meetings will be scheduled in advance so you may make arrangements to attend. Please contact the Director any time you have questions or concerns.

Parent Access

We invite parents to visit Little Steps. The custodial parent(s) of a child, shall at any time the child is in attendance, be permitted access to all childcare areas of Little Steps. The parents shall make his/her presence known to Little Steps staff prior to removing the child from Little Steps.

- The following information is available for your consideration:
- Child Care License
- Emergency plans for severe weather and fire
- Statement for Parental Access
- Managing Infectious Disease in Child Care and Schools
- Statement for visitors entering Little Steps
- Names of staff in charge

We will inform parents of childcare changes and/or improvements. Constructive parent comments for improvements at Little Steps will always be welcome.

Resources Available for Developmental Screening

Please refer to the links below for developmental milestones and for a free service provider to families through Maine's Department of Education that will come onsite to assess children for special needs and support the teachers, parent and child through the process of retaining services/appropriate placement when needed.

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/cds/families>

Interpretation for English Language Learners

Little Steps will do everything in its power to work with a family and/or child Learning the English language. Our goal is to find the most effective communication style. Some strategies are as listed:

- Google translate
- Use of photos for descriptions
- Asking if there is a family, friend, or relative who can translate more complicated questions, injuries, or emergencies.
- Written communication instead of verbal so both parties can look up words as needed
- Interpreter Services could be used but Happy Trunks is not liable for payment of this service:
- House of Languages (207)423-9962
- Maine State Interpreters (207)221-0740
- Day Translations 1(800)969-6853
- Language Partners Catholic Charities Maine (207)523-2700

Concerns and Compliments

Concerns, compliments, or suggestions should be directed to the childcare Director. We need to know what is most meaningful to you so that we can continue to do it, and we need to know what concerns you have so that we can consider changes.

Confidential Information

Information pertaining to the children enrolled at Little Steps is considered confidential and may not be released by Little Steps staff without first obtaining written permission signed by the parents, except in the following situations:

Relevant information relating to the children's family situations, medical status, and behavioral characteristics of the children enrolled at Little Steps at any time shall be shared by Little Steps

caregiver staff, with members of DHHS, or other persons authorized by these rules of the law to receive such information, or with other persons in an emergency situation involving the child.

Rights of Children in care, per DHHS' Child Care Facility Licensing Rules, established September 27, 2021.

A. Rights of Children. Children receiving Child care from Child Care Facilities have the following rights:

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
4. Each Child must be provided Child care services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.

B. Rights of parents and legal guardians of Children receiving Child care from Child Care Facilities.

1. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian must be fully informed of items or services which are included in the rate they pay for Child care services.
2. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian has the right to be fully informed of findings of the most recent inspection conducted by the Department. The Child Care Facility must inform Children's Parents or Legal Guardians that the licensing inspection results are public information and inspection results must be posted in a prominent place on the Premises.
3. Parents or Legal Guardians must be notified by the Child Care Facility within two business days of any actions taken against the Child Care Facility by the Department, including but not limited to,

decisions to issue conditional Licenses, refusal to renew a License, or to impose fines or other sanctions.

Disciplinary Action and Behavior Policy

We, the staff of Little Steps, believe that children learn best through experiences. We try to be as consistent as possible modeling positive behavior, self-control, and administering our classroom rules so that the children will see and know what is expected of them. If a child is having consistent difficulties, or becomes distracting to the entire group, he/she is asked to sit in a special area of the room so that he can regroup so they have decreased stimulation in a quieter atmosphere. Children with consistent difficulties are taken through the above procedures, and the parents are consulted; if necessary, outside assistance is sought in hopes of gaining insight into classroom arrangement/dynamics, child specific accommodations, and to avoid disruption when possible. Parent collaboration in that effort is essential to success. Without parent collaboration to support the child and ultimately the child could be dismissed from Little Steps if resolution is not forthcoming. This is seriously considered when the health, safety and welfare of this child, and/or that of another child or children in the group are at risk. Little Steps reserves the right of dismissing any child based on the above criteria from the program.

Guidance and Discipline Techniques

We believe that the teachers must model, lovingly guide and redirect the children to help them learn and cooperate with their peers, to learn to manage big emotions and to learn to effectively self-regulate emotions; we want them to have positive and educational experiences to encourage and enhance their growth and development while in our care. We believe that we can best accomplish this by:

1. Having a variety of activities for the children.
2. By the use of group management techniques, limit the number of children in each area of the room to avoid overcrowding, allow for sufficient materials and the opportunity for constructive interactions.
3. By speaking with a child if their behavior is inappropriate for the area of material that they are using, i.e., “we take the blocks down; this is the way we use the paintbrush; walking only please”, etc.
4. By using positive language with the children to praise for appropriate behavior, i.e., “I like the way John is sitting”; etc.
5. After using the above techniques, if a child is having a problem cooperating in an area of the room,

he/she is asked to go to another area for a while, i.e., “Peter, I’m sorry but that is not how we play at the water table. Please go to the puzzle table or the science area.” As the year progresses, if the children are redirected to another area, they know that it means the behavior was not appropriate.

6. After exhausting these methods, if a child still has a problem with inappropriate behaviors, the child is asked to sit in the “peace corner,” which is a time-away place to think about what he/she has done with the help of teachers’ discussions with him/her, what might be a better way to interact with the other children, materials, etc. Thinking time lasts for approximately 2 to 5 minutes, depending on the age of the child. Repeated trips to the thinking chair would indicate to the teacher that an informal conference with the parent was in order, to inform the parent and to enlist their assistance in working with their child.

7. If a child is having consistent difficulties, or becomes distracting to the entire group (usually at group time), he is asked to sit in a special area of the room so that he/she can think in a quieter atmosphere. He is still in sight of the teacher and when there is a break in activities, the teacher will speak with the child in a problem-solving manner.

8. Children with consistent difficulties are taken through the above procedures, and the parents are informed. If necessary, outside resources will be enlisted and when all opportunity determine Little Steps is not the appropriate placement, the child would be dismissed from Little Steps. This is seriously considered when the health, safety, and welfare of this child, and/or that of another child or children in the group are at risk.

9. Please be advised that under the State Child Care Licensing regulations issued by The Department of Health and Human Services, any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment, is a violation of rule and is against our philosophy. **NONE OF THESE BEHAVIORS WILL EVER BE TOLERATED AT LITTLE STEPS.**

10. We try to be as consistent as possible with our classroom rules so that the children will know what is expected of them. We find that this helps the children and leads to their success.

11. Extreme discipline problems will be referred to the Director.

12. Little Steps reserves the privilege of suspending and or dismissing any child with discipline problems.

Roles of Parents in the Discipline Process

Children are most likely to respond to attempts to discipline them when the adults involved are

consistent; that is, when every adult who disciplines the child uses similar techniques. Parents often find it difficult to be consistent at those times when family or financial pressures or other stresses seem more important than a child's misbehavior. The parent may feel that keeping the child quiet, whatever it takes, is the only solution at that moment.

However, there are other solutions. One of the many roles of Little Steps is to work together with parents to help children develop appropriate behaviors. Parents are invited and urged to discuss their concerns about their child's behavior with teachers and plan together how to respond consistently to problem behaviors. In this way, children will always get the same message about those behaviors that are acceptable and those that are unacceptable. When these efforts are unsuccessful the Director will support this process as well.

Biting Policy

Biting occasionally happens in childcare settings in which infants and toddlers are enrolled. Biting is a common developmental behavior for children ages 18-26 months of age. There are several reasons a child may bite. These reasons include:

- Young children explore by placing objects in their mouths. Sometimes children "accidentally" bite other children in this process. It is common for the "biter" to look shocked at the bitten child's behavior.
- Young children do not have verbal skills to express themselves. Biting is a very powerful release of frustration and to communicate dislike of a situation. Most biting ceases by age three when the child has acquired better verbal skills.
- Toddlers are learning new physical and social skills. This often leads to frustration which can lead to biting.

Biting Prevention During Childcare:

Planned activities that allow children to release frustration will be implemented in the daily routines. Age-appropriate toys (sometimes more than one of the same toy) will be available that stimulate interest and decrease frustration and/or boredom. Provide biting substitutes such as teething rings, wet washcloths, etc. may be used for prevention.

When Biting Occurs:

- The biting child is calmly removed and given "Quiet Time" alone. Statements such as "Your teeth hurt her. Teeth are for eating. I can't let you bite her." or "Biting is not allowed. It hurts

people.” are used.

- The bitten child is immediately consoled and the bite is quickly cleaned and ice is placed on the bite to decrease the likelihood of swelling or bruising.
- An incident report will be completed so that you are made aware of your child being bitten. A copy will be kept in the director’s office.
- If a child bites another child and breaks the skin, that child is sent home immediately for the day.

Things We Will Not Do:

- Bite the child back.
- Encourage the other child to bite the child back.
- Call the child names such as “bad”, or “naughty”.
- Tell other parents who did the biting.

Conclusion: Each case will be resolved on an individual basis. We will do everything we possibly can to work with the biter and the parents. If all steps have been followed and the issue has not been resolved, Little Steps may, at our discretion, enforce a suspension of services, or ask that the child be dismissed from the childcare.

Child Abuse, Neglect or Deprivation

State licensing laws require that we report any suspected incident of child abuse, neglect, or deprivation to the Office of Family and Children Services. 1-800-452-1999

Smoking and/or Controlled Substances Policy

All staff, parents, and visitors will refrain from smoking, vaping or using tobacco in any form while in Little Steps, on the playgrounds, parking lots, or while in personal or Little Steps’ vehicles. Also, no staff member, parent, or visitor may be under the influence of, or participate in the use of any controlled substance of any kind while on the property.

Termination of Services

The parents agree to notify, verbally (if possible in writing), Little Steps two weeks in advance of withdrawal of their child. The written notification must include the last date that the child will attend

Little Steps. The parent will verbally notify the staff of the child's last attending date. If no notification is received, the child will be dis-enrolled after one week of non-payment. Re-admittance into Little Steps will be based on availability of space, past accounts paid in full, and an additional registration fee will be required.

If you have an extended absence which is due to illness, he must be withdrawn unless payment in full continues to reserve the child's place in the program. When recovery is complete the child may be re-enrolled if a space is available and the registration fee will be waived within a school years' time if a physician authorized the absence. Little Steps reserves the privilege of dismissing any child if he seems unable to participate in group experiences, fees have not been paid, or for any other valid reason. Little Steps reserves the right to withdraw your child from the program without notice, if Little Steps feels that the child is a threat to other child/staff.

Suspension and Expulsion

The Director at Little Steps reserves the right to discontinue care for any reason, at any time, upon reasonable notice to the parent/guardian. Little Steps will provide a three week notification except where immediate termination is warranted per this agreement. To voluntarily withdraw from care, parents/guardians are required to provide a two week written notice stating the final date their children will be in care. All tuition fees for the two weeks (minus any deposits paid) are provided. Parents/guardians may not provide a termination notice while the provider is on vacation. If the parents/guardians account is in good standing, deposits paid upon enrollment are applied to the last week of care. Any remaining balance is the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Little Steps reserves the right to terminate our contract immediately for any of the following reasons (but not limited to)

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION:

- Parents threaten physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.
- Parents exhibit verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.
- Failure to comply with Handbook policies
- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
- Verbal abuse to staff.
- False information given by parents/guardians either verbally or in writing

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or him/herself
- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called and correspondence will be sent home indicating what the problem is, and every effort will be made by both Little Steps and the parent to correct the problem. If, after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to other children's welfare or safety, behavior does not improve, and the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove him/her. The parent will be given a minimum of three week's notice to find another center to provide care for the child.

A child will NOT be terminated if a child's parents/guardians/relatives did any of the following:

- Made a complaint to Licensing regarding alleged violations of licensing rule
- Made a complaint to Licensing regarding alleged violations of the law
- Reported alleged child abuse or neglect at the child care program
- Questioned the child care provider regarding policies and procedures

No refunds of any pre-paid child care fees or deposits will be given in the event of an immediate termination.

Transportation of Children

Little Steps Childcare will only transport enrolled children in the event of an emergency relocation.

Emergency Response Plan

Severe Weather Procedures

Our management staff monitors the emergency weather channel during bad weather for severe weather alerts. In accordance with National Weather Service recommendations, children will be moved into the hallways and supervised during the duration of the alert. Notice will be given by way of the intercom system.

1. Upon notification of severe weather, teachers stop activities immediately.

2. Line children up at the door. Children who are outside will be brought inside.
3. Do a headcount of all the children.
4. Pick up the attendance record.
5. Exit to the main hall on the first floor of the building.
6. Do a roll call check and headcount.
7. Notify the director of all being present or if someone is missing. A search of the building and grounds will be made immediately.
8. Director gets an emergency record/card from the office and mobile phone. Goes through building checking rooms and closing windows and doors. At the meet site, check with each teacher in reference to attendance.
9. When a severe weather alert has been lifted, teachers will line children up to return to rooms.
10. Teachers will return to the rooms with children and take the role to assure that all children have returned safely to the classroom.
11. Teachers resume normal activities.
12. If unable to return to the classroom, the Director will notify parents to pick-up their children.

Fire, Gas, Leak, or Bomb Threat Evacuation Procedure

In the event of fire, gas leak, or bomb threat, children and employees will be evacuated from the building using the following plan and procedure:

1. Teachers stop activities immediately.
2. Line children up at the door.
3. Do a headcount of children
4. Pick up attendance record
5. Exit front exit to the church building or the side gymnasium exits depending upon weather and guidance from the supervising teacher.
6. Do a roll call check and head count
7. Notify the Director of all being present or if someone is missing. A search of the building and ground will be made immediately.
8. Director gets emergency record/cards from office and mobile phone
 1. Calls 911
 2. Go through the building checking rooms and closing windows and doors.
 3. At the meet site, check with each teacher in reference to attendance.

9. Upon arrival of the fireman: notify them of attendance, if all are accounted for, or the number of staff/children missing.
10. Re-entry will not be approved until the officers give the "all clear."
11. Teachers will return to the rooms with children and take the role to assure that all children have returned safely to the classroom.
12. If unable to re-enter the building, the Director will notify parents to pick-up their children.

These plans are to be posted in each classroom.

Plans for Physical Building Problems

In the event of physical damage in the childcare area, the following will happen. Upon notification of damage:

1. Line children up at the door.
2. Do a headcount of the children.
3. Pick up the attendance record.
4. Move children to a safe part of the building or evacuate from the building. If evacuation is necessary, children will be taken to the rear of the playground or the church building depending upon weather and guidance from the supervising teacher.
5. Do a roll call check and headcount.
6. Notify the director of all being present or if someone is missing. A search of the building and grounds will be made immediately.
7. Director gets an emergency record/card from the office and mobile phone; goes through building checking rooms and closing windows and doors. At the meet site, check with each teacher in reference to attendance.
8. When all is clear, teachers will line children up to return to rooms.
9. Teachers will return to the rooms with children and take the role to assure that all children have returned safely to the classroom.
10. In the event of severe damage when children cannot return to the classroom, the Director will notify parents to pick-up their children.
11. Parents will be given the expected date facilities will be repaired.

Loss of electricity, water, or heating or cooling:

1. Teacher will do a head count and roll call.
2. Activities should continue, as much as possible, until notified by the Director and/or the power, water, or heating/cooling is restored.
3. Director will check breakers, plumbing or heating/AC units. If needed, the Director will call the utility company.
4. If it is determined that the loss will not be more than two hours, regular activities will continue as much as possible.
5. If it is determined that the loss will be more than two hours, or the health and welfare of the children would be in jeopardy, the parents will be notified to pick up their children.
6. Parents will be given the expected date the utilities will be repaired.

Loss of Child

All reasonable efforts are made to prevent such loss by properly supervising children and maintaining the proper staff-child ratio. If a child is lost, the following will occur:

1. As soon as the lead Teacher/caregiver realizes a child is missing, workers will make a search of the immediate areas. Staff will do an immediate count and attendance of all other children.
2. If the child is not found, the Caregiver will notify the director or person responsible at that time.
3. If the child is missing on a field trip, after first searching for the child, the Caregiver will notify police.
4. The Director and/or other workers not responsible for directly supervising the children at that time will conduct thorough search of the facilities and/or grounds.
5. If the child is not found within 30 minutes of the report, the Director, parents and appropriate law enforcement officials will be called by the director and the search expanded and continued.
6. During this time, caregivers not involved in the search will continue activities, as much as possible, with the other children. If on a field trip, if possible, caregivers not involved in the search will return to the center with the other children.
7. The Director will notify the parents if the child is not found within 30 minutes.
8. Within 24 hours a report will be filed in the child's records and the State Child Care Licensing Division will be notified with a phone call and a written report will be mailed.

Plans for Serious Injury/Death

In the event of serious injury or illness, the following will take place:

1. The caregiver who is supervising the child at the time will immediately administer first aid, CPR, etc.
2. If the situation is life threatening:
 1. Call the Director and inform them of the situation.
 2. Continue to care for the child until help arrives or move the child to a safe place.
 3. If other caregivers are present, they will assist by administering first aid, CPR, or informing the director and removing other children from the area if appropriate.
3. The Director or Assistant Director will:
 1. Call 911 for assistance.
 2. Call parents and inform them of the situation and what is being done. If 911 is not called the child is then taken to their physician or the Maine Medical Emergency Room by the Director or Caregiver.
4. An "Incident Report" will be completed within 24 hours of the next working day following the incident. A copy will be placed in the child's records and a copy and phone call will be made to the State Child Care Licensing Division within 24 hours.
5. In the event of death, notify police, coroner, and significant others.
6. Do an internal investigation with thorough documentation of events leading up to death.