

“Your partner in quality childcare.”

EST. 1998

**PARENT HANDBOOK, INFORMATION, AND REFERENCE GUIDE**

WELCOME to First Step Learning Centre. Thank you for making us your partner and a part of your village in helping care for your child. In this reference guide, you will be given the policies and procedures to help guide you with any questions you might have about First Step Learning Centre.

**Our MOTTO:**

We believe that any parent should feel one hundred percent confident that their child’s safety, education, health, and emotional well-being are given priority by the person to care for their child in their parent’s absence. First Step Learning Centre is honored to have the privilege of caring for your child.

All children will receive educational opportunities in a fun filled, yet moderately, challenging environment here at First Step Learning Centre

**Hours of Operation:**

We are open Monday through Friday from 6:30 A.M. to 6:30 P.M.

First Step Learning Centre is a YEAR around Pre-School. We are closed on Saturday & Sunday and all posted annual holidays.

We administer yearly calendars with our closed dates.

**Open Door Policy:**

At First Step Learning Centre, we have an OPEN DOOR POLICY. We invite you to visit your child at any time throughout the day. We also invite you as a parent to participate in any activities we offer to your child at First Step Learning Centre. We will always post notifications of the events coming up on our Parent Announcement monitor, as well as in your classroom on their individual boards.

We also are very active on our social media accounts and encourage you to follow and/or “like” us on them so you can also stay updated there as well.

Instagram: @firststeplearningcentre

Facebook: First Step Learning Centre

**ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES:**

Each parent upon arrival and departure must sign your child in and out through the Brightwheel system. This is either on our iPad located at the entrance, QR codes located in your classroom, or through your phone on your Brightwheel App. This is a STATE and CENTER policy. Children will only be released to the persons listed on your enrollment form. You may add as many people as you would like, but in order to avoid confusion, if you take off any persons from your pick-up list, you may NOT re-add them. Each person that you have selected to be on your pick-up list will have their own 4 digit code designated to your child specifically to check in and out.

If you have legal documents stating custody regulations, we will need a copy of these papers to place in your child’s folder so we can enforce pick-up and drop-off with the limited parent.

NO phone authorization will be accepted at any time. If it is a first time for a person to pick your child up, a written or typed email/text approval from a parent and a valid picture I.D. is REQUIRED.

This is for the safety of your child and our center.

**Communication:**

We understand that communication is a very important part of feeling comfortable in leaving your children at First Step Learning Centre.

We implemented a new system called Brightwheel in 2022. This new system allows you to pay your tuition, receive updates, announcements and update your profiles at the convenience of your cellphone.

In our Infants, Toddlers, Two and Three Year old programs, you will be updated throughout the day through your Brightwheel App. We can send pictures and notes through the messenger program in the App.

All classrooms will communicate directly with the parents during drop off and pick up. If you feel that you would like a parent/teacher conference at any time – that can be arranged with advance notice, but, we also schedule Parent/Director conferences throughout the year to discuss your child’s development.

Located at the front of the center is our Parent Information Monitor. All special events and notices will be posted here for parent review, as well as sent as an alert through the Brightwheel App.. These boards are also located in each classroom.

We also update our socials with all important dates and reminders as well.

**Twice a year**, during Spring and Fall, we will offer Parent-Teacher conferences between you, your child’s teacher and the Director. These are not mandatory, but they are free at your disposal. They do not always have to be negative either, we can discuss any development you see in your child!

If you ever have any questions or concerns, please immediately address them with the Owner/Director, Wendy Mireault, or Director, Chanler Melton, by phone or email. If you feel you need to speak directly to the Owner/Director, Wendy is available Monday through Friday. If for some reason, Wendy is not in the center, office personnel can reach me by cell phone at any time.

**Surveys will be handed out in the concluding months of the year to our parents so we can get feedback on what we can improve or continue to do what we are doing that is satisfactory.**

**ENROLLMENT:**

All children must complete the total enrollment package and pay the non-refundable Enrollment Fee before they will be accepted for enrollment. All forms are a requirement of the TDPRS – State Licensing. These forms include, but are not limited to: Enrollment Application, Parent Agreement, Medical Release Form, Photo Release, Tuition and Polices, and Child Nutrition Program Information.

Medical Requirement: A healthcare statement signed by your child’s physician will be required at time of enrollment. Forms will be provided to you in your enrollment packet, or your pediatrician can fax or email one to us.

Current Immunization Records are a requirement of enrollment and they must remain current throughout your child’s enrollment.

You are NOT required to have a Flu or COVID vaccine, but in order to enroll with us at First Step Learning Centre, we require as a small business, for your child to be up to date on all vaccines.

**WITHDRAW PROCESS:**

When you are enrolling with us, you are not bind into a contract. All we require is a 2-week notice. You are required to pay those two weeks whether you attend or not.

In a rare occasion, where we choose to withdrawal you, we will give you a 2-week notice, or depending on the severity of the situation, we will wave that 2-week notice, under our discretion.

**ENROLLMENT FEE:**

Each family is responsible for an enrollment fee of $225. This is a one-time fee unless you un-enroll and then later re-enroll.

Enrollment fees are NON-refundable.

We accept CCMS, but the enrollment fee is still required.

**TUITION POLICY and ADDITIONAL FEES:**

There is no contract to sign whenever you sign up with us at First Step Learning Centre. We just require a two week notice if you are going to withdraw your child. Whether you stay the two weeks until your last day or not, you are responsible for your child’s tuition for those last two weeks.

Weekly Tuition is due on Monday of that week of care and considered late on Tuesday. The late fee is $25.00. This amount will be charged to your account on Tuesday at CLOSE (6:30 P.M.) if payment is not made.

First Step Learning Centre accepts cash, checks and all major credit cards for payment.

First Step Learning Centre offers automatic draft payments. You can set up your credit card to draft either every Monday for weekly payments or if you would like to pay advance for the full month it will draft the first of every month and be calculated for how many Mondays are in that month.

All payments can be set up through the Brightwheel App.

**No Refunds will be given unless the mistake was on our end.**

**CCMS/Child Care Assistance:**

At our center, we accept CCMS/CCA. You are still required to pay the $225 enrollment fee, but before you are able to start, you must contact CCA and let them know you would like to enroll at our center and they will notify us with your start date and your Co-Payment, if any.

A Co-Pay is due at the first of every month. If you are past due, we are obligated to notify CCA.

As well as absences; if you are absent without notifying us or CCA for more than 5 days, we have to report you. This is not our rule, it is the States.

**ACCOUNTS IN ARREARS:**

Family’s accounts that fall two weeks in the arrears will be withdrawn from the centre. Children CAN NOT re-enroll until the account is current and ONLY if space is available at the time of re-enrollment.

Family’s that re-enroll will be charged $225 Enrollment Fee.

**RETURNED CHECK POLICY:**

There will be a $25.00 charge for all returned checks.

**LATE PICK UP:**

Any child enrolled who have NOT been picked up by 6:30pm will be charged a LATE pickup fee. Fees will automatically be drafted from your account that day. The late pick up fees are:

1. $20.00 for 1-15 minutes, per child.
2. $1.00 per minute after the first 15 minutes, per child

NOTE: Tardy pickups exceeding 2 occurrences in a month – may result in termination of services.

**SUPPLY FEE’S:**

Supply fees are due quarterly. The amount is $130.00 per child enrolled. Supply fees are to replenish toys, supplies, educational curriculum, and classroom necessities. Your account will be automatically billed on the following months: March, June, September and December annually.

**TUITION: BAD WEATHER/VACATION DAYS/ABSENT/HOLIDAYS**

Tuition is the same whether you attend one or five days per week. All enrollments at First Step Learning Centre are FULL TIME care only.

**ABSENCES:**

If your child is going to be absent, please notify us via phone call, email or through the Brightwheel App.

**VACATION POLICY:**

We allow our families two weeks of vacation time per year at a fifty percent discount. Your child CAN NOT attend during that week in order to receive discount. We must have one week notification before we will discount these weeks. We follow the calendar year of January – December.

**BAD WEATHER DAYS:**

We will follow the Dallas ISD closure for bad weather. These dates will NOT be discounted. Tuition will be required as policy states.

**HOLIDAYS:**

We schedule our holiday schedule every December for the upcoming year and post the annual holiday schedule on the parent board for your review as well as in your enrollment packet.

If you have any questions or concerns about childcare closings, please address your concerns with Owner/Director, Wendy Mireault or Director, Chanler Melton.

**BIRTHDAY PARTIES:**

We welcome the celebration of your child’s birthday. We like to celebrate these special days during snack time. Just check with your child’s teacher in arranging this special event.

**HOLIDAY PARTIES:**

We love to celebrate and decorate for every holiday. If the season permits, we will have a celebration for any holiday that we can. Our normal include but are not limited to, Valentine’s Day, Halloween Parade, a huge Thanksgiving Luncheon, and a Christmas Party. Do not feel obligated to participate in all the events, but we do highly encourage as the kids love it!

**CLASSROOM STRUCTURE AND CURRICULUM:**

Each classroom follows the education Curriculum of Experience Early Learning. We use this teaching approach in all classrooms starting in our Toddler program through our Kindergarten readiness classes. We have found that Experience Early Learning masters the educational guidelines to meet all aspects of learning for a child. Experience Early Learning addresses aspects of Social and Emotional, Physical Health, Language, Literacy, Communication, Math, Creative Arts, Science, STEM, Technology and Social Studies. In addition to Experience Early Learning Curriculum, we also include in the child’s daily schedule:

Name and Letter practice

Computer Lab

Educational Media Time

Art Lessons

Center Time

Outdoor playtime

**INDOOR PLAYTIME:**

Although being outside is most children’s favorite activity, we do offer many stimulating curriculum and activities inside as well. We have established many stations in every classroom that exude our STEM programs. They are able to use their hands, play pretend and read aloud with their peers. We also have a building station with gizmos and gadgets that will allow your child to use their imagination and their creative side to create and build with plastic screws and bolts. We have a light up table that the children can play at with objects and translucent squares and tiles.

**SCREENTIME:**We do not allow screentime regarding iPads or Tablets at any time. The only screen time your child will get is if they are 2 and over and they will watch a G rated movie/TV show at 5/5:30 pm until close while waiting for their approved pick up.

**EXTRA CURRICULARS:**

We also provide extracurricular activities for your child to engage in during their day.

Dance, “Flippers” (Gymnastics) and Sports – this is available to families for an additional fee monthly. This is provided through MyGymStation who come to our location every week, focusing on the individual curricular. There is a $40 enrollment fee, $58 a month per activity, with a 10% discount if you choose to do multiple activities.

Dance has a recital after each season that your child will perform once their routine is learned.

**ACCOMODATIONS FOR FAMILIES:**

We pride ourselves on accommodating all families and children that have differing abilities and cultural backgrounds. Please notify the Owner and/or Director if you or your child require accommodations and we will ensure that we do our part in making sure your needs are met.

Some of the ways that our program will partner with our families:

1. If your child requires any type of behavioral, speech, or play therapy, we have a separate space that will be private enough for a efficient session.
2. We will participate in all comprehensive care meetings and evaluations.
3. We will provide opportunity for cultural inclusiveness by hosting cultural events throughout the year.

We are not licensed Physicians, but if we are notified or parents have suspicion of a learning disability or “challenging behavior” this is our procedure that we use for handling that:

1. A formal discussion will be carried out with the child’s parents to gain information regarding the child’s behavior and to discuss ways of dealing positively and consistently with the challenging behavior. We will highly enforce parents to implement similar strategies from the program at home to enhance positive behavior. Examples of these strategies are:
   1. Praising good behavior
   2. Getting on their “level” and listening to the child
   3. Setting limits by choosing a few simple rules, explaining and repeating them.
   4. Incorporating activities into the curriculum to reinforce good behavior for example role play, art and craft, reading favorite stories at story time, etc.

Again, we are not licensed Physicians and cannot diagnose any children but through our experience, we can maybe advise parents to refer their child to other professional services, for example, any type of therapy that we can house at our center for convenience for the parents and keeping the child comfortable.

1. The Director will see that every effort is made to ensure that each child’s individuals needs are met while the program is being implemented.
2. If all strategies have been tried by each supporting role and you feel like our center is not a good fit for your child, we will always access in ways that we can help in your next transition.

If we are experiencing any type of “challenging” behavior, we will keep a LOG for us as a center, you as a parent and for your child’s caregiver to acknowledge and be able to document any developments or set backs we notice your child is experiencing. This is so you feel understood, communicated and updated with your child’s progress.

*As required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, First Step Learning Centre does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission to its programs, services or activities in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operations. For additional information or referral to the appropriate system coordinator, contact the Director.*

**CAREGIVERS:**

Each Classroom Caregiver must maintain a current CPR/First Aid Certificate, SIDS and Shaken Baby certificate, TB test, state required background check, FBI fingerprint clearance, and annually maintain 30 hours in their classroom related training to enhance their teaching techniques and working with their classroom age group.

**CLOTHING:**

In the infant area, we highly recommend dressing your baby “warm” as we keep the classrooms pretty cool. This can fluctuate obviously with the weather, but keeping any type of extra clothes is apparent for your child’s comfort.

In our Toddler classrooms and older, because they go outside twice a day, we require them to wear shoes. We highly recommend closed toe shoes, but weather permitting, they can wear sandals. Anything that is most comfortable is obviously what makes the most sense.

**NAPTIME:**

After lunch, a naptime is mandatory for all children, Toddlers and up. Times: 12:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M., times vary depending on the classroom. Naptime duration is 2 hours in the classroom – check your child’s daily schedule. Even if your child does not sleep during nap, we encourage them to rest and reset.

Each child is required to bring a crib size sheet, blanket, and a standard pillowcase. The pillowcase will house his or her belongings after nap, daily.

All your child’s sleep necessities will be sent home on Friday for you to laundry and return on Monday.

**OUTDOOR PLAYTIME:**

Each classroom from Infants through Pre-K will receive outdoor playtime. Infants will be taken from their rooms daily, weather permitting, and play in our accessible courtyards. All other classrooms will be permitted to play on the playground 2 times daily, weather permitting at scheduled times.

We have 2 playgrounds and 3 courtyards equipped with turf, STEM activities and stimulating toys.

**WATER ACTIVITIES:**

During the Summer months, we may elect to have “SPLASH DAY.” In the event of this, we will notify parents by posting this information on the Parent Board or through Brightwheel.

**ANIMALS:**

First Step Learning Centre does NOT allow any type of animals as classroom pets as well as, they are not allowed in the center at anytime due to known or unknown allergies, and the safety of our staff and children.

**FIELD TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION:**

We do NOT offer Field Trips or Transportation at First Step Learning Centre.

**SCHOOL PICTURES:**

Lifetouch Studios does school photographs two times per year. As a parent you’re under NO obligation to purchase photos.

**NUTRITION:**

We serve breakfast, lunch and snack at no extra charge to you. Breakfast ends at 8:30 am and you may sit with your child during breakfast for an easy transition.

All meals meet and exceed the guidelines set forth by USDA. Any food restrictions must be presented to First Step Learning Centre upon enrollment with Physicians Note or letter from parent due to religious beliefs.

Menu will be posted in the cafeteria area and copies of weekly menu are available at the front desk.

In a 4 week period, we rotate a protein, starch, carb, fruit and veggie. These portions are listed from our USDA Texas Minimum Standard requirements. We do our best to balance healthy yet substantial meals.

We have a chef on site that prepares all your child’s meals throughout the day. Any liquid or solid foods that exceed a certain degree, are out of reach of any children. The plates are passed out by the caregivers or members of First Step Learning Centre staff. Each time a class finishes and leaves the cafeteria, it is disinfected and cleaned for the next class and then deep cleaned at the end of the serving period.

Allergies or food sensitivities are easily located and visible for every effected student in care. Any food we receive is commercially prepared.

You are able to bring your child’s lunch every day if you want. We have refrigerators in every Infant and Toddler classroom, and then our chef will take your lunchbox and prepare your child’s lunch.

We are a **NUT FREE** center.

**BREASTFEEDING ROOM:**

We are so excited that we have a private area for moms. This area is located in the hallway labeled “Nursing Room.” We provide a quiet area for moms to nurse their babies or just have some one on one time with them during the day. This is a great benefit to being right by mom while she’s working. We also have the availability to “pump” if needed. We welcome moms to visit anytime during the day!!

**ILLNESS AND MEDICATION:**

Your child’s health is of great importance to First Step Learning Centre. If your child has a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, vomiting and/or diarrhea 3 or more times, we ask they be picked up immediately and **they must be fever free for 24 hours before returning back to daycare without use of fever reducing medication.**

Although, First Step Learning Centre does not have a sickroom, we do have a Clinic Area to accommodate ill children until their parents arrive to pick them up from First Step. This is only a temporary accommodation so we can limit the spread of illness to other children enrolled in First Step Learning Centre.

**MEDICATIONS:**

All medication given to your child must be signed into the medicine log book in the CLINIC area, daily. NO phone authorization will be taken. All prescription medications must be in their original container, indicating the child’s name, type and date of prescribed medication, and the amount of dosage. All medications must go home daily, State and Centre policy. All over-the-counter medications will be given with complete directions and authorization of the parents. Staff member will sign and put the time the medications were given, daily. Medications will only be administered two times a day 11:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.

**INJURIES:**

In case of a serious injury, we will immediately call 911. We will then make every effort to contact you. If not successful in reaching you, we will go to the next person listed as your emergency contact on the enrollment form. Please make sure that all your information is correct.

We have incident reports that we will document any injury, small or large. This is our way to have documentation that the injury occurred in our care and proof you were notified.

If your child is the repeat injurer, we will also create an incident report for you to sign so you are knowledgeable of the acts.

**HEARING AND VISION:**

Children 4 years old or older must have documented hearing and vision testing as part of their enrollment into First Step Learning Centre.

**CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS:**

Please make sure your child has a change of clothing in their cubbies at all times. Children are extremely active at childcare and may require a change of clothing.

**PERSONAL BELONGINGS:**

We ask that you NOT allow your child to bring TOYS from home. We have plenty of educational toys and activities to keep your child busy throughout the day, please have them leave their belongings in the car or at home. We will NOT be responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken items.

**DISCIPLINE:**

Discipline consists of positive reinforcement only. The use of physical punishment is PROHIBITED. The Director will contact the parent in the event a child’s behavior becomes a threat to himself or other classmates. It’s our hope that a solution of satisfactory be reached between centre and parent.

**BITING POLICY:**

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. The safety of the children at the center is our primary concern. After all preventative steps have been tried by the staff and the child continues to bite routinely, the Director will call the parent to pick up the child for the remainder of the day. Chronic biting may require that a child be suspended for a period of time or terminated from enrollment. Each biting situation is carefully evaluated by the Director and a solution is formed on a child to child basis while considering all the relating factors.

**ABUSE and NEGLECT:**

First Step Learning Centre caregivers will never intentionally cause any type of Abuse or Neglect or cause emotional harm or physical injury to, or the death of, a child served by our facility at any time. We will provide a stable, loving, and educational environment during the time we care for your child.

If First Step Learning Centre ever suspects ABUSE or NEGLECT by a child’s parents, it’s our duty as a licensed childcare center to report all incidents to the proper authorities of the State of Texas.

**Court Appearances:**

First Step Learning Centre staff will not appear in court unless it’s mandated through the court directly or through the State of Texas. If we are subpoenaed for a circumstance that does not pertain to us directly then we will charge $200 per hour per staff member that attends court.

**In the event of an EMERGENCY EVACUATION:**

1. Each staff member in their related classroom is responsible for the relocation of the children to the designated area.
2. In each classroom, there is unique evacuation plan for each way that the staff and the children exit their classrooms in a safe and efficient way.
3. In the event of an emergency, we will notify parents by phone, or a mass alert through Brightwheel.

**FIRE AND SAFETY DRILLS:**

Fire drills are performed 1 time per month and severe weather drills are performed 4 times annually. This is to acquaint your child with First Step Learning Centre evacuation procedures.

To all parents: You must always UPDATE your enrollment paperwork with phone number changes. It is very important that we always have updated information.

**GANG FREE ZONE:**

New Requirements Regarding Gang-Free Zones for Child Care Centers

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81 Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This new statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed child care centers. The following is a tip sheet to assist in complying with the new law. This information may be posted at your child care operation or copies may be provided to parents.

Penalty under the state law.

*First Step Learning Centre is located in a GANG FREE ZONE. We have a secured environment for all children enrolled and are NOT located 1000 feet from any GANG activity.*

**State DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE:**

The school’s director or teacher must notify CPS of the local law enforcement officials by telephone when it appears that a child is being neglected or abused away from childcare.

**YEAR END STATEMENTS:**

According to the IRS, childcare expenses for working parents is tax deductible. A statement of your payments will be given to all parents on or by January 31 for the preceding year of service. If you are behind on tuition, your balance must be in the clear before we hand out your Tax Statement.

**MINIMUM STANDARDS:**

*A current copy of the State Minimum Standards is available for your review at the front desk of First Step Learning Centre.*

Please sign and date on this page to confirm you have read carefully through our Policies and Procedures.

Name of Parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Contact Information:**

**First Step Learning Centre**

**5641 Southwestern Medical Avenue**

**Dallas, TX 75235**

214-352-8608

[www.firststeplearningcentre.com](http://www.firststeplearningcentre.com)

FAX: 214-350-0285

**Childcare Licensing** 214-951-7902

**DFPS Website** dfps.state.tx.us

**Abuse Hotline** 1-800-252-5400