

# **Little Steps and Dreams**

## **CONTRACT & HANDBOOK**

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### **Welcome to Little Steps and Dreams Family Child Care!**

As a **military family-owned and operated** childcare, we understand the unique challenges and demands on your time. We are here to be your trusted partner, providing a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where your child can thrive as you serve or work. We are committed to caring for your child and working with you every step of the way on this important journey.

Our philosophy is built on creating a balanced, enriching experience. We introduce your child to the **Spanish language** through fun, daily activities, and foster creativity through **art and dance**. We prioritize development through lots of **outside time**. Our program is intentionally designed to guide your child in developing crucial **independence skills**, ensuring they are well-prepared and confident for their transition to formal schooling.

We offer flexible scheduling options to meet your family's needs, including **full-day care, part-day care, and hourly care**. Please refer to the following sections for details on our policies and the terms of your agreement.

# Application

To secure your child's placement and ensure a smooth start, please note the following essential requirements:

1. **Non-Refundable Registration Fee:** A **\$50.00** registration fee per child is required at the time of enrollment. This covers the administrative costs of processing your application.
2. **Required Paperwork and Payment:** All required enrollment forms, including emergency contact and medical records, **must be completed and submitted at least one week (7 days) before** your child's first day of attendance. Additionally, the **first week's tuition payment** is due at this time.

We look forward to reviewing your application and working with you on this important journey!

- 1) Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 1.1) Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Address: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Email: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) Child (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) Second Child (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Third child (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents are welcome to visit at any time during childcare hours. The purpose of this agreement is to define mutual terms for childcare arrangements. It is important to advise of any changes on address, telephone number or emergency contact numbers.

## Childs Preadmission records

Childs Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name child is known by \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Birthday \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

Father's/ Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Father's/Guardian Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Address \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's / Guardian Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Address \_\_\_\_\_

Employer Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

List person to be contact in an emergency if parent or guardian cannot be reached. ( At least 2)

Name	Relationship with child	Address	Telephone

### Child Doctors

Name of the Doctor \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Authorization

I give permission to Little Steps and Dreams childcare facility to obtain emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation, for my child if I cannot be reached immediately. I agree to be responsible for any emergency medical expenses incurred. (If the parent/guardian refuse to sing, instructions must be attached stating what procedure the facility is to follow in an Emergency)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any special needs or instruction related to your child below:

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List Person my child can be released to: ( this person needs to bring a photo ID to pick the child up at any circumstances)

\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ /  
Signature parent/guardian Date

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## OUR PURPOSE

to serve as a **trusted partner for military and working families**, offering a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where children can thrive. Your program features a **balanced, enriching experience** that includes Spanish language introduction, creativity through art and dance, and development fostered by lots of outside time. Ultimately, you are committed to preparing children for formal schooling by developing their **crucial independence skills** while providing **flexible scheduling options** to meet family needs.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Normal hours of operation are 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM from Monday through Friday.

Federal Holidays	The Daycare will be <b>closed on all Federal Holidays</b> . Full weekly tuition is still due for these weeks to secure your child's spot and cover our fixed operating costs.	
Annual Center Closures	<b>Daycare will be closed for two (2) weeks each year for staff vacation and maintenance: one week in the summer and one week during the Christmas/New Year period. Specific dates will be provided at the beginning of each calendar year.</b>	
Tuition During Closures	<b>During the two (2) weeks of annual center closure, the family's tuition fee will be reduced to 50%. Full tuition will resume immediately upon the center's reopening.</b>	

### Federal holidays and Observe closures

2025	2026
November 11-Veterans Day	January 1st - New Year
November 27-Thanksgiving	January19- Martin Luther king
November28-Thanksgiving Friday	February16-President Day
December 24- Christmas Eve	May 25-Memorial Day
December25- Christmas Day	June19- Juneteenth
December 31- New Year Eve	July 3 -Independence Day
	September7- Labor Day
	October12- Indigenous/Columbus Day
	November 11- Veterans Day
	November26- Thanksgiving
	November27-Thanksgiving Friday
	December24- Christmas Eve
	December25- Christmas Day
	December31-New Year Eve

### Center closure for training and maintenance

**2025 Winter December 29 to January 2nd**

**2026 Summer July 6 to July 10**

**Winter December 28 to January 1<sup>st</sup>**

1) Guardian signature

2) Guardian signature

# THE CURRICULUM

At Little Steps and Dreams, we believe every child is a unique explorer. Our curriculum is thoughtfully designed to honor individual developmental paces while fostering a strong sense of community and a love for learning. We seamlessly weave together structured learning with spontaneous discovery, ensuring a rich and responsive experience for every child.

## Our Curriculum Pillars:

### 1. Individualized Learning Paths:

- **Responsive Teaching:** Our educators continuously observe each child's interests, strengths, and emerging skills. This informs daily activity modifications and goal setting, ensuring that learning is always at the "just right" challenge level for everyone.
- **Personalized Goals:** While engaging in group activities, children often have individual learning objectives (e.g., one child focusing on letter recognition, another on sharing, another on fine motor skills). Activities are adapted to support these personal journeys.

### 2. Harmonious Group Interaction:

- **Community Building:** Daily circle times, collaborative art projects, and shared mealtimes foster a sense of belonging, turn-taking, and active listening.
- **Social-Emotional Foundations:** Through guided play and positive reinforcement, children learn empathy, problem-solving with peers, and expressing emotions constructively.

### 3. The Great Outdoors - Our Extended Classroom:

- **Daily Outside Adventures:** A significant portion of each day is dedicated to outdoor exploration, regardless of the weather (within safe limits).
- **Nature-Based Learning:** Our outdoor environment is utilized for gross motor development (running, climbing), sensory exploration (mud, leaves, sand), scientific inquiry (observing insects, plants), and imaginative play. This is where many of our science units truly come alive!

### 4. Rhythmic Discoveries - Music Time:

- **Joyful Engagement:** Dedicated music times incorporate singing, movement, playing simple instruments, and listening to diverse genres.
- **Multi-Faceted Development:** Music enhances language skills (rhythm, rhymes), cognitive abilities (memory, patterns), physical coordination, and emotional expression.

### 5. Hola Amigos! - Spanish Language Immersion:

- **Natural Integration:** Spanish is woven into our daily routine through songs, simple commands, greetings, story time, and labeling objects.

- **Cognitive Enrichment:** Early exposure to a second language supports cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and a broadened understanding of the world, fostering a valuable lifelong skill.

## Sample Weekly Thematic Overview (Inspired by the Kindergarten Map & Monthly Grids):

Instead of rigid weekly units, we propose a flexible, emergent approach where themes can extend based on child interest. Here's a blend:

Focus Area	Sample Thematic Exploration (Flexible & Child-Led)	Little Steps & Dreams Approach
Theme (e.g., 1-2 weeks)	<p><b>"All About Me &amp; My Family / ¡Mi Familia!"</b> (Early Fall)</p> <p><b>"Our Local Community Helpers / Ayudantes de la Comunidad"</b> (Late Fall)</p> <p><b>"Wonders of Nature / Maravillas de la Naturaleza"</b> (Ongoing, especially with outside time)</p>	<p><b>Individualized:</b> Children create "All About Me" books, drawing their families and favorite things. Teachers interview each child to understand their unique background and interests, informing future planning. <b>Group:</b> Circle time shares about families, what makes each unique. Role-play community helpers. Collaborative art project of a "community mural." <b>Outside Time:</b> Explore our outdoor space, identifying elements of nature. Nature scavenger hunts (e.g., find 3 different colored leaves). <b>Music Time:</b> Songs about family members ("Finger Family" in English &amp; Spanish). Songs about nature. <b>Spanish:</b> Learn "Hola," "Adiós," "Gracias," names of family members (mamá, papá, hermano, hermana), and basic greetings and feelings in Spanish.</p>
Language & Literacy	<p>Letter of the Week (emergent based on group interest or individual needs), Story Time</p>	<p><b>Individualized:</b> Books chosen based on child's interests. Tracing individual letters they are working on. Dictating stories about their drawings. <b>Group:</b> Daily story time (often bi-lingual). Group discussions about characters and plot. Rhyming games and songs during music time. <b>Spanish:</b> Read simple Spanish picture books. Introduce new vocabulary daily,</p>

Focus Area	Sample Thematic Exploration (Flexible & Child-Led)	Little Steps & Dreams Approach
		reinforced through repetition and action. Spanish word wall with pictures.
Science & Math	Counting, Sorting, Observing, Cause & Effect	<p><b>Individualized:</b> Providing specific manipulatives that align with a child's current math concept (e.g., blocks for one-to-one correspondence, beads for patterns). Science experiments adapted to individual participation levels.</p> <p><b>Group:</b> Counting during transitions. Sorting toys by color/size. Observing changes in weather. Simple cooking activities (measuring).</p> <p><b>Outside Time:</b> Collecting and sorting natural items (leaves, rocks). Observing insects and plants with magnifying glasses.</p> <p><b>Spanish:</b> Count to 10 or 20 in Spanish ("uno, dos, tres..."). Learn colors and shapes in Spanish.</p>
Creative Expression	Art, Dance, Dramatic Play	<p><b>Individualized:</b> Open-ended art materials available for free exploration. Encouraging children to express their unique ideas through art.</p> <p><b>Group:</b> Collaborative art projects. Group dance sessions with various music styles. Dramatic play area with props for imaginative role-playing (e.g., a "veterinarian office" or "restaurant").</p> <p><b>Music Time:</b> Incorporating movement and dance to various music types.</p> <p><b>Spanish:</b> Singing and dancing to traditional Spanish children's songs. Learning Spanish names for colors and shapes through art.</p>
Physical Development	Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Self-Help	<p><b>Individualized:</b> Activities designed to strengthen specific gross or fine motor skills based on assessment (e.g., puzzles with larger pieces for emerging fine motor, smaller for advanced).</p> <p><b>Group:</b> Structured and unstructured play in the outdoor area. Indoor obstacle courses. Dancing. Fine motor activities like drawing, cutting,</p>

Focus Area	Sample Thematic Exploration (Flexible & Child-Led)	Little Steps & Dreams Approach
		manipulating playdough. <b>Outside Time:</b> Running, jumping, climbing, balancing, throwing, catching. Sensory play with water, sand, mud. <b>Music Time:</b> Action songs that encourage large and small movements. <b>Spanish:</b> Incorporating Spanish words into action songs (e.g., "levanta la mano" - raise your hand).

### How We Adapt and Assess:

- **Daily Observations:** Educators at Little Steps and Dreams keep detailed observations of each child's engagement, interactions, and progress.
- **Flexible Planning:** Weekly plans serve as a guide but are fluid, adapting to children's emerging interests and the dynamic needs of the group.
- **Parent Partnerships:** Regular communication with families ensures alignment between home and daycare experiences, supporting a holistic approach to each child's development.

This framework allows Little Steps and Dreams to offer a truly enriching, responsive, and holistic early childhood experience that prepares children not just for school, but for a lifetime of confident learning and global awareness.

## SAFETY

The safety and well-being of every child enrolled at Little Steps and Dreams is our highest priority and is non-negotiable. This section outlines the mandatory policies, procedures, and responsibilities agreed upon by the Parent/Guardian and Little Steps and Dreams to maintain a secure, healthy, and compliant environment.

By initialing and signing this contract, the Parent/Guardian agrees to abide by all the following safety and health policies, including immediate response requirements for illness, emergency procedures, and authorized pickup protocols. Compliance with these terms is required for continued enrollment and is essential for the protection of all children in our care.

**Minor Injuries & First Aid**(Initial)  Minor bumps and scratches are an inevitable part of active learning, but we make every effort to keep children safe through vigilant **active supervision** and comprehensive childproofing throughout the property, including outdoor play areas. Minor injuries receive appropriate **first aid**, and an **Incident Report Form** detailing the incident and treatment will be completed and presented to you at pickup for your signature.

**Serious Injuries & 911**(Initial)  If a serious emergency injury or sudden illness occurs, you will be contacted immediately via all available contact methods (phone, text). If staff determines the situation requires immediate medical attention, **911 will be called first**. Your child will be transported to the nearest appropriate hospital by first responders, and a staff member will remain with the child until you arrive. **Parents are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation.**

**Exclusion Criteria**(Initial)  **No child will be accepted with any signs of contagious illness.** This includes, but is not limited to, a fever of 100.4°F or higher, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis ("pink eye" or runny/crusty eyes), or an undiagnosed, unexplained rash. The child must be **symptom-free for a full 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing or anti-diarrheal medication** before returning to the center.

**Managing Illness On-Site**(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ In cases the child become ill while at the center, the parent will be notified immediately. We will determine the best course of action, which typically requires the child being picked up within **one hour** of notification.

**Contagious Disease Protocol**(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ If a child is suspected or confirmed to have a contagious disease (e.g., Hand/ Foot/ and Mouth Disease, COVID-19, Flu, measles, chickenpox ), the parents will be notified and asked to pick him/her up promptly. The child will be **isolated** from the other children and given special attention and comfort until the parents arrive. The child will be accepted back only upon receiving a doctor's note or meeting the facility's and local health department's **exclusion period requirements**. All other parents will be notified of the possible exposure and symptoms to watch out for while maintaining the privacy and anonymity of the affected child.

**Prescription Medications**(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Prescription medications, ointments, and creams can be given only if they need to be administered during operating hours. Parents are required to fill out the proper **Medication Administration Forms** and to supply all medications in their **original containers**. These must be clearly labeled with the child's name, and staff must have the doctor's note or prescription label detailing the dosage and administration instructions. **Over-the-counter medications will only be administered with a specific doctor's written order.**

**Emergency Rescue Medications**(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Rescue medications (e.g., EpiPens, asthma inhalers) are stored securely but immediately accessible. For families, we require the parent to provide a signed **Emergency Care Plan** from the doctor *before* the child's enrollment. Staff will be specifically trained on the use of these rescue medications.

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## ADMISSION PROCEDURES

- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Admission is open to children aged 3 months to 5 years old. Admission is not subject to race, color, or religion. Children will be enrolled on a first come first serve basis.
- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ All children must submit Immunization Records (or immunization exception) and Birth Certificate along with the admission form that must be completed and returned a week before the child first day.

**The Director reserve the right to drop any child from enrolment if it is determined that the center cannot meet the needs of the child or the child's presence poses a threat to the welfare and safety of others.**

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## TUITION AND PAYMENTS

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Payment obligation is based on the time slot you agree for use of childcare either part-time or full-time, not actual hours of attendance. Fees are not refundable for days your child is absent while the FCC provider is open for care.

### Tuition Rates (Per Week) based on age group:

- *Under 1 year old:*

(Full-time) \$257.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

(Part-time) \$129.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

- *1 year old to 3 years old:*

(Full-time) \$237.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

(Part-time) \$119.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

- *3 years and older:*

(Full-time) \$206.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

(Part-time) \$103.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

- *Before/after school* \$103.00 per week \_\_\_\_\_

### **Payment Schedule and Late Fees:**

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition is due **in advance on a weekly basis**, no later than **Tuesday by 5:30 PM**. Payments are considered late if not received by this time.

( Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ No refund will be given for absences. Full tuition is due even when the child is absent.

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Holidays are included in weekly fees. Full fees will be due for the weeks during which holiday are observed by the center.

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ A late fee of **\$20.00** will be charged for each business day the payment is past the due date, beginning on Wednesday morning.

- *Emergency Late Payment Communication:* If you anticipate a late payment due to an emergency, **you must communicate with the center promptly**. A grace period of up to three days may be allowed. If payment is not made by the end of the third day, the late fee of \$20.00 per day will be charged **retroactively from the original due date**.

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Child Care fees will be paid by:

**Credit card** \_\_\_\_\_ **money orders** \_\_\_\_\_ **bank account** \_\_\_\_\_ **debit card** \_\_\_\_\_

***CASH OR CHECKS ARE NOT ACCEPTED PAYMENT METHOD***

### **Late Pick-Up Fees:**

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ A late fee will be charged as follows:

- **\$5.00 per minute** for the first 15 minutes after 5:30 PM.
- **\$10.00 per minute** after the first 15 minutes, up to one hour.
- **An Hour after closing time late with not communication the proper authorities will be called for the child safety and wellbeing**

## DISCOUNTS

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ **Discounts Available:**

- **Military Discount:** A **10% military discount** is offered on the weekly tuition rate for all active-duty military families.

	Active Duty	Spouse	Veteran	Reserve	National Guard
<b>ARMY</b>					
<b>AIRFORCE</b>					
<b>NAVY</b>					
<b>MARINES</b>					

- **Monthly Payment Discount:** An additional **10% discount** will be applied to your total tuition if you choose to pay in full for the entire month in advance.
- **If you have two children enrolled, you will have a 15 % discount on the second child**
- If you have a 3<sup>rd</sup> child enrolled, you will have a 10% discount additional to the 15% for the second child

**Vacation (Child):**

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Each child is eligible for a **50% discount** on their weekly tuition for up to **two weeks per calendar year** for family vacations. To receive this discount, you must notify the daycare in writing at least **two weeks in advance**. The child must be enrolled in the program for a minimum of **30 days** before taking your first week of vacation/leave. If the vacation are taken on the same weeks the center closures the extra 50% will not apply.

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## TERMINATION OF SERVICES

(Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ Two weeks in advance written notice is required for **parent-initiated withdrawal**. If this notice is not provided, you will be responsible for paying tuition for the two-week period.

- **Provider-Initiated Termination:** We reserve the right to terminate this agreement for reasons including, but not limited to:
  - a) persistent late payments or non-payment of tuition and fees ( 3 late fee or failure of payment the child will be terminated, and the parent will have to pay the remind balance the same day if not proper authorities will be involve)
  - b) failure to adhere to the policies outlined in this handbook
  - c) consistent late pick-ups
  - d) if your child's needs cannot be adequately met by our program.
- *Failure to follow the rules of this contract/agreement is cause for immediate termination with no notice.*
- The first 14 calendar days from the child's start date are a probatory period, and the agreement may be terminated at any time during this period.

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Parent/Guardian

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Date

# Arrival and Departure Policy

These guidelines are essential for maintaining a secure and emotionally supportive environment for all children. Your cooperation during drop-off and pickup times is required.

## 1. Drop-Off Protocol and Transition

- (Initial) **Mandatory Digital Check-In/Out:** For accurate attendance, billing, and safety records, **Parent/Guardian must digitally sign the child in and out** upon arrival and departure every day. This is accomplished by using the **Procare App** or by scanning the designated **QR Code** available at every facility entrance. This step is mandatory before the physical handoff and immediately after retrieving the child.
- (Initial) **Ready for the Day:** Children are expected to arrive clean, well-rested, and having eaten breakfast if arriving after **8:30 AM**. This ensures your child is ready to engage with the curriculum and group activities immediately.
- (Initial) **Brief Goodbyes are Best:** It is completely normal for children to be hesitant or cry during separation. To minimize stress for your child and the group, please make your drop-off interaction **very brief (5 minutes is sufficient)**. A smile, a cheerful good-bye kiss, and a reassuring word that you will be back soon is all that is needed. The longer you prolong the departure, the harder the transition becomes.
- (Initial) **Required Physical Handoff:** Following the digital sign-in, you **must physically hand off your child to a staff member** before leaving the premises. Your child is not considered officially under staff supervision until this physical handoff occurs.

## 2. Pickup Protocol and Authority

- (Initial) **Strict Authorized Pickup Rule:** The child will not be released to any person, including family members, who is not listed on the child's **Authorized Pickup or Emergency Contact form**. You must notify the Provider in advance of any alternate arrangements. **Any individual not recognized by the staff is required to present a valid photo ID before the child is released.** This is a strict security measure enforced for the safety of all children.
- (Initial) **Brief Pickup Times:** Please be brief during pick up times also. This transition time can often be a moment of testing for the children when both the parent and provider are present. It is important that you **maintain and reinforce the facility's behavioral rules** at this time. If your child displays inappropriate behavior, I will remind them of the rules, and I appreciate your support in the moment to quickly move to departure.
- (Initial) **Child Security and Supervision:** **You must take full control of your child immediately upon pickup.** Do not allow your child to run unattended in the facility, parking area, or backyard. The security rule is clear: **"No child is permitted outside the main structure without their authorized parent or guardian."** Failure to supervise your child during this transition is a significant safety risk.

### 3. Communication

- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ **Scheduled Communication:** Drop-off and pickup times are not the appropriate times to discuss complex problems, extended concerns, or administrative matters, as this detracts from supervising the children who are present. Parental communication is vital and is the key to a successful childcare arrangement.
- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ **Designated Contact:** If there are any problems, concerns, or major updates, please **call or text me outside of the transition period.** If I do not answer immediately (as I may be actively supervising the children), please leave a message or send a detailed text, and I will call you back as soon as I am able.

# Feeding and Nutrition Policy

The following policy outlines our commitment to providing healthy, safe, and positive mealtime experiences at Little Steps and Dreams.

## 1. Meal Service and Nutrition

- (Initial) **Provided Meals:** Little Steps and Dreams provides **breakfast, a nutritious lunch, and two daily snacks**. These meals comply with USDA nutritional guidelines and are designed to support the healthy growth and development of children in our care. Our menu focuses on whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins.
- (Initial) **Menu Availability:** The weekly menu is posted **on the Parent Board in the front entrance** every week. The menu is subject to change based on ingredient availability and seasonality. We encourage children to try new foods but will never force them to eat.
- (Initial) **Outside Food Policy:** To minimize allergy risks and adhere to regulatory standards, **outside food is generally not permitted** in the center, with the following exceptions: sealed breast milk/formula, commercially prepared baby food, and food required due to diagnosed allergies or specialized medical dietary needs documented by a physician.

## 2. Infant Feeding and Breast Milk/Formula

- (Initial) **Formula and Breast Milk:** Parents of infants are responsible for providing all necessary **formula or breast milk**, which must be pre-mixed and labeled with the child's full name and the date. All bottles will be refrigerated immediately upon arrival. Staff will follow the parent's written instructions regarding feeding schedules.
- (Initial) **Solid Food Transition:** The introduction of solid foods must be done at home first. Once solids are approved by the child's pediatrician, parents must provide written consent and instruction for staff to begin feeding the infant.

## 3. Allergy Management and Choking Prevention

- (Initial) **Strict Allergy Protocol:** Parents/Guardians must immediately notify Little Steps and Dreams in writing of any food allergies or sensitivities their child has. A **signed Emergency Care Plan** from the child's doctor, detailing symptoms and emergency response (e.g., EpiPen use), is mandatory. We maintain a **[Specify Policy, e.g., "Nut-Aware" or "No Peanut/Tree Nut"]** facility to protect children with severe allergies.
- (Initial) **Choking Prevention:** Staff are trained in basic choking relief procedures. During meal times, children are **never left unattended**, and food is served in small, developmentally appropriate sizes to minimize choking hazards. Children are required to sit down while eating or drinking.

#### 4. Mealtime as a Learning Experience

- (Initial)  **Positive Environment:** Meal and snack times are treated as social and learning opportunities. Staff sit with the children, modeling positive eating habits, encouraging conversation, and fostering independence (e.g., teaching toddlers to use utensils and pour drinks).
- (Initial)  **Developing Independence:** Children are encouraged to serve themselves small portions (where age-appropriate) and clean up their eating areas, supporting the development of the crucial **independence skills** that are a core part of our curriculum.

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# Clothing and Personal Belongings Policy

This policy ensures a safe, hygienic, and loss-free environment, supporting our "Little Steps and Dreams" curriculum which often involves messy, hands-on learning, and extensive outside time.

## 1. Daily Clothing Requirements

- (Initial) **Dress for Activity:** Children must be dressed in **comfortable, non-restrictive clothing and closed-toe shoes** that allow for safe and active participation in indoor and outdoor play, running, and climbing. Flip-flops, backless shoes, or shoes with slick soles are prohibited for safety reasons.
- (Initial) **Weather and Outside Play:** Given our priority on development through outside time, children will go outside daily unless the weather presents a safety hazard (severe cold, excessive heat, heavy rain). Parents are required to provide **weather-appropriate outer gear** (e.g., hats, mittens, boots, raincoats) seasonally.
- (Initial) **Spare Clothes Mandate:** Parent/Guardian must provide **at least two (2) complete, labeled changes of weather-appropriate clothing** (including socks and underwear/diapers) to be kept at the center at all times. If a child uses their spare clothing, the Parent/Guardian must replace it the following day.

## 2. Labeling and Responsibility

- (Initial) **Mandatory Labeling:** All items brought into the center must be **permanently labeled** with the child's full name. This includes clothing, outerwear, blankets, nap items, bottles, and food containers. Unlabeled items pose a sanitation risk and cannot be guaranteed to be returned.
- (Initial) **Facility Responsibility:** Little Steps and Dreams is not responsible for **lost, broken, or stained personal items or clothing**. Since our curriculum emphasizes messy play (art, water, mud), clothing may occasionally get soiled. While we take care, Parent/Guardian accepts this risk and should not send children in valuable or favorite clothing that cannot be replaced.

## 3. Personal Items and Toys

- (Initial) **No Toys from Home:** To maintain fairness, prevent loss or breakage, and reduce the risk of conflict, children are **not permitted to bring toys, electronics, or valuables from home**, unless specified otherwise (e.g., "Show and Tell" day or special security item for nap time).
- (Initial) **Nap Time Items:** Only **one soft, washable comfort item** (e.g., small blanket, stuffed animal) for nap time is permitted, provided it is fully labeled. All nap items must be taken home weekly for laundering.

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# Home-Center Cooperation and Parental Involvement

At Little Steps and Dreams, we view parents as our most vital partners. We are committed to fostering a strong, collaborative relationship to ensure a cohesive and supportive experience for every child.

## 1. Open-Door Policy and Class Visits

- (Initial) **Classroom Visits:** We welcome parents to visit their child's classroom at any time to observe their child engaging in activities or to see our curriculum in action. However, to ensure minimal disruption to our daily routine, classroom flow, and required security ratios, **all visits must be pre-arranged with the Center Director.** Please contact the Director to schedule a mutually agreed-upon time. Unscheduled visits may be politely curtailed by staff if they interfere with nap time, meal service, or a high-focus activity.
- (Initial) **Daily Communication:** We use the **Procare App** and daily communication logs to share information about your child's meals, sleep, activities, and daily milestones. We encourage parents to review and use this tool daily.

## 2. Parent Involvement Opportunities

- (Initial) **Parent Story Time:** We host **Parent Story Time** every **Wednesday afternoon** of each month. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to connect with their child's classroom community and share a personal experience. Parents interested in participating must **contact the Center Director in advance to schedule** their time slot. We welcome reading books in English or Spanish!
- (Initial) **Professional/Cultural Sharing:** Parents who wish to share an aspect of their military life, job, or cultural background with the class (e.g., through a brief presentation or activity) are encouraged to speak with their child's teacher or the Director to arrange this special opportunity.

## 3. Celebration Policies (Birthdays and Holidays)

- (Initial) **Birthday Celebrations:** Birthdays are always special milestones, and we make the best effort to celebrate each child's day! If the Parent/Guardian wishes to bring in treats or decorations, **all food items must be pre-packaged, store-bought, and explicitly peanut-free and tree-nut free** to protect children with severe allergies.
- (Initial) **Decoration Restrictions:** For safety and liability reasons, **latex balloons are strictly prohibited** in the facility due to the high risk of severe latex allergies and choking hazards. Any decorations or special arrangements must be discussed and **pre-arranged with the Center Director** at least one week in advance.

# Disciplinary Action and Behavior Guidance Policy

Little Steps and Dreams is committed to a **positive guidance philosophy** focused on teaching self-regulation and crucial social-emotional skills, not punishment. We aim to help children develop the independence and control necessary for successful group interaction and school readiness.

## 1. Philosophy and Guidance Methods

- (Initial) **Positive Reinforcement:** Our primary method of behavior guidance is **positive reinforcement**, focusing on acknowledging and praising appropriate behavior, clear communication of expectations, and building strong, trusting relationships with staff.
- (Initial) **Redirection and Modeling:** For minor inappropriate behaviors (e.g., misusing a toy, hitting), staff will first use **redirection** to a more constructive activity or interest. Staff will model appropriate language and behavior, guiding the child to use words to express feelings rather than actions.
- (Initial) **Natural and Logical Consequences:** When necessary, staff will implement **natural and logical consequences** (e.g., if a child purposefully spills juice, the consequence is helping to clean it up; if a child destroys a toy, they may lose access to that toy for a short period).
- (Initial) **Time for Reflection (Guidance, Not Punishment):** If a child is consistently unable to regain self-control, is acting aggressively, or is a danger to themselves or others, they may be gently moved to a designated "**Time for Reflection**" area for a brief, supervised period. This is a quiet, safe space used to help the child calm down, process their emotions, and talk with a teacher about an alternative way to handle the situation before rejoining the group.

## 2. Prohibited Disciplinary Practices

- (Initial) **Prohibition of Punishment:** Staff at Little Steps and Dreams are strictly **prohibited** from engaging in any form of corporal punishment, emotional abuse, verbal humiliation, or the withholding of necessary food, rest, or toilet use as a disciplinary measure. Any such incident will result in immediate staff termination and notification to licensing authorities.
- (Initial) **No Derogatory Language:** Staff are prohibited from using sarcastic, demanding, or derogatory language towards a child. All interactions are handled with respect and compassion, even during corrective moments.

## 3. Chronic and Extreme Behavior Protocol

- (Initial) **Tiered Intervention:** For children demonstrating consistent or chronic inappropriate behavior, the following tiered intervention will be implemented:

1. **Level 1 (Communication):** Daily communication with the Parent/Guardian about specific behavior incidents and staff interventions.
2. **Level 2 (Parent Meeting):** A mandatory meeting between the Parent/Guardian, the child's teacher, and the Center Director to develop a **Behavior Management Plan** with consistent strategies to be used at both home and the center.
3. **Level 3 (Specialist Referral):** If behavior persists and endangers the safety of the child or others, the Parent/Guardian may be required to seek professional evaluation or counseling for the child before continued enrollment is possible.

- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ **Grounds for Immediate Termination:** The Center Director reserves the right to immediately terminate the Child Care Contract if the child's behavior presents a **persistent, severe danger** to themselves, other children, or staff members, or if the Parent/Guardian fails to cooperate in implementing the Behavior Management Plan established in Level 2.

# Parent Feedback and Communication Policy

At Little Steps and Dreams, we believe that open, respectful communication between parents and the center is the cornerstone of a successful partnership. We value your input and are committed to resolving concerns efficiently and confidentially.

## 1. Suggestions and General Feedback

- (Initial) **Suggestions are Welcome:** We operate on a philosophy of continuous improvement, driven by our commitment to providing individualized care. We warmly **welcome and encourage Parent/Guardian feedback and suggestions** regarding our program, curriculum, staff, and facility operations.
- (Initial) **Submission Method:** Suggestions that are not urgent can be communicated directly to your child's teacher or submitted in writing to the Center Director via email or the communication box located [Specify location, e.g., near the front desk].

## 2. Formal Complaint and Concern Resolution

- (Initial) **Chain of Communication:** All formal concerns or complaints must follow a clear chain of communication to ensure proper investigation and resolution:
  1. **Teacher Level:** For minor concerns regarding daily classroom routine or your child's activities, please first speak privately with the child's primary teacher.
  2. **Director Level:** If the concern involves a staff member, a major policy, or the resolution provided by the teacher, the Parent/Guardian must **contact the Center Director immediately** to schedule a private meeting or submit a formal written statement.
- (Initial) **Professional Conduct Required:** We require that all complaints be handled with **professionalism and respect**. Parent/Guardian agrees **not to confront staff members** about sensitive issues during drop-off or pickup times, as this disrupts the classroom and impacts supervision.
- (Initial) **Resolution and Follow-Up:** The Center Director is responsible for initiating a fair investigation into the concern and will provide a **written or verbal response detailing the resolution within three (3) business days**. All complaints and resolutions are documented internally.
- (Initial) **Confidentiality:** All reports and subsequent investigations are treated with the utmost **confidentiality**, respecting the privacy of the child, the parent, and the staff involved.

## 3. External Licensing Authority

- (Initial) \_\_\_\_\_ **Licensing Contact:** If the Parent/Guardian is dissatisfied with the Center's internal resolution of a complaint, they have the right to contact the state/local child care licensing authority. The contact information for this agency is posted on the Parent Board in the main entrance.

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*All other terms and conditions from the original Little Steps and Dreams Family Child Care CONTRACT & HANDBOOK document remain in effect.*

I have read and fully understand this contract. By signing this agreement, I agree to comply with all terms and rules herein.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_