

Child Guidance Policy

Child safety is our number one priority. Here at Small Steps Center, we work hard to create a fun, safe, and secure environment for learning and care. Along with our efforts, there are certain center's basic guidelines and rules all children will be taught and expected to follow. Examples of rules are as follow: no running is permitted in the center, no hitting, biting, pushing, kicking, spitting, pinching, or any kinds of verbal abuse to other children. Respectful treatment of other children/people and all property, toys, and furniture is expected.

The following guidelines are more detailed program rules (that are in effect), and some additional rules may be made from time to time in conjunction for specific areas of the facility and grounds or specific activities and field trips. We ask that parents/guardians go over these rules with their children.

- Follow the directions and listen to the SSC staff team.
- Be respectful to others, yourself and the property.
- Respect the personal spaces of others; keep hands, feet, and other body parts to yourself.
- Respect the program spaces by cleaning up after yourself and putting things away after you are done.
- Be responsible for your own belongings and respect the property that belongs to others.
- Respect others feelings.
- Use appropriate language.
- Use inside feet while inside the building.
- Bullying and engaging in a fight are prohibited.
- No sharing of food due to food allergies.
- Use inside/talking voices inside the building and in transported vehicles.

One of our goals of child guidance here at Small Steps Center is to help children learn social skills that will enable them to get along with other people. We also aim to maintain our classrooms so that each child can feel secure and comfortable while in our care.

All staff members and educators at Small Steps Center must support children in the development of social competence by:

- Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults by talking to and with children frequently.
- Encouraging children to share experiences and ideas.
- Modeling cooperation, problem-solving strategies and responsible behavior for children.

- Assisting children in learning social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and working together.
- Encouraging children to listen, help, and support each other.
- Providing guidance to assist children in resolving conflicts, finding solutions to problems, and making decisions.
- Helping children to understand and respect people different from themselves.
- Helping children learn to respect each other's possessions and work.
- Helping children to learn effective ways to deal with bullying, teasing, or other forms of intolerance.

All educators at Small Steps Center must provide guidance to children in a positive and consistence way based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of children by:

- Encouraging each child to practice self-control and using positive child guidance techniques such as recognizing **and reinforcing children's appropriate behaviors**, having reasonable and positive expectations, setting clear and consistent limits, and redirecting of behaviors.
- Helping children learn social, communication, and emotional skills they can use in place of challenging behaviors.
- Using environmental variations, activity adaptations, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to encourage appropriate behavior and prevent challenging behaviors.
- Intervening quickly when children are physically aggressive with one another and helping them develop more positive strategies for solving conflict.
- Explaining rules and procedures and the reasons for them to children, and where and when appropriate and feasible, allowing children to participate in the establishment of program rules, policies and procedures.
- Discussing behavior management techniques among staff to promote consistency.

All educators at Small Steps Center must have a method of communicating effectively with each child by:

- Providing opportunities for children to experience the connection between the spoken word and the written word.
- Engaging in questions about past events and probe for details and provide new words to enhance description of experiences.
- Encouraging children to talk about their feelings, both positive and negative, and discuss the possible causes for the emotions.

- Engaging in storytelling and let the children write them down and retell the stories to the teacher or to each other.

Educators at Small Steps Center must direct child guidance to the goal of maximizing the growth and development of children, and protecting the group and individual within it by practicing consistent, positive guidance is one of the most important ways you can support your child's healthy development. The goal of is to guide children to behave in socially acceptable ways. Positive child guidance is crucial because it promotes a child's self-control, teaches children to take responsibility for their actions, and helps them make thoughtful choices about how they treat themselves and others. We will also:

- Be aware of each child's temperament and respect his or her uniqueness.
- Communicate with children by making points clear and simple.
- Listen to all the children; hear their point of view.
- Set limits to help children develop self-control.
- Be a good role model.

All staff members at SSC are trained in the management of children's behavior. We will consistently praise the children when their behavior has been positive and employ positive redirecting (reinforcement) strategic plans to help minimize potential behavior challenges.

When undesirable behavior occurs, the children will be reminded of the program rules and the following consequences are in effect:

- The child will be reminded of the behavior expected.
- Redirected to alternative activities.
- The child(ren) will be spoken to apart from others and will be documented (staff will confer with parents/guardians).
- Staff will write up and record a formal incident report concerning with behavioral difficulties.
- During transporting, the bus driver will stop the vehicle and the child be will spoken to (move seats if necessary). The administration will be notified of the incident.
- After three incident reports (write-ups), the child will be automatically suspended for one day.
- Write-ups for serious behavior issues may warrant immediately suspension and/or termination.
- After five one-day suspensions within one year, the child may face the possibility of termination from the program.

***Note:** SSC employs an alternative method *“go read alone quietly with a book”* similar to time-out. This involves removing a child from the group activity, while remaining in the classroom or an alternative safe space designated by program staff. The child will sit and read quietly for no longer than 5 minutes from the time he/she regains control and/or calms down.

The following practices are strictly prohibited at Small Steps Center:

- Spanking or other corporal punishments of children.
- Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment including any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body, shaking, threats, or derogatory remarks.
- Depriving children of outdoor time, meals or snacks; force feeding children or otherwise making them eat against their will, or in any way using food as consequences.
- Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.
- Excessive time-out. Time-out may not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age and must take place within an educator's view.

Plan for Restroom Supervision

In compliance with EEC licensing regulation 7.10(5)(b) and (j), SSC must plan for the proper supervision of children at all times to ensure safety for all children within our care. In accordance with this regulation, children age seven or older may, with written parental consent, go and use the restroom without constant visual supervision by the educator. For children who are under seven years old, and per parents/guardian request, a staff member will closely supervise the restroom usage and respond immediately to any emergency situation that could arise. **For restrooms that are general available for public use (during field trips and etc.), SSC will provide constant supervision (*applicable only for SSC After School Program*).**

Anti-Bullying

SSC has a strict policy regarding bullying and mistreating of others and will not tolerate such behavior. If a person is found alleged of abuse due to bullying, and there is clear evidence, a written notice or an immediate suspension will be put into action. SSC is committed to create a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for all children. SSC expects all members (children and staff) to treat each other with dignity and respect.

Suspension and Termination

Suspension and termination from SSC are last-resort actions but we reserve the right to terminate a child for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay for tuition/ routinely late for payment for tuition.
- Failure to complete the required forms.
- Routinely late picking up your child.
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property (applicable for both children and parents/guardians or representatives).
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations.
- Serious illness of child.
- Lack of parental cooperation.
- Unable to function in the group/disruptive behavior.
- Unruly or disruptive behavior of parents/guardians or representatives

Small Steps Center will assist your family in finding child care services if for any reasons your child has been terminated. Either by choice or termination, Small Steps Center will provide resources (Child Care Connection at www.cccfscm.org, Child Care Resources Center at www.cccinc.org, and Child Care Choices of Boston at www.childcarechoicesofboston.org), and refer your family to the best quality child care services in your community.

We hope that all children that come to SSC do well. If we are not able to meet the needs of your child or the behavioral issues are more complex than our staff can handle, we will meet with the family to discuss about alternative options. SSC will give the family two weeks' notice for termination of their child from the program.

We appreciate as much advance notice as possible if you decide to take your child out of the center, and we will give the same courtesy in return. Parents are required to give two weeks written notice when they decided to terminate Small Steps Center's services and care.

An outstanding balance will need to have the account settled within 30 days. All accounts not settled within 30 days will be turned over to a collection agency regardless of the amount owed.

To avoid the suspension and termination of a child from our program due to challenging behavior:

- We will provide opportunity to meet with parents to discuss options other than suspension or termination.
- We will offer referrals to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services.
- We will pursue options for supportive services to the program, including consultation and educator training.
- We will develop a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program.

Referral Services Policy and Procedures

Small Steps Center will have a written plan describing procedures for referring parents to appropriate social, mental health, educational and medical services, including but not limited to dental check-up, vision or hearing screening.

Small Steps Center's plan for referral services will include, but not be limited to the followings:

- Staff responsibilities for informing the director of their concerns.
- We will observe and record the child's behavior and review the child's record prior to making a referral.
- We will plan to meet with parents to notify them of the program's concerns. A written statement will be provided to the parents that includes reason for the referral, summary of observations and efforts made to accommodate child's needs. We will assist the parent in making a referral.
- A current list of referral resources in the community for children in need of social, mental health, educational or medical services will be provided. The list will include the contact person for St. 1972 c.766 and early Intervention Program referral.
- Written notice to the appropriate administrator of special education that serve a child with a disability, if the child is 2 years and 9 months old or older.
- Parental consent prior to the referral and maintaining written documentation pertaining to the referral including parent conferences and results in the child's file.

Abuse and Neglect

Small Steps Center is committed to providing the children in our care with the uttermost respect in a safe and healthy environment. We have zero tolerance policy for abuse of any kind against a child. All staff members at Small Steps Center must be familiar with the state Child Abuse and neglect Prevention and reporting Guidelines. All staff members are expected to use positive guidance techniques to refrain from any inappropriate measures while caring for children on behalf of Small Steps Center. There will be no use of any kind of corporal or physical punishment, no isolation or separation (time out) from the group, no punishments or consequences that withhold of food, naps, or bathroom time, and no threatening words or harsh tone of voice.

Procedures for Identifying and Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect to the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Early Education and Care:

All staff members are mandated reporters according to Massachusetts General Law C119, Section 51A. This means that if a staff member has a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child he/she must file a report with the Department of Social Services. See attached information for definitions, reporting procedures, etc.

The following procedures will be followed:

- A staff member who suspects abuse or neglect must document his/her observations including the child's name, date, time, child's injuries, child's behavior, and any other pertinent information. The staff member will discuss this information with the center Director.
- The center Director or the staff member with the assistance of the Director will make a verbal report to DSS, to be followed by a required written report 51A within 48 hours. **Department of Social Services Telephone # is 617-748-2000.**
- If a staff member feels that an incident should be reported to DSS, and the Director disagrees, the staff member may report to DSS directly.
- All concerns of suspected abuse and neglect that are reported to DSS will be communicated to the parents by the Director unless such a report is contra-indicated.

Procedures for Identifying and Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect While in the Care of the Center:

It is the Center's commitment to protect all children in care from abuse and neglect. The following are procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect while the child is in the Center's care.

Any report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child will be immediately reported to the Department of Social Services and the Department of Early Education and Care. A meeting will be held with the staff member in question to inform him/her of the file report. **Dept. of Social Services telephone # is 617-748-2000 and Department of Early Education and Care # is 617-472-2881**

The staff member in question will be immediately suspended from the program **without** pay pending the outcome of the DSS and EEC investigations.

If the report is screened out by DSS, the Director has the option of having the staff member remain on suspension pending the EEC investigation or allowing the staff member to return to the classroom. This decision will be made by the Director and will be based on the seriousness of the allegations and the facts available.

If the allegations of abuse and neglect are substantiated, it will be the decision of the Director whether or not the staff member will be reinstated.

The Director and staff will cooperate fully with all investigations.