



Learning Center of Littleton

We welcome your family to Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton (SSLC)! Our school is designed to meet the needs of childcare in your area and to provide a quality program for all children, regardless of race, nationality, or any other basis. We are committed and passionate about offering care and learning experiences that promote growth and development, and that is individualized for each child, and his or her needs. We recognize that so much growth and development occurs in these young ages, and it is exciting to be a part of this important time in each child's life. We are not simply here to provide care, we are enthusiastic participants in each learning experience, and in guiding children as they become more socially and emotionally competent, and learn new cognitive and physical skills every day! It is a very humbling and inspiring experience when we recognize that each child's experiences now will have a lifelong impact on their individual lives, and can also drastically change our community in the future. We believe in hugs, play time, creative learning experiences, and building positive relationships and family partnerships!

We invite you to stop by and see us at any time. As a partner in the care of your child, we are always interested in your comments and concerns. Most of the policies governing the school are included in this handbook. Please keep it for your reference through the years your child stays with us. We have designed programs that incorporate the ideals of learning through experience for children six weeks to 12 years of age.

The characteristics of our philosophy are as follows:

- Teachers are aware that each child has different needs and develops at an individual rate, and provide a variety of activities geared toward individual and group learning.
- The school provides each child with a loving, warm, safe and healthy environment.
- Teachers focus on the fact that children learn best by doing. With opportunities for problem solving, decision making, and exploration.
- Teachers and Staff are aware that social and developmental intervention may be needed for individual children at times. Staff will always communicate with families regarding children's individual growth, health, and development and are able to provide families with numerous and helpful resources.
- The school has developed a program that enhances self-esteem through positive learning experiences.
- Teachers guide children in developing self-control through positive disciplinary methods.
- Teachers provide children with a predictable yet flexible environment that allows for the freedom of self-expression.
- Teachers respect the trust given by parents and work to establish positive communications between school and home.

Hours of Operation

Stepping Stones Learning Center will be open from 6:45 am through 6:00 pm Monday through Friday.

The center operates on a year round basis and enrolls children throughout the calendar/school year. In general, we observe New Year's Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day (and Black Friday), and a winter break (typically the week between Christmas Day and New Year's Day). We also schedule two teacher in-service days per year, where no care is provided so the staff can participate in mandatory training and center projects. Additionally, we have early closures that are listed on the calendar, in advance, for professional development and center events. Parents will be reminded of these holidays prior to the date that they are observed. No tuition credit or make up days are available as the tuition structure takes these days into consideration. All tuition is based on an annual amount, and this amount is then divided into 52 equal installments, to be paid over the course of a year. The tuition rates are subject to change, typically 3% on an annual basis, at the start of each school year (August/September), and this is due to changes in cost of living, program changes, and market rates. The rate sheets will be posted in the lobby, and we will provide you with written notice at least 30 days before the new rates take effect. When a holiday falls in the middle of a week we reserve the right to close the school additional days. Two weeks' notice will be given for these closures. Each January we publish a school year calendar to inform families of additional closures which we minimize for your convenience.

Program Information

Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton provides nursery care for infants, aged six weeks through eighteen months, or earlier should the child be ready. We schedule classroom graduations based not only on a child's age, but also on each child's individual developmental abilities. Toddler care is available for children as young as 12 months old. Classrooms are separated by six month increments to allow children to progress at their own pace, reaching developmental milestones with same-aged children in the classroom, but children are permitted to move up sooner/later depending on individual needs. We offer potty training in all of our classrooms, but children must wear a diaper/training pants until they have gone at least 2 full weeks, accident-free. We

consider a child to be potty trained when there are no bathroom related accidents for a two week period, a child recognizes the need to use the bathroom on his/her own.

In addition to our infant and toddler program, we offer preschool and pre-k. All of our classrooms utilize the HighScope Curriculum, which is aligned with Colorado's Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines (ELDGS's). This curriculum focuses on allowing the child to be the active participant, and places a great deal of emphasis on individualized learning and family/educator partnerships. We also utilize two assessment systems, both of which align with Colorado's ELDG's: Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and CORAdvantage. These assessments are ongoing, and we schedule at least 2 parent teacher conferences to share assessment findings, and to gather input from families/guardians.

Starting the 2023/2024 school year, SSLC is proud to announce that we participate in Colorado's Universal Preschool (UPK). See the rate sheet for more information.

Community Resources

We offer a list of community resources at our initial entrance interview, and parents and families may request this list at any time if they need information regarding Medicaid, low-income dental services, housing, and more! You can also find resource lists and materials on our parent resource table, in the lobby, or on our website, www.SSLSoFLittleton.com

General Policies

Absences

A tuition week is defined as Monday through Friday. Families must pay tuition based on their child's expected enrollment, not on actual hours of attendance. If your child is absent due to illness or vacation, tuition is still due at the full amount, and on the scheduled due date.

Admission Procedures

For your child's safety and to comply with state regulation all enrollment papers must be completed and on file in the school no later than the day your child begins attending SSLC. Within 30 days of starting a child must have his/her medical and immunization form completed and signed by your physician. Non immunized children may be considered depending on age and circumstances, but in general children are expected to be up to date on immunizations. To reserve your enrollment space we require you to place a deposit to include your Enrollment Fee, the Enrichment Fee (the amount of which is located on our rate sheet and will be charged annually, every fall) and 1 week of tuition. The week's tuition will be used as a first week's deposit for your attendance at Stepping Stones Learning Center. If Stepping Stones does not have immediate availability, or you are requesting a start date that extends more than 30 days, your child will be placed on our waitlist. Please see the rate sheet for waitlist details.

Attendance

Each day, you are responsible for checking your child in and out of our care using the app Brightwheel. State regulations mandate that you sign your child in and out of our care on a daily basis. If you need to use the pen and paper sign in on the front desk, you must ask the classroom staff to please check your child in on the app. If your child will be absent for the day, please call or message us, and let us know as early as possible, so we can plan staffing and activities accordingly. If they will be absent due to illness, please be sure to let us know any details involved (symptoms, treatments, etc). All children must arrive by 9:30 am, or they are marked absent for the day. Please avoid picking up children during the center's quiet time, which is 12:00 pm – 2:30 pm. No child may be dropped off during quiet hours, and we ask that parents (aside from nursing mothers) refrain from visiting during these hours as well.

Damage to Property

Normal wear and tear is expected at any childcare. However, if a child is intentionally causing damage to property through destructive behavior, the parent will be held liable for any reimbursements required, which will be due with tuition the following Monday due date. In regards to personal property, SSLC is not responsible for any personal items that are lost or damaged. Please leave toys and other personal belongings (aside from the requested supplies needed) at home.

Recalled Toys and Equipment:

We are regularly notified of recalled toys and equipment through the different child care associations we belong to. When we become aware of a recalled item that is in our center, Stepping Stones Learning Center will take the necessary steps to remove the item and/or replace the item according to the manufactures instructions. In most cases, we will print out the list of recalled items, and post them next to the sign in station so you can see if you have any of the recalled items in your home as well.

Smoking:

There is to be no smoking, or any other use of drugs or alcohol (including vaping) on the premises at any time, indoor or outdoor (this includes the parking lot).

Child Pick-up

Only the guardian(s) on record will be allowed to pick up a child. Prior arrangements with the center must be made if a child is to be picked up by someone not authorized in your child's permanent file and in Brightwheel. In an emergency situation a child may be picked up by someone else if you notify us in advance, with an email or Brightwheel message.

This person must identify themselves with photo identification. Each child must be signed in or out by the adult who is dropping off or picking up to/from Stepping Stones Learning Center. Should you feel that a panic code is warranted for you/ your child's safety, we will discuss our possible interventions and actions, assigning a code to your family. Pick-up past 6:00pm (or in the event of an early closure, as communicated by management via Brightwheel, either scheduled or emergent) will result in a late charge of \$20.00 per quarter hour (not to be prorated) per child. This policy is effective in the event of weather or traffic delays which may not be within your control, but need to be accounted for. Jefferson County Child Services and Jefferson County Police will be called for any child not picked up by 30 minutes past the close of business. During this time, children will be provided a small snack and supervision. Should you discover that you will not be able to reach Stepping Stones Learning Center by 6:00, advance notification by means of telephone is appreciated. If your delay will be greater than five minutes we suggest that you contact family or friends to arrange an alternative authorized adult pick up, as our staff has personal evening events and obligations to attend.

Communicable Diseases

Any communicable disease will be reported to the county health department in accordance with rules and regulations. If your child has been exposed a notice will be posted on the classroom door and will be communicated via Brightwheel/Email.

Special Needs Among Children

Each child and their needs will be evaluated on an individual basis. Stepping Stones Learning Center will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). We will also comply with all state, county, or local jurisdictions. Prior to enrollment, a meeting with the child, child's parents/guardians, and the Director will be held at Stepping Stones Learning Center. The Director will interview both the child and the guardians to determine the needs of the child. Prior childcare history as well as all information regarding the child's social, emotional, and physical abilities must be disclosed at that time. There will be a ten day consultation period during which the Director, management, and consultants of the facility will meet to determine the needs of the child and the center's ability to meet those needs. At that time, a determination of enrollment will be made. Any information that is withheld that is determined to be vital with regard to this evaluation will result in immediate disenrollment if that determination is made. If the child is enrolled, there will be a meeting in the Director's office not less than once per week for the first five weeks. During that time, we will evaluate:

- If Stepping Stones Learning Center can make reasonable modifications to policies and practices to integrate the child
- If auxiliary staff/aids and services can be employed without undue burden
- If the child poses a direct threat to staff or other children

If it is determined that Stepping Stones Learning Center cannot meet the physical, medical, supervisory, or emotional needs of the child, or by virtue of enrollment we cannot address the needs of the other children in that child's group, we reserve the right to give notice of disenrollment. That disenrollment shall take place within 5 operating days.

Inclusion

Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton adheres to practices that support the right of every child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion are access, participation, and supports.

Access: Providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments is a defining feature of quality early childhood inclusion. In many cases, simple modifications can facilitate access for individual children. If a child or family member needs altered access, we will have a meeting with relevant staff and family members to assess what is needed, and we will make every attempt to provide accommodations, within reason and to the best of our ability.

Participation: Even if environments and programs are designed to facilitate access, some children will need additional individualized accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning activities with peers and adults. Adults promote belonging, participation, and engagement of children with and without disabilities in inclusive settings in a variety of intentional ways. Depending on the individual needs and priorities of young children and families, implementing inclusion involves a range of approaches—from embedded routines based teaching to more explicit interventions—to scaffold learning and participation for all children. Social-emotional development and behaviors that facilitate participation are critical goals of high quality early childhood inclusion, along with learning and development in all other domains. We will utilize observation and assessment with every child, and this will enable us to individualize participation, and aide in further decision-making, as well as identifying challenges and goals to support each child. We use authentic observation, and record progress in relation to Colorado’s Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines, as well as utilizing the ASQR-3 assessment, which is detailed more in our curriculum and family engagement policies.

Supports: Family members, teachers, and administrators should have access to ongoing professional development and support to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to implement effective inclusive practices. Because collaboration among key stakeholders (e.g., families, practitioners, specialists, and administrators) is a cornerstone for implementing high quality early childhood inclusion, resources are needed to promote multiple opportunities for

communication and collaboration among these groups. Specialized services and therapies must be implemented in a coordinated fashion and integrated with general early care and education services. We will keep resource lists available, along with materials, that aide in locating supports for each child, family member, teachers, etc. We will also set up regular conferences with all families, so we may collaborate, review assessments, and perhaps identify other areas where support is need. Furthermore, we agree to help families locate assistance, and work with assistance programs on site, such as therapists, assessors, etc. If a child has an IEP or individualized care plan, we will go over this plan with all stakeholders, and will regularly communicate on the child's health, well-being, and progress. Every child has the right to be in a safe, welcoming environment, where the staff has high expectations for each child, regardless of ability, to reach his or her full potential. We are committed to this philosophy, and our role in promoting inclusion.

Referrals

Should SSLC staff determine that it may be in the best interest for a child's family to be referred to a local service, such as those provided by Jefferson Center for Mental Health or ChildFind/Developmental Disabilities Resource Center, we will first conduct a meeting with the child's guardian to share concerns, gather input, as well as share our intention to refer a family to such services. Once the referral has been made, we will notify the family when it was done, and what to expect next. We will continue to remain in communication with the family, and work with service providers, to meet each child's needs.

Emergency & Evacuation Procedures

Evacuation routes as well as Emergency Procedures are reviewed and practiced regularly. Each classroom has an information sheet posted near each exit to guide actions and behavior during drills and in the event of the unthinkable. During an emergency situation every child will be kept at the center until picked up by the parent or an authorized adult. The center will keep apprised of the situation by radio, television, Internet, or other means from within the center. We will use discretion in determining the need to contact families to relay information/direction via the numbers provided on your child's profile. It is required that two emergency contacts are named, including their phone numbers and addresses, in your enrollment paperwork and on Brightwheel. All contact information for guardian's and emergency contacts must be updated regularly, by the child's guardians. In the event that there is an emergency that will affect our school, Stepping Stones Learning Center will post a notice on social media, and we will also notify families via phone, Brightwheel, and email. Should the need to contact parents in the event of an emergency arise, your quick action and cooperation is greatly appreciated. Should we need to leave the site, our off-site designated location is the Jefferson County South Service Center, 11139 Bradford Road Littleton, 80127. Should we need to go to a site outside of our neighborhood, we will typically go to Shaffer Elementary, located across Chatfield Ave, and will communicate this via phone, sign on the center door, social media, or Brightwheel.

Food & Meals

Breakfast

If your child arrives before 7:30am, they may bring a small breakfast from home so that they may have time to eat and get a great start to their day. However, all breakfast items need to be fully prepared, such as fruit being peeled or cut, and no items that will require being heated or cooked will be allowed. Additionally, your child must be able to self-feed all items that he or she brings for their breakfast, and breakfast foods may not contain any nuts or seeds, or any of the items listed below that need to be avoided. Please do not send items requiring syrup or juice to drink. Milk or water are acceptable, as well as yogurt drinks that are in a spill proof cup. Absolutely no peanut butter or nuts please! Don't forget to label any containers, cups, or utensils and send all items in a lunchbox that is also labeled

with your child's name. Additionally, if there are known food allergies in your child's age group, we may notify you of additional foods that must be avoided. If you have a question, or need safe food ideas, please check with your child's teacher.

Morning Snack and Lunch

We will provide a small morning snack for each child, which is typically served at 8:30am, which is a 2 component meal and usually resembles breakfast. Lunch will be provided by Stepping Stones Learning Center, and it will be healthy, and well balanced. Meals are comprised of fruits and or vegetables, whole grains, protein, and dairy. If your child has dietary restrictions, and will require items that we are not providing, you will be responsible for providing alternate foods. If space in our kitchen allows, we are more than happy to keep a week's supply on site for your child.

Afternoon Snack

For the afternoon snack, we ask parents to participate in the community snack, and send two bulk items, which are sealed and commercially package, or are fruits that we can wash and serve. Items must be shelf stable. Parents also have the option to opt out of the community snacks, and simply send an individual snack for their child in the afternoon. We will keep some extra snacks on hand in case a child forgets his or her afternoon snack. Absolutely no peanut butter or nuts please! Don't forget to label any containers, cups, or utensils and send all items in a lunchbox that is also labeled with your child's name. Additionally, if there are known food allergies in your child's age group, we may notify you of additional foods that must be avoided. If you have a question, or need safe food ideas, please check with your child's teacher.

For the community snacks, we have a few guidelines that must be followed:

1. When parents or guardians furnish snacks for children other than their own child, the snack shall consist only of foods that are prepackaged and prepared from commercial sources. Such foods shall be non-potentially hazardous or shelf stable and received sealed.
2. Uncut produce may be provided if the facility has the capacity to wash and prepare it.

Footwear

Children must wear closed-toe shoes to prevent injury to their feet. Please take care in choosing your child's footwear to ensure that shoes are comfortable for the various activities Stepping Stones Learning Center students will engage in on a daily basis.

Illness & Medication

If your child exhibits any of the symptoms listed below, a parent/guardian will be called to investigate concerns further. It is likely that we will ask the parent/guardian to pick up the ill child, which must be done within 60 minutes of being contacted. If a child is sent home, he/she is not allowed to return to school the next day in order to implement an appropriate get well/stay-home period due to strong recommendations to mitigate the contagiousness of any illness. The child may return only when symptom free for 24 hours without the use of any fever reducer. Additionally, please do not medicate your child prior to drop off in the morning unless the medication is related to specifically relieving teething discomfort or prescribed by a physician. We reserve the right to request a physician's note indicating an all-clear for a child to return to school. This will specifically be requested if a child has a fever in addition to another symptom of illness, as well as any unusual rash (excluding a diaper rash or known eczema). We use the following guidelines when sending a sick child home:

- Atypical behavior (this is typically our first indication of an illness)
- Breathing concerns
- Diarrhea – more than 3 incidents causes us to become concerned about hydration
- Extreme cough
- Fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Suspicion of conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Symptoms of a communicable disease
- Unusual rash
- Vomiting

Keeping Your Child at Home

In order to maintain the health of all children at Stepping Stones Learning Center as well as our staff, consideration for removal from the school environment should be seriously considered if the following conditions are manifested:

- A constant, deep, and disruptive cough
- Behavioral concerns that may indicate the onset of illness
- Diarrhea
- Fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit
- Suspected sinus infection related nose discharge
- Suspicion of conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Symptoms of a communicable disease
- Unusual and/or undiagnosed rash
- Vomiting

Please understand that if we see your child manifest these conditions during his/her day at Stepping Stones Learning Center, we will call you to pick up your child, which must be done in a 60 minute time frame.

Notes from a Doctor

Please understand that, at times a doctor's recommendation may not match our sick policy, and may not be made with the wellness of the entire group of children in care in mind. Since there are infants, or children with autoimmune or respiratory disorders in our care, it is at our staff's discretion when to allow a child to return to care or not.

A child may need to be excluded from care if he or she needs more care/attention than SSLC staff can offer in a group setting, or if a sanitary issue arises.

For example, if your child has diarrhea and it is posing a sanitary issue (such as leaking out of pants or diapers), or creating care needs that prevents staff from being able to care for the rest of the children in the group, the doctor may determine that the child should be able to return to care but since this a group setting and the sanitary concerns and unique factors are present, the child will need to follow the illness policy, along with Stepping Stones Learning Center's determination, and remain at home until symptoms have cleared.

If your child is determined to have a contagious illness, such as pink-eye or croup, they will not be allowed back without a doctor's note. If they are vomiting or have diarrhea, they will not be allowed back for 24 hours past their last bout of vomiting or diarrhea whether at home or in our care. If a child is sent home while in care, he or she must not attend the following day and must remain at home for 24 hours past the last occurrence of symptoms. The exception to this is in cases such as pink eye, or similar illnesses, where a child can comfortably attend and is not contagious once he or she is on antibiotics for a specified amount of time, which must be stated on a signed physician's note. Also, we do not expect parents to keep children home for minor colds. This typically means clear nasal discharge and a minor wet or dry cough. However if the discharge is thick, green or yellow or if the cough is persistent, severe, or has any bark to it, in order to prevent the spread of RSV, respiratory infections, or croup to small children, your child must not attend.

In addition to the above policies, influenza presents a unique set of factors to consider and will fall under additional sick policy terms. Please note that the stomach flu is not influenza and does not fall under this category. If anyone in a child's household is diagnosed with influenza, since this is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening illness, Stepping Stones Learning Center requests that you avoid sending your child to school if they have been exposed to the illness. This is especially true in the case of siblings, as children often do not understand how to prevent illness as well as adults do. Even as adults we may not realize the need to be extra cautious because influenza is highly contagious one day before symptoms begin. If a child does have influenza, he or she will need to be excluded from care for a minimum of five days, as the flu is contagious typically for 5-7 days (even after symptoms have begun to go away), and sometimes even longer. To read more on influenza, specifically on the matter of being contagious, feel free to visit this article by the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/spread.htm>

Medication Administration

We are able to administer medicine at Stepping Stones Learning Center. To be able to give a child prescribed medicine at school we need to have a physician's note on hand specifying the medicine's name, the start and end dates, as well as specific times to administer the medicine. We must have the medication in its original packaging so that we are able to compare the label with the physician's instructions, cross-referencing for your child's safety. For children with specific health plans (chronic concerns) we do need to have a health treatment plan filled out by the physician with specific instructions. This health plan is typically updated on a yearly basis and our visiting nurse will check these plans for compliance. We do reserve the right to refuse medication administration to any child if medical forms are not in our possession or incomplete: we do not want to take any risks/chances with your child's health and well-being. Teething infants and toddlers may receive Tylenol/Motrin to ease the associated pain, but please make sure you have a physician's signature on our OTC Medication form. We will call each time we feel a child may benefit from OTC teething-related medicine to obtain your approval. Lastly, should your child receive prescribed medication or OTC medication, we will place a record of the administration in your child's daily folder to ensure that you are aware of dates, times, and amounts. All medication will be stored in a locked location, that is inaccessible to children.

Injury/Emergency Situations

Our staff makes every effort to ensure the safety of your child. Unfortunately, minor accidents may occur. Your child will be comforted and given minor medical care by Stepping Stones Learning Center staff (ice, bandaid, etc...). You will also receive a carbon copy report of the accident/injury which we require you to sign, leaving a copy with your child's teacher, and taking a copy home for your records. Occasionally, we may reach out with a phone call to inform you of a minor injury that occurred during your child's school day. If an accidental injury requires immediate medical attention we will make every effort to contact you, as parents and/or guardian, for instructions. If we cannot reach you, we will call the authorized persons you have indicated as an emergency contact, who have the ability to make medical decisions for your child. A staff member will always stay with your injured child while they are on school premises. A medical injury that is life or limb threatening will result

in an immediate call to 911. You, as parent/guardian will be contacted as well, and in the event of ambulance transportation, a staff member will accompany your child to the hospital deemed most suitable to handle your child's emergency needs and the guardian of the family is responsible for all medical/transportation fees incurred.

Notice of Withdrawal/Disenrollment

You must give written notice of your intent to withdraw your child(ren) from Stepping Stones Learning Center. Four full weeks' written notice is required throughout the building. If you withdraw you may not re-enroll until six calendar weeks have passed. Re-enrolled children will be subject to registration fees. A schedule reduction cannot be used to accommodate a withdrawal. Whether your child attends Stepping Stones Learning Center during that period or not you will be liable for the tuition due. At the time of notice given, the full 4 week's worth of tuition is due immediately. We reserve the right to terminate care prior to the end of the notice period, and the full 4 weeks' tuition amount still applies. Notice periods begin on Mondays, so if you provide notice on any other day of the week, it will begin on the following Monday.

Center-Mandated Disenrollment

We reserve the right to disenroll any child or family for any reason. A child will be disenrolled without notice for expressing violence towards a teacher, administrator, or another child. A family will be disenrolled without notice for staff raiding (as well as attempts), chronic late child pick-up (more than three times in a six month period), or any other breach of company policy or lack of parental cooperation. In the event that SSLC chooses to disenroll your child, you are still responsible for paying 4 weeks' worth of tuition, regardless of attendance.

Raiding Policy/ Outside Communication with Staff

If we are informed by our staff or another family that you are attempting to hire a staff member from our facility we will disenroll your child at once, and staff members have agreed not to leave our center in order to set up private nanny/care services for current or past families. Raiding of the staff impacts all families. You are permitted to arrange babysitting services with SSLC

staff, of which SSLC takes no responsibility for, and will not be held liable for anything that occurs during a babysitting event. Raiding of the staff impacts all families. Furthermore, SSLC staff are not permitted to babysit for families during regular business hours (unless they have prior permission from management) or communicate with families regarding child care business, events, etc via personal conversations. SSLC Staff are not permitted to transport children, for babysitting purposes, from SSLC. Please do not reach out to staff on their personal phones to discuss your child's care, all concerns, comments, and questions are to be directed to the business.

School Closures

Should Stepping Stones Learning Center close for any reason, (weather, building concern, etc ...) please check our Facebook page, Brightwheel, and 9news.

Brightwheel will always be the first method to communicate all closures.

We do not take closing the building lightly, but must assess whether the given situation allows staff to transport themselves with reasonable accommodation to and from the center, as well as allow us to provide quality care for your child(ren) ensuring we are following state rules and regulations. In the event of an impending storm warning, we may choose to close the school early. The early closure will be determined by the extent of the storm warning. In most cases, the closure will occur at 3:00 pm. You, as parent and/or guardian, will be notified by telephone per the contact numbers listed on your child's Emergency Card. In the event of a delayed opening, Stepping Stones Learning Center will open at 9:00 am. In general, if Jefferson County Schools are closed due to weather conditions, we will close as well.

However, we reserve the right to make this decision for our school, and we may choose not to follow Jefferson County Schools if we believe a differing decision must be made. As tuition is based on paying for the spot and not hours of attendance, and is an annual, equally divisible expense, there will be no reimbursement or credit for closures.*

Tuition Payment

We require that all families sign up for automatic payments via Brightwheel. If you sign up for direct withdrawal from your bank account, there are no additional fees. However, credit/debit card payments are subject to processing fees, as determined by Brightwheel (Brightwheel will notify you of this fee at the time of setting up your payments, it is typically around 2.9%)

- Tuition payment is to be made prior to the start of care provided by Stepping Stones Learning Center and is therefore due on Monday of each week.
- Tuition is considered late if paid after the close of business on Monday, unless otherwise agreed upon. This applies to each week, regardless of whether or not the building is closed (holiday, in-service, snow day, etc...).
- Any financial communication will be left with your child's teacher, and we will make every effort to also communicate in person and via Brightwheel.
- Late fees are \$35.00 per week, starting with the close of Monday's business hours.
- Brightwheel is the only means for accepting payment, unless otherwise approved by management
- If a family falls one week behind on payments to Stepping Stones Learning Center, we will not allow the child(ren) to attend until payment is brought current. Additionally, even if we restrict your child's attendance, families are still liable for all tuition and late fees due. Should a family fall behind, more than 2 weeks, we will first seek payment via collections, and then in small claims court. Families are responsible for any legal, collection, or fees incurred due to lack of, or untimely, payment.
- Non-sufficient checks will be run through our bank only one time. If a check/payment is returned as NSF, the family will be charged a \$25.00 NSF fee as well as a \$30.00 late fee if sufficient funds are not presented for payment by the close of business Tuesday for the week care is needed. Additionally, two NSF checks will result in our inability to accept checks from a family and require cash payment for tuition for the duration of the child's tenure at Stepping Stones Learning Center.
- Brightwheel is able to issue receipts or statements with each payment, monthly,

quarterly, or yearly. We can and will sign any flex-spending paperwork you might need for benefit reimbursement (although we cannot take payment with a flex-spending debit card).

- Year end tax statements are available in your Brightwheel account, by January 31st winter break.

Weather

Children will not be permitted to play outdoors in inclement or severely hot weather. An interior multi-purpose room has been provided to accommodate your child's gross motor needs during these times. However, we do attempt to go outside at least twice a day, for 30 minute periods, year round. You are required to send appropriate weather clothing, including boots, gloves, mittens, coats, hats, and clothing that will not cause a child to overheat on warm days. Please expect that children may get messy or wet during play!

Birthdays and Family Interactions

Arrangements may be made with your child's teacher to bring in a special treat for a birthday celebration. We celebrate birthdays during afternoon snack time at 2:30 pm and typically sing the Birthday Song to the birthday child. Invitations to outside birthday celebrations may be brought to Stepping Stones Learning Center, but we require that these invitations include the entire class. Otherwise, you may utilize the SSLC Family Directory to contact other families regarding plans.

Our SSLC Family directory will be kept on our website, in our private, password protected page. Participation and information sharing is optional, and the directory is not to be shared with anyone outside of SSLC. Families can also join private Facebook groups, which are class specific. We welcome ideas for family interaction, and encourage you to reach out to other families.

Clothing/Supplies

Please do not send children in clothing that will hinder toileting/diapering. Additionally, SSLC is not able to support potty training methods that allow children to go without training pants or underwear. All children must wear undergarments, such as diapers, pullups with velcro on the side, or underwear. Each child that attends Stepping Stones Learning Center needs at least one complete change of clothing in his/her cubby that is appropriate for the current season. A complete set includes the following: shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Infants and toddlers, as well as children whom are engaged in potty training, should have more than one change of clothing available to change into. If your child is actively potty training we have found that the original rubber Crocs are quite easy to wash and rinse, preventing the need to bring an extra pair of shoes to change into. During winter months all children should have hats, coats, gloves (waterproof preferred), and appropriate footwear (snow boots). Because we strive to take the children outside each day, snow pants or a snow suit gives us greater access to outdoor play, and is appreciated in each classroom throughout the building, especially the toddlers because they tend to sit in the snow immediately. A jacket should be provided during spring and fall months, as Colorado weather is unpredictable and during the spring, summer, and fall months a hat to protect from the sun's UV rays should be brought to school each day. Expect that your child may come home with evidence of messy play on his/her clothing, as we encourage year-round play outdoors, and sensory experiences. We will make every effort to clean up after these fun messes are made, and use washable paints/art products.

All children are to have a water bottle or sippy cup that is to go home nightly, for drinking water throughout the day. SSLC supplies blankets, sheets, and SIDS safe sleepsacks, but children may bring a blanket from home, as well as pacifier, small lovey for rest time, and these will be sent home daily as well (children in our infant rooms may not have anything in their crib at naptime, aside from a wearable sleepsack and a pacifier). Diapers/pull-ups must also be sent, for all children who have not met the center standards determining them to be potty trained. Please note, we do not allow pullups that do not have velcro or reusable snap closures. SSLC supplies wet wipes and sunscreen, but families are welcome to send their own if they prefer. We are not permitted to treat diaper rash without a dr note but can use diaper cream/ointment as a preventative if you send some for your child to keep in his/her cubby. Do not send hand sanitizer, lotion, or other self carry items. We are not permitted to have these items in the classroom, or use them, without a medical

note signed by a doctor, and any medical items must be kept out of reach of children.

All children must have a bag or backpack to bring back and forth from the center, daily. We will send a folder home every Friday with crucial paperwork, information, and art work.

We ask that you send the folder back at the start of every week. Teachers will check these regularly, but it is a good idea to message and let us know if you are sending something back to us in a folder so we can look for it.

ESL/Dual-Learners

To fully support young dual language learners, we provide a climate that welcomes and honors all languages, cultures and abilities. We ensure each child receives support in their home language to help them build upon current skills and knowledge as they also gain the benefits of growing up bilingual. Stepping Stones Learning Center recognizes that children who are exposed to English as a second language will need understanding and support to develop both their home language and the second language. If needed, we can locate an interpreter to work with the child, their family, and the child's caregiving team. Also, should we have a child who needs a bilingual teacher, we will make every effort to locate a teacher, in lieu of an interpreter, and are open to parent suggestions. In this event, parents will be required to pay the interpreter's fees, and we will select an interpreter together to ensure that all needs are being met. Additionally, with the introduction of CorAdvantage, we can now send reports and communication to families, that families are able to translate into their selected language. We do casually incorporate ASL, French, and Spanish into our daily learning activities, and would love to do so with more languages. If families would like to participate in these efforts, please contact management.

Communication/ Conferences

It is important that you have information about your child's day. Stepping Stones Learning Center's teachers post classroom communication on bulletin boards outside the classroom's door along with a copy of the classroom schedule. Our teachers make every effort to adhere to the information presented to you, but please understand that there are times when changes are warranted. Our teachers will provide you with daily communication via Brightwheel, which gives you a record of your child's daily activities. We will also send out assessment reports, observations, and notes via Kaymbu, which is the platform we use for CorAdvantage. Parent teacher conference are regularly scheduled, a minimum of twice per year, in October and February, but can always be requested as well. We will try to be as open as possible during communication, however please refrain from asking questions that ask teachers to name other children or requested more than a brief chat at drop off/pick up, as the teacher is required to be actively supervising his/her classroom. We encourage phone calls and Brightwheel messages during the day and also questions, comments, and very brief conversation as you drop off and pick up, as well as emails at any time, although you may not receive a response until the next business day if you are emailing on the weekend or in the evening. Brightwheel will always be the best and preferred means for any communication, as emails often get overlooked and staff may not always be available for a phone call.

Please do not use Brightwheel to send message before 6:30am, or after 7:30pm. These messages go out to all of the staff, and we want to respect their personal time.

You can call the center at 303-904-1121 or email our staff at director@steppingstoneslittleton.com

Any paperwork or notes you may need to leave can be handed directly to the management team or your child's classroom team, or sent in your child's take home folder.

Guidance

At Stepping Stones Learning Center, we believe it is a teacher's role to guide children. Guidance comes in many forms, and depending on your child's classroom, differing guidance strategies will be employed. Additionally each classroom possesses its own culture and rules/guidelines differ from classroom to classroom.

We require that when communicating with a child about an action, and its consequence, that teachers speak to children at their level, bending down and making eye contact. Verbal warnings, redirection, and then removal are strategies used throughout the center. Removal may result in a short time out period, and illustrates that a child needs to manage his/her behavior, making positive choices to be able to participate in classroom activities. After a removal, the child will be reminded and asked to give his/her input as to the direction of his/her behavior from that point forward. Social and emotional competence is a skill children must be taught and provided with opportunities to build competence. When necessary, we will help guide them and can provide resources to families that can help with behavioral, mental, and developmental issues. Physical and/or corporal punishment is **never** permitted, and neither is withholding of food or affection, or tactics that single out a child and purposefully cause humiliation. These forms of punishment only confuse the child, cause emotional/physical distress, or escalate a situation, and do not adhere to our teaching practices or center philosophy.

Insurance

We will take every precaution for the safety of your child. Should an accident occur and medical treatment is necessary, you should contact your healthcare insurance carrier with related questions.

Nap

We are required by the State of Colorado to provide a two hour rest period for all children whom are enrolled in full day care at Stepping Stones Learning Center. Infants are not to be left to cry for more than 10 minutes, per licensing, and children who do not fall asleep after 30 minutes will be given a quiet activity to work on. Your child is welcome to bring a blanket from home and/or a small soft, naptime appropriate item, such as a stuffed animal, to rest with. These items may be transported to and from school on a daily basis or taken home weekly for laundering.

Children under the age of 12 months are to be placed in a safe sleep environment. Pacifiers are encouraged, and armless sleep-sacks are provided. There will be no other materials in the crib, aside from a thin, fitted crib sheet (which is washed daily). All staff working with infants are required to complete training on Safe Sleep and SIDs Prevention, annually.

Children cannot be forced to take a nap, nor will we wake children prior to the end of the center's quiet time. Children are, however, expected to make age appropriate attempts to play in a quiet and non-disruptive manner while his/her classmates are napping, should he/she not fall asleep or wake early.

Infant Feeding

Unless medically necessary, infants are fed on demand until they are eating solid foods, and are old enough to be working toward a toddler schedule. Families are required to provide all breast milk, formula, and puree foods. Our infant teacher will work with families to determine when, and which foods, an infant is ready to begin eating foods from our center-supplied menu. We follow the infant's cues for eating and sleeping, as required by state licensing rules and regulations.

Reporting of Child Abuse

Your child's best interests, health and safety are our primary concern. As required by law, if we have reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused, neglected or has observed the child being subjected to circumstances which could result in abuse or neglect, we will immediately file a report with Jefferson County Department of Human Services and/or a local law enforcement agency. A report demonstrates that there is a cause for concern and should not be taken as an accusation. We are not allowed to consult with the parents/legal guardians first and must file a report immediately.

If you believe that your child has been a victim of abuse, you should seek immediate assistance from your local department of Human Services. The phone number for abuse reporting at Jefferson County Department of Human Services is: 303-271-1388

If you are struggling, and need support for your family, we are more than happy to be a source of support for you. We will keep your private information confidential, and are more than happy to offer resources, advice, or simply be a sounding board should you need someone to commiserate. We wish to serve the families in our community, and often this includes the parents and family members of our enrolled children.

Media/Videos

We believe that media has a place in today's world and allow our teachers to check out the TV/ DVD, or use educational video clips to add enrichment to the classroom. Please understand that we allow for movie viewing in moderation to limit the amount of screen time your child is exposed to, and will never allow the television to take the place of a caring, engaged, adult. We may also use the computer for less than 20 minutes at a time to access learning sites, such as education.com or ABCMouse.

Volunteers/Visitors and the Parent Committee

If you wish to share your time and talents with the children that attend Stepping Stones Learning Center, we encourage you to talk to a member of the administrative staff and/or your child's teacher. Each classroom has specific needs that can be addressed and met through parent support. We would also love to set up in-house field trips, classroom talks, or off-site tours for children in our pre-k and school age programs that involve our families and members of our community. Please speak to us if you have any ideas, questions, or would like to volunteer or offer ideas and services!

All families are encouraged to join our parent committee, which helps encourage family/educator partnership, and gives families an opportunity to share ideas while interacting with other enrolled families. For more information, please visit our website, at www.SSLCofLittleton.com

Parent Education Series and Staff Development

We recognize that we all have unique skills and educational experiences that can enhance the professional development of our staff, or family experiences. We offer parent education sessions at least once a year, and

prefer to offer these more often. Should any families be willing to volunteer their time or expertise during these educational sessions, we would love for you to contact our director!

Every fall, our director will conduct an educational session that explains our curriculum and assessment methods, and how they serve the children in our care, in relation to the early learning and developmental guidelines. This session will be recorded, and posted on our social media and website.

Visitors

All visitors must be escorted/supervised by a staff member, and must sign in with the administrative team. Should this visitor not be an approved family member, or invited by SSLC management, they will likely be asked to leave the premises.

Transition Plan

The five key transitions in our policy will focus on:

1. Transitions into a program;
2. Transitions while enrolled;
3. Transitions within the program day;
4. Family transitions outside a program; and
5. Transitions when leaving a program.

Please see the Transition Plan Handout for More Information

Family Engagement

A child has his/her first learning and bonding experiences at home, and each family has a unique outlook based on cultural and familial preferences and experiences. We value the partnership between our program and the families of our enrolled children, and have developed a family engagement plan.

Please see the Family Engagement Plan Handout for more information!

Continuity of Care and Child:Teacher Ratio

We aim to create an environment where your child is most likely to feel comfortable and secure, and have his or her needs attended to. The healthy bond between a caregiver and child aligns with this goal, and as such we believe in continuity of care and low ratios. For each classroom, we have a lead teacher and an assistant/co-teacher assigned. These teachers work with their assigned group on a daily basis, and the staff in each classroom remains the same, aside from times where a teacher is absent for personal time or vacation. Furthermore, the state required ratios are as follows:

Infants and Toddler 6 weeks to 2 years of age: 1 teacher per 5 children
24-30 months: 1 teacher per 7 children
30-36 months: 1 teacher per 8 children
3 year olds: 1 teacher per 10 children
4 year olds: 1 teacher per 12 children
5 year olds/school age: 1 teacher per 15 children

It our goal to run according to the ratios suggested by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and these are as follows:

Infant (Birth–15 months) 1:4
Toddler/Two (12–36 months) 1:6
Preschool (30 months–5 years) 1:10
Kindergarten (Enrolled in any public or private kindergarten) 1:12
5 years and up- 1:15

We have currently already implemented these ratios in our preschool and kindergarten classrooms, and plan to implement the NAEYC ratios in our infant and toddler classrooms by January, 2025.

Thank you and we welcome you to our community here at
Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton!

SSLC Family Handbook Revised 6/6/2023

Contact Information: 10670 Bradford

Road

Littleton, Colorado 80127

Phone: 303-904-1121

Email: Director@steppingstoneslittleton.com; CMAGrouplittleton@gmail.com

These policies may be changed without prior written notification. An addendum to your handbook will be presented to you within seven work days of the implementation of a new policy. Please refer to our COVID-19 Procedures and Policies, found on our website at www.sslcoflittleton.com to see altered operations regarding current mandates and practices related to the pandemic. Revised 12/23/2020

To file a complaint against this facility, contact the Colorado Department of Human Service, Division of Early Care and Learning.

303-866-5958 1575 Sherman St. Denver, CO