

SSLC Family Handbook Revised March 7, 2025



We welcome your family to Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton (SSLC)! Our school caters to childcare needs in your area and provides quality programs for all children, regardless of race or nationality. We offer individualized care and learning experiences that promote growth and development. We are active participants in each child's learning journey, fostering social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. The experiences here will have a lifelong impact on each child and can significantly influence our community's future. We believe in hugs, playtime, creative learning, and building positive relationships and partnerships with families.

Feel free to visit us anytime. As partners in your child's care, we value your comments and concerns. Most of our policies are included in this handbook, which you can refer to throughout your child's stay with us. Our programs are designed around experiential learning for children aged six weeks to 5 years.

Our philosophy includes:

- Recognizing each child's unique development pace, offering activities tailored to individual and group learning.
- Providing a loving, warm, safe, and healthy environment.
- Emphasizing hands-on learning through problem-solving, decision making, and exploration.
- Communicating with families about children's growth, health, and development, offering helpful resources.
- Enhancing self-esteem through positive learning experiences.
- Guiding children in developing self-control with positive guidance methods.
- Offering a predictable yet flexible environment for self-expression.
- Establishing positive communication between school and home, respecting parental trust.

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### Hours of Operation and Tuition Structure

Stepping Stones Learning Center will be open from 6:45 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Regular care and education hours are from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Families can choose to enroll in before and after care, if available, which will grant access to additional hours of care, starting at 6:45 AM and ending at 6:00 PM.

The center operates year-round and enrolls children throughout the calendar/school year. The observed holidays include 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). Teacher in-service days are scheduled each year, during which no care is provided so the staff can participate in mandatory training and center projects. Additionally, early closures for professional development and center events are listed on the calendar in advance. Parents will be reminded of these holidays prior to their observance. No tuition credit or make-up days are available as the tuition structure accounts for these days. Tuition is based on an annual amount, divided into 52 equal installments to be paid over the course of a year. Tuition rates are subject to change, typically by 3% annually, at the start of each school year (August/September) due to changes in cost of living, program changes, and market rates. Rate sheets will be posted in the lobby, and written notice will be provided at least 30 days before new rates take effect. When a holiday falls in the middle of a week, the school reserves the right to close on additional days, with two weeks' notice given for these closures. Each January, a school year calendar is published to inform families of additional closures, which are minimized for convenience.

### Program Information

Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton offers nursery care for infants (ages six weeks to eighteen months) and toddler care starting at 12 months. Classrooms are generally grouped by six-month increments, but children can move based on individual needs. Potty training is provided in all classrooms, with a requirement of two accident-free weeks before transitioning from diapers.

We also provide preschool and pre-k, using the HighScope Curriculum aligned with Colorado's Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines (ELDGs). This curriculum emphasizes active participation, individualized learning, and family-educator partnerships. Our assessment systems include Ages and Stages Questionnaire and CORAdvantage, both aligning with ELDGs.

SSLC proudly participates in Colorado's Universal Preschool (UPK).

We proudly utilize HighScope Curriculum, which aligns with state standards and allows care and learning to be fun and individualized. We also utilize the social/emotional curriculum, RULER, created by Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. For more information, see the handouts in Brightwheel.

### Conferences

We provide a minimum of two parent-teacher conferences to share assessment findings and

gather input from families or guardians. If parents wish to schedule a conference with a teacher outside the designated center-wide dates, they must submit a request to the administration team. Please note that discussions beyond brief questions or sharing of information are not permitted during drop-off and pick-up times, as teachers need to focus on supervising the children in the classroom.

### 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](http://www.SSLSoFLittleton.com)

### 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

To ensure your child's safety and comply with state regulations, complete all enrollment papers by their start date at SSLC. Within 30 days, provide a medical and immunization form signed by your physician, updated according to the American Academy of Pediatrics' schedule. All children must be fully vaccinated as per Colorado Department of Public Health guidelines. Submit up-to-date vaccination records on the first day.

To reserve an enrollment spot, pay a deposit covering the Enrollment Fee, Enrichment Fee (annual fall charge), and one week's tuition (used for the first week). If immediate availability is not possible or the start date is over 30 days away, your child will be placed on the waitlist. Refer to the rate sheet for waitlist details.

### Annual Enrollment and Renewal

Family enrollments operate on a summer-to-summer basis. Each June, you will receive an annual renewal form that must be returned by July 1st. Missing this deadline will suspend care until the form is received. Families can withdraw their child anytime with a minimum of four weeks' written notice starting on a Monday. See the "Withdrawal Policy" section for more details and fees.

### Attendance

Each day, parents or guardians are required to check their child in and out of our care using the Brightwheel app. State regulations mandate that this process be followed on a daily basis. Should you need to use the pen and paper sign-in at the front desk, please request classroom

staff to log your child into the app. If your child will be absent for the day, kindly inform us via call or message as early as possible so we can plan staffing and activities accordingly. In cases of illness-related absence, please provide details such as symptoms and treatments. All children must arrive by 9:30 am, or they will be marked absent for the day. We ask that pickups during the center's quiet time, from 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm, be avoided. No child may be dropped off during these hours, and we respectfully request parents (except nursing mothers) refrain from visiting during quiet hours as well. Our general operating hours are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Families may opt to enroll in before and after care based on availability, or request drop-in visits for these periods, subject to availability. Please refer to the tuition rate sheet for pricing information and details. Before and after care provides access from 6:45 am to 8:00 am, and 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm. All children in after care must be picked up and have exited the building by 6:00 pm. Please see the Documents section in Brightwheel for more information regarding General Attendance Policies.

### Damage to Property/ Harmful and Destructive Behavior

Normal wear and tear is expected in childcare. However, parents will be liable for damages if a child intentionally destroys property. Reimbursements are due with the following Monday's tuition. SSLC is not responsible for lost or damaged personal items. Please keep toys and personal belongings at home unless requested.

If a child's behavior is harmful, intentionally destructive, or requires more care than staff can provide, they may be sent home. Guardians will be notified to pick up the child within 60 minutes of notification.

### 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.

### Smoking, Drugs, and Alcohol

Smoking, vaping, or using drugs or alcohol is prohibited anywhere on the premises, including the parking lot.

### Child Pick-up

Only guardians aged 16 or older can pick up a child. If someone else needs to pick up your child, you must notify the center in advance via email or Brightwheel, and they must provide photo ID. Every child must be signed in or out by the adult dropping off or picking up. If a panic code is necessary for safety, we will assign it and discuss interventions. A late fee of \$20 per 15 minutes applies after 6:00 pm (or early closure times), and Jefferson County Child Services and Police will be notified if a child is not picked up within 30 minutes past closing.

In such cases, children will receive a snack and supervision. Please inform us by phone if you cannot arrive by 6:00 pm, and if delayed more than five minutes, arrange for an authorized alternative pick-up.

### 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 sent via Brightwheel/Email. In the event of a communicable disease, a classroom may be closed unexpectedly for deep cleaning, or changes may be made to normal operating procedures. All families will be notified of any special circumstances that may arise.

### Special Needs Among Children

Stepping Stones Learning Center will evaluate each child's needs individually and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and local regulations. Before enrollment, there will be a meeting with the child, parents/guardians, and the Director to discuss the child's needs and prior childcare history. Over ten days, the Director and staff will determine if the center can meet those needs. Missing vital information may result in immediate disenrollment. If enrolled, there will be weekly meetings in the Director's office for five weeks to assess:

Possible modifications to integrate the child

Employing auxiliary staff/aids without undue burden

Whether the child poses a threat to others

If Stepping Stones cannot meet the child's or group's needs, we reserve the right to give notice of disenrollment within 5 operating days.

### Inclusion

Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton supports the right of every child and family to participate fully in various activities as members of families, communities, and society. The goal is to foster a sense of belonging, positive relationships, and overall development for children with and without disabilities. Key features of inclusion are access, participation, and support.

**Access:** Access to diverse learning opportunities is provided through simple modifications based on individual needs, ensuring all children can participate. Meetings with staff and families will assess and accommodate these needs within the center's capabilities.

**Supports:** Ongoing professional development and collaboration among families, practitioners, and administrators are essential. Resource lists are maintained and regular conferences are held to identify and address support needs. For children with IEPs or care plans, consistent communication and collaboration are ensured to monitor progress and well-being. Every child deserves a safe, inclusive environment where they can reach their full potential.

**Referrals:** If 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, a meeting will be conducted with the child's guardian to share concerns, gather input, and share the intention to refer the family to such services. Once the referral has been made, the family will be notified when it was done, and what to expect next. Communication with the family will be maintained, and work with service providers will continue to meet each child's needs.

**Supporting Positive Behavior:** Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton aims to provide a nurturing environment that supports the social and emotional well-being of all children. Collaboration with parents is encouraged to address behavioral concerns.

### **Addressing Behavioral Concerns**

If a child exhibits behavioral concerns, the following steps will be taken:

**Schedule a meeting:** A meeting will be held with the child's parents to discuss the behavior, identify potential triggers, and develop an action plan.

**Action Plan:** The plan may include defining expectations, setting clear limits (such as temporary adjustment of attendance hours), exploring relevant resources, and consulting with the center's mental health consultant.

**Termination of Care:** As a last resort, termination of care may be discussed if a child's needs exceed the center's capabilities or the program is not a suitable fit. Notice will be provided whenever possible, and resources for continued support will be offered.

If full parental participation in the steps outlined above cannot be gained, a decision may be made to move forward with termination of care, surpassing other steps detailed above.

**Commitment:** Efforts will be made to work collaboratively with parents to find solutions that meet the needs of all children. Idea sharing and communication from families of children impacted by behavioral concerns/repeat incidents within the classroom are welcome. These matters are protected by privacy laws, and no one child and their needs will be the same as the next. Efforts will be made to demonstrate commitment to finding solutions that best serve the children in care.

### Emergency & Evacuation Procedures

Evacuation routes and emergency procedures are routinely reviewed and practiced. Each classroom has an information sheet posted near each exit to guide actions and behavior during drills and emergencies. In an actual emergency, every child will remain at the center until picked up by a parent or an authorized adult. The center will stay informed of the situation through radio, television, Internet, or other means. We will use discretion in determining the need to contact families to relay information and directions via the phone numbers provided on your child's profile. It is required that two emergency contacts, including their phone numbers and addresses, be listed in your enrollment paperwork and on Brightwheel.

Guardians must regularly update all contact information for themselves and emergency contacts.

In the event of an emergency affecting our school, Stepping Stones Learning Center will notify families via Brightwheel, and may follow up with a phone call as well. Prompt action

and cooperation from parents in such situations is greatly appreciated.

If relocation is necessary, our off-site designated location is the Jefferson County South Service Center, 11139 Bradford Road, Littleton, 80127. If we need to go to a site outside of our neighborhood, we will typically relocate to Shaffer Elementary, located across Chatfield Ave, and communicate this through phone, signage on the center door, social media, or Brightwheel.

## Food & Meals Breakfast

### *Breakfast*

If your child arrives before 7:30am, they may bring a small breakfast from home so that they have time to eat and start their day. However, all breakfast items need to be fully prepared, such as fruit being peeled or cut, and no items requiring heating or cooking will be allowed. Additionally, your child must be able to self-feed all items they bring for 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 in a spill-proof cup. No peanut butter or nuts are allowed. Be sure to label any containers, cups, or utensils, and send all items in a labeled lunchbox. 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, served at 8:30-9am, which is a two-component meal resembling breakfast. Lunch will be provided by Stepping Stones Learning Center, from 11:30am-12:00pm, and it will be healthy and balanced. Meals consist of fruits and/or vegetables, whole grains, protein, and dairy. If your child has dietary restrictions and requires items that we do not provide, you will be responsible for providing alternate foods. If space in our kitchen allows, we can keep a week's supply on site for your child. If your child arrives after a mealtime, please ensure they have eaten before drop-off.

### *Afternoon Snack*

For the afternoon snack, we ask parents to participate in the community snack by sending two bulk items, which are sealed and commercially packaged, or fruits that we can wash and serve. Items must be shelf-stable. Parents also have the option to opt out of 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 their afternoon snack. No peanut butter or nuts are allowed. Label any containers, cups, or utensils, and send all items in a labeled lunchbox. 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:

When parents or guardians furnish snacks for children other than their own, the snack shall consist only of prepackaged and commercially sourced foods. Such foods shall be non-potentially hazardous or shelf-stable and received sealed. We will also share details regarding



foods to avoid and preferred snack ideas when the classroom snack supply is low. Uncut produce may be provided if the facility has the capacity to wash and prepare it. However, we typically ask that families bring items that require as little preparation as possible, as we do not employ full-time kitchen personnel.

### 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 following symptoms, a parent or guardian will be contacted to address concerns further. We may request the parent or guardian to pick up the ill child within 60 minutes of being contacted. If a child is sent home, they are required to stay home the next day to implement an appropriate recovery 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 fever reducers. Please do not medicate your child before drop off unless the medication specifically relieves teething discomfort or is prescribed by a physician. We reserve the right to request a physician's note indicating that the child is cleared to return to school. This will be requested if a child has concerning symptoms of illness or any unusual rash (excluding diaper rash or known eczema). We adhere to the following guidelines when sending a sick child home:

Atypical behavior (typically our first indication of illness)

Breathing difficulties

Diarrhea

Severe cough/wheezing/moderate to severe congestion

Fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit

Suspected conjunctivitis (pink eye)

Symptoms of a communicable disease

Unusual rash

Consistent, greenish/yellow nasal drainage that needs to be frequently wiped

Vomiting

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### **Keeping Your Child at Home**

To maintain the health of all children and staff at Stepping Stones Learning Center, please seriously consider removing your child from the school environment if the following conditions manifest:

Constant, deep, disruptive cough

Behavioral changes indicating onset of illness

Diarrhea

Fever above 100 degrees Fahrenheit

Suspected sinus infection-related nose discharge

Suspected conjunctivitis (pink eye)

Symptoms of a communicable disease

Unusual and/or undiagnosed rash

Vomiting

If we observe these conditions during your child's day at Stepping Stones Learning Center, we will contact you to pick up your child within 60 minutes. If a child is sent home due to illness, they must remain home the following day to ensure recovery.

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### **Notes from a Doctor**

Please understand that a doctor's recommendation may not always align with our sick policy and may not account for the wellness of all children in our care. Since we care for infants and children with autoimmune or respiratory disorders, it is at our staff's discretion when to allow a child to return to care.

A child may need to be excluded from care if they require more attention than SSLC staff can provide in a group setting or if a sanitary issue arises. For example, if diarrhea poses a sanitary issue (such as leaking out of pants or diapers) or creates care needs preventing staff from attending to other children, even if a doctor allows the child to return, the child must follow our illness policy and remain home until symptoms clear.

For fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, they must stay home for 24 hours past their last episode, whether at home or in our care. Children sent home while in care must not attend the following day and must stay home for 24 hours past the last symptom occurrence. Exceptions include illnesses like pink eye, where a child can attend once non-contagious after antibiotics for a specified time, noted on a signed physician's note. Minor colds (clear nasal discharge, minor wet/dry cough) do not require staying home. However, thick green/yellow discharge or persistent severe cough necessitates staying home to prevent spreading RSV, respiratory infections, or croup.

Influenza presents unique considerations under additional sick policy terms. Note that stomach flu is not influenza. If anyone in a child's household is diagnosed with influenza, Stepping Stones Learning Center requests keeping your child home to avoid exposure. This is crucially important for siblings, as children often do not understand preventive measures as well as adults. Influenza is highly contagious one day before symptoms begin. A child with influenza must be excluded from care for a minimum of five days, as it remains contagious typically for 5-7 days, sometimes longer.

### Medication Administration and Topical Preventative Items

Stepping Stones Learning Center is equipped to administer medication to children. To provide prescribed medicine at school, we require a physician's note specifying the medication's name, start and end dates, and specific administration times. New medication authorization forms will be required with each APA well child visit date. The medication must be in its original packaging to allow for cross-reference with the physician's instructions to ensure your child's safety. For children with specific health plans (chronic conditions), a health treatment plan filled out by the physician with detailed instructions is necessary. This plan is usually updated annually, and our visiting nurse will verify compliance.

We reserve the right to refuse medication administration if medical forms are incomplete or not provided: we prioritize your child's health and well-being. If a child has an allergy or asthma plan, and the plan is expired or proper medications are absent, we will refuse to provide care until an updated health plan signed by a physician and all unexpired medications and necessary tools (e.g., medicine cup) are present on site. We do not administer fever-reducing medications as they can mask symptoms, nor medications for cold-like symptoms. Should your child receive prescribed or OTC medication, we will document the administration in your child's daily folder to ensure you are informed of the dates, times, and amounts. All medication will be securely stored in an inaccessible location to children.

For items such as Vaseline, lotion, diaper ointment, and lip balm, we can administer them with written authorization from a parent or guardian. However, if the skin is open or cracked, a physician's note is required. Children are not permitted to self-carry these items. Please supply these items labeled with your child's name, in their original container, along with clear written instructions to the management at the front desk.

State law prohibits us from administering holistic or cannabis-containing treatments. Additionally, if a child requires our team to obtain specialized delegation to deliver medication, the cost will be the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

### 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 an electronic report of the accident/injury which we via Brightwheel, by the end of the day. We make every effort to enter such reports before the child leaves, but if supervisory needs deem that we must do so, a teacher or administrator will verbally inform the parent of an incident or injury, and will ensure that it is recorded on Brightwheel before 7 PM. 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

Written notice is required to withdraw your child(ren) from Stepping Stones Learning Center. A four full weeks' written notice is necessary for all areas of the building. If you withdraw, re-enrollment is not permitted until six calendar weeks have passed. Re-enrolled children will be subject to registration fees. A schedule reduction cannot be used as a withdrawal method. Regardless of your child's attendance during this period, tuition remains your responsibility. Upon giving notice, the full 4 weeks' worth of tuition is due immediately. We reserve the right to terminate care before the end of the notice period, with the full 4 weeks' tuition still applicable. Notice periods begin on Mondays; if notice is given on another day, it starts the following Monday.

### Center-Mandated Disenrollment

We reserve the right to disenroll any child or family for any reason. Immediate disenrollment will occur if a child exhibits violence toward a teacher, administrator, or another child. Families may also face immediate disenrollment for staff raiding or attempts thereof, chronic late pick-up (more than three times in six months), or breaches of company policy or lack of parental cooperation. In cases where SSLC decides to disenroll your child, you are responsible for paying 4 weeks' worth of tuition, regardless of attendance.

### Universal Preschool (UPK) Program Participation/ Enrollment

Stepping Stones Learning Center of Littleton is proud to participate in Colorado's Universal Preschool (UPK) program, beginning with the 2023/2024 school year. This program provides eligible children with access to high-quality preschool education. Please note that enrollment in our UPK program is a separate process from our infants through Junior Pre-Kindergarten classrooms.

#### **Enrollment Process:**

**Dual Enrollment:** Families interested in enrolling their child in our UPK program must complete two separate enrollment processes:

1. A pre-registration decision form, in addition to the annual renewal form with Stepping Stones. Families who decide not to join the UPK school year must also use this form to indicate their choice.
2. An application through the State of Colorado's UPK program during their designated pre-registration window (typically December-February).

#### **Priority Placement:**

Children currently enrolled in our program during the year prior to their UPK eligibility receive priority placement for the upcoming UPK school year.

Children with siblings currently enrolled in our program also receive priority placement.

In October of the year prior to their UPK year, families will receive a form to indicate their intent to enroll in our UPK program. Families declining participation in our UPK program will

also need to complete this form.

**General Public Enrollment:** Any remaining UPK spots will be opened to the general public during subsequent matching rounds through the state UPK program, typically starting at the end of February/Early March

**Summer Placement for Graduating Junior Pre-K Students:**

Students graduating from our Junior Pre-K (Owls) classroom will have a graduation date at the end of May.

We may offer summer-only spots to graduating Junior Pre-K students.

Priority for summer placement will be given to students enrolled in our upcoming fall Pre-Kindergarten program.

Any remaining summer spots after the general public matching occurs will be opened to interested families. This will typically occur by the end of April.

**UPK Program Details:**

**Program Hours:** Our UPK classroom operates from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Children may attend for our full enrolled business hours, but the UPK program is within these hours.

**UPK Hours Allocation:** The State of Colorado determines the number of UPK hours each child is eligible for.

**Wrap-Care:** Any hours exceeding the state-allocated UPK hours are considered "wrap-care." Parents/guardians are responsible for paying for all wrap-care hours. Wrap-care payments are due in full on Mondays at the start of each week.

**School Year:** Our UPK school year runs from September through May.

**Acclimation:** Children will begin acclimation and building a daily routine in the UPK classroom prior to the official start of the school year.

These policies are subject to change based on updates from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood and center operational needs. Families are encouraged to stay informed about UPK program updates and deadlines through our communication channels and the state's UPK website, and to read all center-wide communication (most often sent over Brightwheel). We will keep families updated regarding timelines as we receive information from our state appointed local coordinators.

Raiding Policy/ Outside Communication with Staff

If we are made aware by our staff or another family that you are attempting to hire a staff member from our facility, your child will be disenrolled immediately. Staff members have agreed not to leave our center to set up private nanny/care services for current or former families. This policy aims to prevent disruptions for all families. You may arrange babysitting services with SSLC staff; however, SSLC assumes no responsibility or liability for any occurrences during such events. Additionally, SSLC staff are not allowed to babysit for families during regular business hours without prior management approval or to discuss child care matters via personal conversations. SSLC staff are also prohibited from transporting children for babysitting purposes from SSLC. Please direct all concerns, comments, and questions regarding your child's care to the business, rather than contacting staff on their personal phones.

### School Closures

Should Stepping Stones Learning Center close for any reason (such as weather or building concerns), we will notify all families via Brightwheel. This will be our primary method of communication for closures. Generally, if Jefferson County offices and/or Public Schools are closed, we will also close. Jefferson County will announce weather-related closures on local news sites.

We carefully consider any decision to close the building and assess whether staff can safely travel to and from the center and provide quality care while adhering to state regulations. In the event of an impending storm warning, we may decide to close the school early. The closure time will depend on the severity of the storm warning, typically at 3:00 pm. Parents or guardians will be notified by telephone using the contact numbers provided on the child's Emergency Contact form.

For delayed openings, Stepping Stones Learning Center will open at 9:30 am. While we generally follow Jefferson County Schools' decisions regarding weather-related closures, we reserve the right to make independent decisions for our school if necessary. Tuition is based on securing a spot rather than hours of attendance and is calculated on an annual basis; therefore, no reimbursement or credit will be issued for closures.

### Tuition Payment

All families must sign up for automatic payments via Brightwheel. Processing fees vary based on your payment method and Brightwheel will inform you of the fee when setting up your payments.

Tuition payment must be made before the start of care provided by Stepping Stones Learning Center and is due on Monday of each week. Tuition payments are considered late if received after close of business on Monday unless otherwise agreed upon, regardless of building closure due to holidays, in-service days, snow days, etc.

Late fees of \$35.00 per week apply starting at the close of business hours on Monday. Brightwheel is the required method for tuition payment unless management approves an alternative.

If a family is one week behind in payments, the child(ren) will not be allowed to attend until the account is current. Families are still responsible for all tuition and late fees, even if attendance is restricted. If a family is more than two weeks behind, we will seek payment through collections and possibly small claims court. Families are responsible for any legal, collection, or other fees due to lack of timely payment.

Non-sufficient funds (NSF) checks will be processed through the bank only once. If a check/payment is returned as NSF, a \$25.00 NSF fee and a \$30.00 late fee will be charged if sufficient funds are not provided by the close of business Tuesday for the week's care. Two NSF checks will result in requiring cash payment for tuition for the duration of the child's enrollment at Stepping Stones Learning Center.

Brightwheel can issue receipts or statements with each payment, monthly, quarterly, or yearly. We will sign any flex-spending paperwork needed for benefit reimbursement. Year-end tax statements are available in your Brightwheel account by January 31st. SSLC increases tuition rates annually and will provide at least 30 days notice of any increases.

### Weather Related Outdoor Play/ Gear Needs

Children will not be permitted to play outdoors in inclement or severely hot weather, or during poor air quality events. 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! All items must be labelled with your child's first and last name.

### Birthdays and Family Interactions

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.

To ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all children, especially those with dietary restrictions and allergies, we have implemented the following guidelines for birthday and special event treats, effective March 3, 2025. Parents/guardians must provide at least one full day's notice to the center before bringing in any treats for birthdays or special events. This advance notice allows for necessary communication and preparations. Parents/guardians must also provide specific details about the treat, including a complete list of ingredients or a detailed description. All treats must be commercially packaged and nut-free. Upon receiving notice, the center will send a message to all parents in the class, informing them that a special treat will be shared the following day. The notification message will request parents to inform the center if they do not wish for their child to participate in the treat. If no response is received, it will be assumed that the child is permitted to have the treat, while staff will remain vigilant about individual dietary needs and allergies. The advance notice allows parents of children with dietary restrictions or allergies to provide safe alternative treats for their children to participate in the celebration. This policy is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of all children, particularly those with allergies and dietary restrictions, provide ample notice to all families, allowing them to make informed decisions, and create a more inclusive and considerate environment for everyone. We appreciate your cooperation in adhering to these guidelines to ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for all children.

### 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. Please also see the handout regarding infant feeding policies and supplies, located in the document section on Brightwheel.

Parents are required to fill out a daily feeding plan in the infant classroom, detailing the child's last feeding, any dietary changes, etc. It will also include the following statement:

I understand that, while SSLC staff will attempt to meet family requests when possible, state law does require that we allow children to eat/sleep on demand until they age out of the infant program. I also understand it is my responsibility to bring enough clean (glass-free) bottles for each feeding that my child will need, daily. Additionally, I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure all bottles are labeled with my child's first and last name, that I have placed a red sticker on any bottle containing breastmilk, and have placed the bottles in the refrigerator of my child's home classroom. At the end of the day, it is my responsibility to grab any remaining breastmilk that has been thawed or is not frozen, as well as the dirty/used bottles from the refrigerator and the drawstring bag that is labeled with my child's name. Any unused breastmilk or formula that was offered to a child will be discarded within one hour from the start of feeding. The drawstring bag that contains my child's used bottles is to remain at SSLC.

### 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.

### Potty Training

At SSLC, successful potty training hinges on a strong partnership between parents and our



teaching team. We prioritize a child's readiness, looking for indicators such as the ability to pull pants down, communicate needs, stay dry for two hours, follow simple directions, and show interest in the restroom. Conversely, we recognize signs of unreadiness, including refusal to sit on the potty, inability to manage clothing, frequent accidents, and lack of interest. Potty training at SSLC begins when a child expresses interest and demonstrates early skills at home, which our teachers will support through regular potty sits during diaper changes. Children must wear easily removable pants and bring at least three complete changes of clothes. Due to health regulations, we require children to wear undergarments, allowing for re-closeable diapers/pull-ups, absorbent training underwear, or underwear layered with diapers/pull-ups. We do not support methods without undergarments or plastic liners. Children must remain accident-free for two weeks before transitioning to underwear only. We address accidents by reverting to diapers/pull-ups after three daily accidents and by pausing training if a child consistently refuses or shows a lack of readiness. We utilize standard toilets, encouraging children to sit while urinating initially. Rewards systems are welcomed and should be communicated with teachers. Children are considered fully potty trained after two accident-free weeks, even if naptime diapers/pull-ups are still needed. See our handout in Brightwheel for more information.

### Clothing/Supplies

Please ensure children are dressed in clothing that does not hinder toileting or diapering. One-piece rompers or outfits that must be entirely removed are not allowed. Additionally, SSLC cannot support potty training methods that allow children to go without training pants or underwear. All children must wear undergarments such as diapers, pull-ups with velcro on the side, or underwear. Easy-Ups or similar styles of training pants/diapers without resealable side closures are not allowed.

Each child should have at least one complete change of clothing in their cubby appropriate for the current season. A complete set includes a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. Infants, toddlers, and children engaged in potty training should have multiple changes of clothing available. For children actively potty training, original rubber Crocs are recommended as they are easy to wash and rinse, eliminating the need for extra shoes. During winter, all children should have hats, coats, gloves (preferably waterproof), and appropriate footwear (snow boots). Snow pants or a snow suit are appreciated in each classroom, especially for toddlers who often sit in the snow. A jacket should be provided during spring and fall months due to unpredictable Colorado weather, and a hat to protect from the sun's UV rays should be brought to school daily. Children may come home with evidence of messy play on their clothing as we encourage outdoor and sensory play year-round. We use washable paints/art products and make every effort to clean up after these activities. All items must be labeled with the child's full name.

All children should have a water bottle or sippy cup to take home nightly for drinking water throughout the day. SSLC provides blankets, sheets, and SIDS-safe sleepsacks, but children may bring a blanket, pacifier, or small lovey for rest time, which will also be sent home daily

(infant room children may only have a wearable sleepsack and pacifier in their crib at naptime). Diapers/pull-ups must be supplied for children who are not yet potty trained according to center standards. SSLC provides sensitive skin wet wipes and Rocky Mountain (also known as Coral Isles) sunscreen; however, families may send their own labeled with the child's first and last name if preferred. Diaper rash treatment requires a doctor's note, but preventive cream/ointment can be used if provided for the child's cubby. Do not send hand self-carry items such as lotion or chapstick in a child's backpack as they are not permitted in the classroom without a medical form signed by parents/guardians and, in some cases, physicians.

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

### 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 essential for you to have information about your child's day. Stepping Stones Learning Center's educators post classroom communication on bulletin boards outside the classroom door, along with a copy of the classroom schedule. Our educators make every effort to adhere to the information presented; however, please understand that changes may occasionally be necessary. Our teachers will provide daily communication via Brightwheel, which offers a record of your child's daily activities. Additionally, we will send assessment reports, observations, and notes via Kaymbu, the platform we use for CorAdvantage.

Parent-teacher conferences are regularly scheduled at least twice per year, although they can always be requested. We strive to be as transparent as possible during communication. However, please refrain from asking questions that require teachers to name other children or request more than a brief chat at drop-off/pick-up times, as the teacher must actively supervise their classroom. We encourage phone calls and Brightwheel messages during the day, as well

as questions, comments, and brief conversations during drop-off and pick-up times. Emails are welcome at any time, though responses may be delayed until the next business day if sent during evenings or weekends. Brightwheel remains the preferred method of communication, as emails might be overlooked and staff may not always be available for phone calls. Please note that Brightwheel messages sent outside of business hours will likely receive a response during the following business day, within regular working hours.

You can contact the center at 303-904-1121 or email our administrative team at [director@steppingstoneslittleton.com](mailto:director@steppingstoneslittleton.com). Any paperwork or notes you 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, teachers guide children using various strategies based on classroom and age. Key methods include redirection and conflict resolution.

Teachers communicate with children at their eye level, using verbal warnings, redirection, and removal when needed. Removal involves a brief time-out and helps children manage their behavior to make positive choices. Afterward, children are reminded and asked for input on their behavior moving forward.

We emphasize teaching social and emotional competence and offer resources for behavioral, mental, and developmental issues. Physical or corporal punishment, withholding food or affection, and tactics that humiliate a child are **never** allowed, as they can cause confusion, distress, or escalate situations, contrary to our philosophy.

### Nap

The State of Colorado mandates that Stepping Stones Learning Center provide a rest period for all children enrolled in full-day care. Infants must not be left to cry for more than 10 minutes, as per licensing requirements. Children who do not fall asleep after 30 minutes will be given a quiet activity to engage in, allowing their sleeping classmates time to rest.

Infants are allowed to sleep on demand, while toddlers and preschoolers are permitted to rest until 2:30 PM. At 2:30 PM, any child still sleeping will be gently woken and given time to wake up. Children may bring a blanket or a small, soft, naptime-appropriate item from home, such as a stuffed animal. These items should not make noise, contain prohibited materials, or create distractions during rest time. For classrooms with children under three years old, it is important to avoid items that pose choking hazards, such as glass/beaded eyes or straps/strings. Blankets and rest items from home can be transported daily or taken home weekly for laundering.

Children under 12 months will be placed in a safe sleep environment, with pacifiers encouraged and armless sleep sacks provided. The crib will contain no other materials aside from a thin, fitted crib sheet, which is washed daily. All staff working with infants are required to complete Safe Sleep and SIDs Prevention training annually.

Children will not be forced to nap, nor will they be woken before the end of the center's quiet time. However, they are expected to engage in age-appropriate, quiet, and non-disruptive

activities if they do not fall asleep or wake early.

### 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. All use of media will require advance notice and written permission from the child's parents/guardian. No child under the age of 3 will ever be offered media use time.

### Volunteers/Visitors

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!

### Parent Education Series and Staff Development

We value the unique skills and experiences our staff and families bring. We provide at least one parent education session yearly, and more if possible. If you wish to volunteer your time or expertise, please contact our director.

Our director will annually explain our curriculum, assessment methods, and their alignment with early learning guidelines. If we can't hold this event or interest is low, we'll provide informational packets with home activities.

### 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 four key transitions in our policy will focus on:

**Transitions into the program:** This will involve ensuring families have access to Brightwheel prior to starting care, including all necessary documents, handbooks, and informational handouts. Families will receive a welcome message from their child's teacher and an invitation to ask any questions they may have.

**Children transition within our program within a cohort system:**

A cohort system is used within our program to help us manage staff schedules and ensure that children feel comfortable with multiple members of the teaching team. This system is particularly useful during our long operating hours or when we experience lower staffing levels. Each cohort consists of specific groups of children and their assigned teachers.

Our cohorts are:

Infants: Bears, Foxes, Hedgehogs

Toddlers: Bunnies, Squirrels, Coyotes

Preschool: Porcupines, Owls, Raccoons

We have designated opening and closing classrooms within these cohorts, which helps in staggering our staff throughout the day. This system allows for consistency, as children become familiar with multiple teachers who can step in if another teacher needs to substitute or when children transition into a new class.

To keep families informed, we make updates on Brightwheel and post notices on classroom doors when children move in and out of different rooms. Additionally, when children are getting ready to move into the next classroom up, having had a chance to visit is extremely helpful. Expect that your child will have transition visits in order to create an easier move up. You will receive welcome messages and move up messages via Brightwheel when their move up date is set.

**Family transitions outside of the program:** If a family is experiencing significant changes, it is beneficial for our team to be informed. While we do not require all details, a brief conversation indicating that a child may have extra feelings or questions, how the family prefers these to be handled, or a general “Handle with Care” notice can greatly assist us in providing responsive care.

**Transitions when leaving the program:** It's helpful to know where your child is going after Stepping Stones, such as their next school or state. This allows us to connect with local schools and support your child's feelings about the change. We have numerous resources to aide in this type of transition on our website, at [www.SSLCofLittleton.com](http://www.SSLCofLittleton.com)

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. We will invite families to numerous events and opportunities to get to know one another, and our staff too! We value parent participation, conferences, and any opportunity to work with the families of the children we provide care and education to! We encourage families to be active in communication with their child's teaching team, and share if they have big news, fun ideas, and more! We also ask that each child bring an updated family picture to each new classroom, which will be posted for your child to see, on our family wall.

### School Calendar

We aim to publish the school calendar at least 6 months in advance for events, closures, and modified schedules. If changes are necessary, we will provide a minimum of 2 weeks' notice, often more. The calendar is available in Brightwheel, on our front doors, and on our website.

### Continuity of Care and Child:Teacher Ratio

We aim to create an environment where children feel comfortable and secure, with their needs attended to. A healthy bond between a caregiver and child is important, so we believe in continuity of care and maintaining low ratios. Each classroom has a lead teacher and an assistant/co-teacher assigned. These teachers work with their group daily, and the staff in each classroom remains consistent, except when a teacher is absent for personal reasons or vacation. We also employ float staff and have a strong management presence within the classrooms, ensuring that well-trained team members are always available for your child. While we often follow state ratios, we strive to exceed expectations and maintain lower child-to-staff ratios whenever possible to enhance each child's experience.

The state ratios are as follows:

Infants and Toddlers 6 weeks to 2 years: 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

### Leadership Team and Contact Information

Address: 10670 Bradford Road Littleton, Colorado 80127

Phone: 303-904-1121

Email: [Director@SteppingStonesLittleton.com](mailto:Director@SteppingStonesLittleton.com)

Executive Director and Co-Owner: Ash Henshaw

Enrichment Coordinator and Co-Owner: Meredith Morris

Co-Director: Haley Orsborne

Assistant Director: Brandi Kean

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. We welcome input, communication, and questions. You can see more information, such as our school calendar, a list of useful resources, and more by visiting [WWW.SSLCofLittleton.com](http://WWW.SSLCofLittleton.com)

Revised 03/07/2025

To file a complaint against this facility, contact the Colorado Department of Early Childhood 303-866-5958