

# Step By Step Preschool Child Development Center 2023-2024

## Center Handbook

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<b>Important Calendar Dates 2023-2024</b>
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Program Starts	Full Day Opens Monday, August 21
Program Starts	Enrichment Opens Monday, August 28
No School No Programs	Full Day Professional Development Monday, October 2
No School No Programs	Thanksgiving Break Thursday, Nov. 23 - Friday, Nov. 24
No School No Programs	Winter Break Thursday, Dec. 21 - Tuesday, Jan. 2
No School No Programs	Spring Break March 25 - April 1
No School No Programs	Memorial Day Monday, May 27
Last Day of School	Last Day of School Year Step By Step Friday, May 31

### **Snow/Inclement Weather Days**

If weather conditions or other school closing situations occur where STCS schools are cancelled, Step By Step will also be CLOSED for the day (both Full Day and Enrichment). The best source for weather closings information is the district web site at [www.stcs.org](http://www.stcs.org) or local TV.

A Community Education program developed in the interest of the  
Saginaw Township Community Schools.

The Community Education Department is located in the Board of Education Office, 3465 N. Center Road. Office phone number is 797-1847. Step By Step's phone number is 989-399-8527 or E-mail [commed@stcs.org](mailto:commed@stcs.org).

## **Philosophy**

Step By Step Preschool Child Development Center was established to offer a quality and caring environment for children ages 3 to 5 years old. It is designed to operate solely on the funds received from the fee structure. Board of Education funds are not used to subsidize the program.

## **Mission Statement**

Step By Step's mission is to offer quality care, a nurturing, developmentally appropriate, and educational environment for preschool age children. Policies will meet or exceed state guidelines for the safety of the children under our care. The programs will be open for any child through our registration process.

## **Goals** \* To provide quality programs.

- \* To provide programs at a reasonable cost and in a convenient location
- \* To provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment
- \* To enhance children's physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth through a developmentally appropriate, literacy based curriculum
- \* To recognize and encourage individual interests and talents

## **Staff Screening**

Saginaw Township Community Schools, by policy, screens all prospective employees with the following procedures:

1. Employment History Check - Authorization for Disclosure of Information regarding Unprofessional Conduct pursuant to Public Acts of 1996
2. Verification from Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs that the staff member has not been placed on the Central Registry for abuse or neglect
3. Live scan Fingerprint screening - all staff members are screened through this process prior to employment. This screening process is conducted by the Saginaw Intermediate School District
4. Fingerprint screening through the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

## **Staff Training**

All staff has the opportunity to participate in conferences and training workshops relating to child development throughout the year. All staff are required to have current CPR and First Aid certifications.

## **Class Size**

The Childcare Preschool Center and the Enrichment Program have a student-staff ratio of 10 to 1.

## **License**

The Step By Step Preschool Child Development Center is licensed by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. Directors have met the necessary requirements in child development, child psychology, and early childhood education. The center meets the necessary requirements for licensing.

## **Admission Policy**

Any child who is 3 to 5 years old, toilet trained, and is able to feed themselves may attend. A completed enrollment packet, accompanied by a \$25 per child non-refundable enrollment fee, must be returned to Community Education at least 2 days prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> day of attendance, provided a space is available. Required forms need to be on file before the child enters the program.

## **Health Records and Immunizations**

Each submitted application package must include a Child Information Record form, Background Information form, Parent Consent & Parent Contract forms, and a copy of the child's birth certificate. Upon enrollment, the parent/guardian must submit a Health Appraisal form, completed and signed by a physician, stating that the child is in good health, along with any health restrictions, allergies, or medications the child may be taking. The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs requires this form along with (or including) a copy of the child's immunization record to be in our records before your child can attend the center. All required shots must be up-to-date. Failure to meet these requirements can result in the denial of admission to the center. This form is valid for one year from the date of the physician's signature and must be resubmitted each year.

## **Child Information Record (Emergency Record)**

This form is required by the State licensing agency and needs to be filled out entirely (each line must show completed information or a line through it showing you read it). This form will be reviewed, and you will be notified if additional information is needed. If you have any changes during the year, please notify the Step By Step Preschool Childcare Center Director. This form must be completed, signed, and on file in order for your child to begin attending. In the event of injury or illness, every effort shall be made to notify the parents/guardians or designated person indicated on the child information form. If unable to contact someone, instructions on the form will be implemented. Unless notified in writing, the staff will only release your child to an authorized person as indicated on the child's information form.

## **Hours of Operation**

The Step By Step Preschool Childcare Program is open Monday - Friday from 7 am to 6 pm. The center operates year round, including the summer months. The Preschool Enrichment Program is open from 8:30-11:30 am during the school year. Both programs follow the school district's holiday Calendar closure day schedule (please see Calendar Dates at the end of the handbook) and are closed on holidays. There are days when schools are closed for school events (Record days, Professional Development Days, special ½ days, etc.). On most of these days, Step By Step remains open. Please check the messages on the sign-in/sign-out table for information about changes in the regular schedule.

## **Arrival/Pick-up Procedure**

When dropping off and picking up your child, the parent/guardian must come into the building to sign the child in and out. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, that person must be listed on the Child Information Record or the child will not be allowed to leave. That person must be at least 16 years old and provide picture identification if requested.

For your child's safety and in case of an emergency, please choose a code word and enter it on the information card. The use of this code word is the only way a child can be released per a telephone request to someone not listed. To avoid confusion, please let staff know if anyone other than the parent/guardian will be picking up your child - even if they are on the Child Information Record.

**Parking:** Step By Step is located in the west wing of Arrowwood School. Please use the west parking lot when dropping off or picking up your child. Do not use the bus loop drive. Once inside, you are asked to remain in the Step By Step area. For the safety of the children and building security, exterior doors will remain locked. Please use the buzzer/camera button by the door and staff will let you into the center.

If you need to go to another part of the school other than our rooms, park at the front east main entrance of Arrowwood and go to the office. All parents and visitors using the main door to Arrowwood MUST check in at the school office to obtain a pass. Please respect the school's rule on this issue.

## **Late Pickup Policy**

If a child is not picked up by the ending time (11:30 am for Preschool Enrichment; 6 pm for Preschool Childcare), the person listed on the Child Information Record will be called after 10 minutes and a late fee of \$15 per 10 minutes will be assessed. A call from parents that they are going to be late is appreciated, but it will not eliminate the late fee. If we are unable to reach the child's parents/guardians, we will call others on the Child Information Record form. After a half-hour, if we are unable to contact anyone for pickup, police may be contacted. The police will be asked for assistance and a decision about calling Protective Services will be made. If a child is picked up late more than twice, the parent/guardian may lose the privilege of using the program.

## **Snow/Inclement Weather Days**

When Saginaw Township Community Schools are closed for weather or other school-closed situations, the Step By Step programs will also be closed. The best source for weather closings information is the district web site at [www.stcs.org](http://www.stcs.org) or most local TV stations.

## **Daily Schedule**

Our program is carefully planned to meet the needs of the preschool child. Each session may include art or craft projects, finger plays, songs or music, stories and discussion of the weekly or monthly "theme." The physical environment in an early childhood center helps determine the way the curriculum is provided. Classrooms are center-oriented and allow for flexibility and child choice. Activities are presented in both small and large groups as well as on a one on one basis. Each day a variety of challenge levels are included in center choice time. Time for children to explore and play, both indoors and outdoors, are available each day, weather permitting. Children feel secure and comfortable when they know what to expect. The Center provides a daily routine that is predictable. Varied and stimulating experiences are planned for choice time.

## **Rest Time**

For the full-day program, we are required to provide one (1) hour of rest time per day, which is immediately after lunch (approximately 1:30 - 2:20 pm). It is not necessary for a child to sleep, but they must remain quiet on their mats so the children that do sleep are not disturbed. Most children in this age group sleep.

## **Open Door Policy/Visitors/Volunteers**

Parents may schedule a visit to the center at a time when the center is open. Please realize, however, that the staff member's time and attention must be directed toward the children and they may only be able to visit with parents on a limited basis. If a parent requests to volunteer, SISD criminal and Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs background checks may be required before volunteers can be with children. The cost of the fingerprinting is up to \$85, payable by the volunteer.

## **Staff/Parent Communication**

Each program has a specific place for information such as newsletters and other important information relating to the program and the children. It is important to check this location daily. The first week of each month, the center newsletter will be attached to your weekly schedule. It helps to keep you informed of your child's activities and also provides a source of current information for you.

Parents will be called as soon as possible when staff observes or is made aware of an accident, incident, or change in a child's health that results in a child not able to participate with the group. For accidents, incidents, or changes in a child's health that are not serious, the staff will continue to monitor the child's status and talk with parents when they arrive for pickup.

## **Withdrawal Policy**

Withdrawal from either programs may voluntarily be done at any time. The parent must notify the center director in writing of the last day of attendance. All unpaid fees must be paid at that time.

## Payment Policy

Weekly payment/schedules are available on the previous Monday of the week to be scheduled. Please fill out with arrival and pick up times. Paper schedules with full payment (check, money order, or cashier's check payable to STCS, or cash) are required by 6 PM each Wednesday prior to the week of care requested.

If paying by credit card, the online Skyward Family Access program must be used. Online schedules with full payment are due by 8:00 am on Friday prior to the week of care requested. See the Director or website for online directions. There is a \$1.75 convenience fee for using the online system. If we do not receive your schedule and payment on time, a late fee of \$20 will be added. The fee schedule is listed on the schedule form.

Online schedules must be PAID IN FULL for all the days selected. If an online schedule is submitted WITHOUT full payment, a late fee of \$20 will be charged.

## Rates

Full Day Preschool Childcare  
Open 7 am-6 pm, Monday through Friday  
**4-days per week minimum required**

Preschool Enrichment  
Open 8:30 - 11:30 am, Monday through Thursday  
**2-days per week minimum required**

### Full Time Rates (Monday through Friday)

5 days \$150 per week  
4 days \$120 per week

### Enrichment (Monday through Thursday)

4 days \$60 per week  
3 days \$45 per week  
2 days \$30 per week

Please make all checks or money orders payable to STCS.

## Returned Check (NSF)

All returned checks are subject to a \$20 fee. It is the responsibility of the parent to submit the NSF amount and fee to Community Education by cash, money order or credit/debit card immediately upon notification. Failure to comply may result in discontinuation or termination of Step By Step services.

## Credits

You will be allowed 6 credit days per school year, with an additional 6 credit days if attending during the summer. The minimum attendance for each child enrolled in the programs is 4 days per week for full time students and 2 days per week for enrichment students. If your child is scheduled and they will be unable to attend, please notify the center if you choose to use your credit.

Credits will also be given for inclement weather days, or other situations when Step By Step is closed. Credits for those types of days will be carried for three weeks. If they are not used within that time, the credit will be forfeited.

## Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Clients

Our centers participate in the MDHHS Direct Payment Program. If your income level may meet the criteria for this program, please contact the local MDHHS offices (411 E Genesee Ave, Saginaw, MI 48607. Phone is 758-1100) to meet with a caseworker who will assist you. Since this process can take several weeks, please begin the process prior to scheduling your child.

If you need child care services while you wait for MDHHS approval, you will be expected to pay 100% of the current rates. There is no refund of payments made prior to receipt of approval from MDHHS. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to know when your child's authorization expires and to be re-authorized before that date. It is also the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the center of any changes in the authorization of payments for your child.

A separate schedule with fee amount are used for MDHHS eligible parents to fill out and pay weekly.

### **Clothing and Personal Belongings**

Please make sure your child has at least one change of clothing at the center and water bottle for the water filling station. Accidents do happen. Each child will have a cubby with their name on it to store personal belongings. Sleep mats are provided by the center, but if they require a small blanket or stuffed animal from home for rest time, they must fit in their cubby. There is not room for pillows. All items **MUST** be labeled with their name, including coats, hats, mittens, boots, water bottles, lunch boxes, etc. We discourage toys from home as they can become lost or broken. Cubbies are also used to send home artwork, notes, etc., so be sure to check them daily.

### **Nutritional Snack and Food Service Policy**

For both Full Day and Enrichment programs, a nutritional snack will be provided in the morning. Please do not send breakfast to the center.

For the full-day Preschool Childcare Program, parents are responsible for providing a nutritional lunch from home (no soda pop please) or money to purchase a hot lunch offered by STCS. Step By Step students may qualify for free/reduced lunch through the Nutrition Services program. Call 989-793-9713 for application details. Snack and lunch menus will be posted. When you drop off your child, give any lunch money to a staff member and let them know if your child is having hot or cold lunch.

Please do not leave money with your child or in their lunch box. Lunch account checks should be made out to the Arrowwood Food Service. Hot lunch is not available on some days when the school is not in session. Please check the message board at the sign-in/sign-out table for those days. A nutritional snack will be also provided in the afternoon in the Full Day childcare program.

### **Medication Procedures**

Physician prescribed medications may be administered by the staff only under the following conditions:

- Medicine must be in original container clearly marked with directions, dosage, and child's name.
- Parents must sign a permission slip and alert the staff of any side effects the medicine may cause.
- **DO NOT** send any medicines with your child. Medicine must be given to the child by staff.

If your child is to take or use ANY type of medicines during the time he is in our care, a separate medication permission form must be completed. Please obtain this form from staff.

### **Discipline Policy**

The staff shall use positive methods of discipline, which encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. We will keep the rules simple and clear so that the children know what to expect. The following steps will be taken at the center:

1. The staff will inform and discuss with the children the rules and regulations and review them frequently.
2. Upon the first infraction of a serious nature, the staff will discuss the behavior with the child.
3. Upon the second serious infraction, the child who is disrupting the activities of others will be removed from the group to a "time-out" area for a short period of time (one minute per year of age) after which the child will return to the day's activities. The parent shall be informed of a repeated need for "time-out".
4. Non-severe discipline or restraint may be used when reasonably necessary, based on a child's development, to prevent a child from harming himself or herself or to prevent a child from harming other persons or property.

5. If further disciplinary action is necessary, a conference will be held with the parent, the staff member, and the Community Services Director. The center Director has the responsibility to suspend any student whose behavior interferes with the safety, quality, and/or routine of the program. The parent and student will be informed as to the length of time for suspension or expulsion. Arrangements will also be made concerning the conditions to be met for the child to return to the program.

6. The program director, in consultation with the Director of Community Services, has the discretion to determine if the program is unable to meet the needs of a child which can result in termination from the program. They may also determine that it is not in the best interest of the program or other children enrolled to have a child continue to attend, resulting in termination.

### **Biting Policy and Guidelines**

Biting is a natural part of a child's development. Children bite for a variety of reasons such as teething, lack of verbal skills, over stimulation, hungry, tired, aggression, attention-getting device, etc. Biting is an issue that often surfaces in a preschool program setting. Biting, however, is not an acceptable behavior. The staff will carefully, thoughtfully, and consistently handle the biting situation by:

- Stopping the action quickly by saying "No" or "Stop."
- Assessing the situation quickly to determine the cause of biting (child's frustration, hunger, teething, fatigue, separation anxiety, etc.).
- Attending to the child that has been bit.
- Talking to the biter in the following manner: "Biting hurts; teeth are not for biting our friends." "Teeth are for eating food." "It is okay to be upset, but it is not okay to bite our friends." "Use your words for what bothers you and the teacher will help you."
- Redirecting the biter to another activity or area.
- Finishing the interaction on a positive note by reassuring the biter that they are still important to you and the rest of the staff.

If the biting continues, the child will be put in time out for (1) minute per year of age. If a bite breaks the skin and/or draws blood, the child will be sent home for the day. The staff will notify the parents of the biter and the parents of the child that was bitten informing them of the severity of the incident. Parents will be asked to work cooperatively with the staff to rectify the biting situation. If the biting becomes ongoing and severe, and the child continues to bite and injure other children, it will be necessary for the parents to withdraw their child from the program.

### **Child Custody Policy**

Only those persons listed on the Child Information Record, and legal parents or guardians may take a child from the center. According to licensing regulations, either parent may take the child unless there is a court injunction prohibiting one parent from visitation rights. Please list both parents on the Child Information Record, either in the parent section, or the authorized persons' section. Please also list the relationship to the child beside the authorized persons' name. (By law, any person who can PROVE parental relationship by birth certificate, etc., would have the right to take the child, and personnel could not legally prevent it.)

If a parent has doubt as to whether a child would be safe in the center during family conflicts, please understand that the staff cannot keep a child from either parent at one parent's request, without an injunction. All persons picking up children for parents, or parents not normally in the center, may be asked to show picture identification. If an emergency arises and it is necessary for a different person to pick up your child, please add that person's name to the card. A child will not be released to anyone not listed unless prior arrangements have been made between parent and director. The person picking up the child must have identification. These rules will be relaxed as staff gets to know families, and ID will no longer be required for individuals known by staff.

## **Sick Child Policy**

We have the responsibility of the well-being of all the children trusted to our care. Please do not send your child to the center with an illness that could be spread to other children or staff. Children do get sick. Please arrange for a "back up" plan when your child is sick and cannot attend the center. There may be times when your child develops symptoms of an illness during the day. We will notify the parent of the child's condition. Parents will be asked to take the child home if the following symptoms are evident:

- Fever - temperature of 101 degrees or higher
- Diarrhea - two or more loose, watery stools
- Sore Throat - if child complains more than twice during the day
- Ear ache - if child complains more than twice during the day
- Common Cold Symptoms - runny "green" nose, persistent cough, watery eyes, difficulty in breathing
- Pink Eye
- Vomiting
- Head Lice
- Ringworm
- Other contagious/infectious conditions - chicken pox, measles, mumps, impetigo

All parents will be alerted to any contagious/infectious illnesses at the center. The following is our policy for allowing the child to return to the center:

- Fever - normal temperature of 98.6 degrees for 24 hours
- Diarrhea - 24 hours without diarrhea
- Vomiting - 24 hours without vomiting
- Head Lice - 24 hours after treatment and no nits (louse eggs) evident
- Ringworm - 48 hours after treatment - affected areas scabbing and drying - affected area covered either by clothing or a bandage.
- Pink eye - 24 hours after treatment and no discharge from eye
- When a contagious disease is no longer communicable
- If medication has been prescribed - 24 hours after first dosage

Your child must be able to participate in the center's daily activities, which includes outside play. If your child is too sick to go outside, your child is too sick to be at the center. There may be times when a physician's written permission is requested before your child is allowed to return to the center.

## **Fire/Tornado/Critical Incident Procedures**

The children will be made aware of the fire drills, tornado drills, and critical incident drills, and will practice them three times or more for each situation during the school year or season. The children will follow rules, evacuation routes and instructions as posted.

## **Pesticides**

As part of the district's pest management program, pesticides are occasionally applied. You have the right to be informed prior to any pesticide application made to the school grounds and buildings. In certain emergencies, pesticides may be applied without prior notice, but you will be provided notice following any such application. If you need prior notification, contact your child's school for more information.

## **Licensing Notebook**

Centers must have documentation on file that parents were notified of the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs licensing notebook. The licensing notebook notification must include the following:

- The center maintains a licensing notebook of licensing inspection and special investigation reports and related corrective action plans.
- The notebook is kept in the room.
- The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours.
- Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are available on the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

## **Discrimination Policy, Religion and School**

It is the policy of Saginaw Township Community Schools that no person shall, on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, age, disability, height, weight, or marital status or any other status covered by federal, state, or local law be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to, discrimination during any program, activity, service, or in employment. Every effort will be made to have parents provide information regarding the celebration, traditions, and history of a variety of religious beliefs to present to children so that many nationalities are represented.

## **Mandated Reporting**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The staff of Step By Step are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The staff is not required to discuss their suspicions with parents before reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition before making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate nutrition for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside

## **Online Information**

To access information regarding Step By Step, visit the district's website at [www.stcs.org/comed](http://www.stcs.org/comed). The Step By Step link is to the left.

## **Income Tax Information**

For the purpose of childcare tax deductions, a payment statement will be issued upon request with a one-week notice. Submit your request to [commed@stcs.org](mailto:commed@stcs.org). Our Federal Tax ID Number is 38-6032446.

## **Questions / Concerns**

Please bring any questions and/or concerns to the Step By Step Preschool Center Director, Pat Buchholz (989-399-8527 or email [psbuchho@stcs.org](mailto:psbuchho@stcs.org)). For specific questions and/or concerns about the Enrichment Program, the first contact should be with the Enrichment Teacher. If your questions and/or concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction, please contact the Director of Community Services, Steve Elliott, at 399-8029 or [saelliot@stcs.org](mailto:saelliot@stcs.org).