



Stepaway Handbook

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The Stepaway Process

At Stepaway we know that Preschool is often the first group experience for young children. In order to ease the transition from home to school, we offer the Two's program as the first "*step*" in the process of growing independence. In the Two's program, your child will have the security of having a parent or caregiver in the classroom for a few weeks while beginning to relate to peers and teachers before completing the year on his or her own.

The next "*step*", the 3-year old class, enables your child to learn to be more independent in a classroom of peers and teachers. Children will have a variety of learning experiences designed to foster growth of the whole child, including but not limited to foundational learning in math, science, language arts, fine and gross motor skills, and creative arts.

The next "*step*" before elementary school is our 4-year old program where your child will continue to grow in confidence while being exposed to a larger variety of activities. This will enable the child to be continually challenged and make increased cognitive, social, emotional and physical strides.

The final "step" for some children may be our Pre-K program, which is geared toward children who may need to take one more final step with their cognitive, social, or emotional growth before entering Kindergarten. Children in the Pre-K program often have fall/winter birthdays and may be turning five later than their peers. Our Pre-K program runs very much like a Kindergarten classroom where children can practice their skills while also receiving both individualized and whole group instruction.

The Stepaway process will give your child the foundational learning necessary to grow a love for learning through our teaching of Christian values, our belief in learning through play and experiences, and our dedication to the Connecticut Early Learning Standards.

Your Child At School

Our preschool is a safe place in which children can develop to their fullest potential. Your child will have an expanded world to explore, social contacts with others their own age, and opportunities for group experiences.

During the formative years, children need wise guidance to help them form good habits and to give them a sense of personal worth.

Here at Stepaway, each child's individuality is respected throughout all stages of development: physical, emotional, social and cognitive. We recognize that each child develops at his or her own natural pace. We nurture this natural progression of developmental stages and provide each child with opportunities for maximum growth in each area.

In physical development, we know that large muscle experiences precede the finer development of small muscles. It is essential that preschoolers be given freedom to move around the classroom and the playground. This gives them a chance to explore their environment and allows them to observe and integrate movements of other children and adults. Small muscle development and eye-hand coordination occurs as children use pencils, scissors, paint brushes, markers, etc. As explorations with large and small muscles take place, the patterns of spatial relationships are established — up, down, in, out, over, under, far, near, between, beside, etc.

Feelings are intense in a young child. We help emotional and social growth by helping the child explore and handle his or her feelings in relation to others. This is a crucial developmental process. Long before children are proficient verbally, they clearly and non-verbally express excitement, frustration, loneliness, anger, jealousy, and happiness. Learning that it is **all right** to feel and express a range of emotions is essential for emotional health. We also try to help our children in their development of control and how they can express feelings in a constructive manner. In order to encourage the development of independence, preschool children need to know what kinds of controls are expected of them while in school. Our loving staff help the children in their development of their own inner controls.

Stepaway preschool is a world planned just for children with furniture built for their size and materials of all kinds for their experimentation. In this type of environment, children will try out their own ideas and learn to solve their own problems knowing that their feelings and efforts will be understood and appreciated. They will find that both happy and unhappy feelings can be expressed and will be understood and shared. They will recognize and accept definite limits within an atmosphere of flexibility and freedom.

staff

The staff members at Stepaway are selected for their qualities of warmth, understanding, and knowledge of the specific needs of preschool children. The staff meets regularly to plan and discuss school programs and curriculum development. All staff members have First Aid certification and attend continuing education courses yearly. Director, Hannah Barnett, has a bachelor's degree in Family and Consumer Sciences, minor in Child and Family Studies, as well as a master's degree in Child and Adolescent Psychology. She has been working with preschool aged children for over seven years.

School Calls: The school telephone number is **203-261-4717**. When calling the school, please ask for the specific teacher you wish to speak with. Please note that teachers may not be able to take calls while with the children. Staff members do take messages and return calls at a more convenient/appropriate time if necessary. The school's e-mail address is stepaway423@gmail.com

The School Board

Stepaway Preschool is a traditional nursery school that is a ministry of the Stepney Baptist Church. The School is governed by the Stepaway Preschool Board, made up of members of the Church that report to the Church Board.

The School Board is responsible for setting up standards, hiring personnel, working closely with the Director and teaching staff, problem solving, maintaining a sound budget, and being available to the parents of our nursery school children.

Board Members 2023-2024:

Pastor Kevin Merritt
Scott Osbourne
Carena DiBello
Eddy Jean Pelak

Goals

Stepaway preschool provides your child with a rich environment and varied learning experiences. These emphasize the child's physical, social, emotional, cognitive and spiritual growth.

Physical Growth: Stepaway is fortunate to have a large main space that can accommodate many different experiences. There is equipment and space to develop muscles by running, jumping, climbing, and rhythmic body movement. In addition, playing outdoors is an integral part of the daily program.

Social Growth: There is opportunity to learn to respect the rights of others, to share and take turns, to follow and to lead, to try out adult roles and to be a child in a child's world. The classes are staffed by warm and caring teachers, giving the child the chance to relate to adults other than their parents or caregivers.

Emotional Growth: We put an emphasis on creativity, self-direction, and solving real-life problems. The environment is a safe one in which the child can learn to value him or herself as an individual and as a member of a peer group.

Cognitive Growth: There are a variety of materials for children to use. Language skills are developed through conversation, stories, games, and music. Mathematical and science skills are developed through the use of materials like sand and water play, blocks, tools, and cooking, observation and an understanding of how things work.

Cultural and Spiritual Growth: There is opportunity in every aspect of the program to help children value our democratic way of life by learning to recognize the worth of each individual and the equal value of all racial and ethnic groups. Christian values are emphasized and Christian holidays are observed.

Program Description

Two's Class: Two-year-olds are terrific...and challenging! So much growing occurs during this year in the child's life that we sometimes have trouble keeping up with it all. They are learning to get along with others and are developing new thinking and talking skills. Large and small motor skills are developing and must be practiced over and over again until they are perfected. They are struggling to be independent one minute and then need help the next.

The Two's class provides an opportunity for your child to experience a planned environment that is specifically designed with two's in mind. Because two year olds are still parallel playing and don't really start to play cooperatively until the middle of the three year old year, we ask that you participate in the planned activities with your child during the weeks that you are here, with the goal being that they will engage with the teachers as the weeks go along. Remember, your child will model your behavior so if you are positive and engaged your child will participate as well.

Each class will consist of a variety of planned activities that will help the children develop many new skills. The emphasis is on the process, or the "*doing*", not on the result or product. Hence, many of the activities will not have a picture or product to take home but they will have accomplished a great deal in the process. Your child will not be forced to do something he or she does not want to do. Two-year-olds are testing their independence and to force an activity on a child would be counterproductive.

Our two's program hopes to provide a safe and stimulating environment where children's minds and bodies can grow and where your child can have some fun with some new friends. Our goal is to begin the education of the whole child through play-based and experiential learning.

Three's & Four's Class: The days are made up a schedule that includes the following segments: guided play, clean up, meeting/circle time, snack, library time, group story times, projects, and outside play.

During guided play the children participate in a variety of planned small group and individual activities located at "interest centers" around the classroom. The teachers plan projects and rotate materials and props in the centers so that they adhere to a curriculum theme. Manipulative toys are changed often to provide opportunities for children to grow and learn.

The children are encouraged to participate in clean up throughout the day and engage in clean up and helper songs. This allows children to have fun while learning responsibility. The four-year-old children utilize a cleaning and helper chart daily.

Meeting time/circle time is a special time of the day where the activities of the morning come together through discussions and experience charts. Learning games are played and rules and routines are discussed. The children also learn to sit, listen, and take turns. Music and movement is a popular part of meeting time where children participate in creative movement and learn many songs and fingerplays.

Snack time is a time of sharing food and pleasant discussions as the teachers join the children in their morning snack. The children take turns saying a “thank you” prayer before snack. Snack is provided by Stepaway Preschool and consists of two food groups, typically some sort of cracker and fruit. The snack is occasionally the result of a cooking project prepared by the children.

As the children finish cleaning up their snack materials, they take a book for quiet reading while others are finishing up. Books for reading are rotated throughout the weeks to coincide with curriculum themes.

During group story time the children listen to a story selected by the teacher. The book often relates to our monthly theme. Stepaway has a large library of over 400-cataloged books, which is a source of many of our selections.

Playing outdoors is often a favorite activity for the children. Stepaway takes children outside in all but rainy or severely cold or windy weather on our fun playscape, in the large sandbox, or playing in our little Tykes houses.

Pre-K: Our Pre-K program closely mimics the routines of the three’s and four’s program but allows for increased independence and responsibility. In addition, the classroom is run much like that of a Kindergarten classroom to prepare children for their upcoming Kindergarten experience. A small classroom with one teacher allows for close connections which helps with social and emotional growth but also allows for individualized learning when and where necessary.

Pre-K friends utilize a job chart, practice saying the Pledge of Allegiance, spend time focusing on each letter of the alphabet, and have much more guided control over their decisions in terms of projects and dramatic play. Our Pre-K class often engages in cooperative learning and brainstorming groups throughout the week as part of a whole group instruction model that allows for all children to express their ideas and opinions. Snack time and outdoor play parallel that of the three’s and four’s class.

School Hours

Two's Classes: M/W- 9:00am-11:30am, T/TH- 9:00am-11:30am

Two's Add-on Day: Friday 9:00am-11:30am

Three's Class: T/TH 9:00am-12:00pm

Three's add-on day: Friday 9:00am-12:00pm

Three's Lunch Bunch for potty trained friends: T/TH 12:00pm-1:00pm as space allows

Four's Class: M/W/F- 9:00am-1:00pm

Four's add-on days: T/TH 9:00am-1:00pm

Pre-K class: M-F 9:00am-1:00pm

Remember to be on time for class so that your child does not miss out on valuable class activities.

Please do not enter the classroom before the start of class. The teacher needs the time before class to set up the classroom and plan the day's schedule.

Late Pick Up Policy

Two staff members, ages 18 years of age or older, will remain at the facility with the child at all times. If the child has not been picked up within thirty minutes of the child's scheduled pick up time, a staff person will attempt to call the child's parents/guardians using the numbers provided. If no one can be reached, the staff member will then attempt to call the emergency and authorized alternate adults provided by the parents/guardians at the time of enrollment. The local police will be called after 1 hour if parents or other adults specified on the permission to release forms cannot be reached. At that time, the child may be released to the police. The non-emergency number for our local police department is 203-452-2830.

Inclement Weather Policy

On snow days, or during other hazardous weather emergencies, Stepaway will follow the town of Monroe Public School system for closings, delays, or early dismissals.

- If Monroe Public Schools are closed, we will be closed.
- If Monroe Public Schools have a delayed opening, Stepaway's pre-k and 4's classes will be held from 10:00am-1:00pm and the 3's class will be held from 10:00am-12:00pm. The two's classes will be held from 10:00am-11:30am. The Lunch Bunch program will be held as scheduled.
- If Monroe Public Schools has an early dismissal, or the weather turns inclement, please use your own judgment as to whether or not to pick your child up early. We encourage you to do so, if possible, but will still close at normal time unless you are otherwise contacted. If Stepaway makes the decision to close early, the following procedure will be followed:
 - The teachers will call to notify parents that school will close early
 - If the immediate family cannot be reached, the teachers will contact the next person on the emergency release form
 - A note will be left on the outside school doors to tell parents that school closed early, could not reach them, and who the child was picked up by from the emergency form
 - If no one could be reached, we will then follow the late pick up policy
- Parents will be notified of closings and delays via email. We also encourage you to watch the local TV stations or radio stations for Monroe Public School closings/delays.
- Ratios will be maintained at all times and two staff members, 18 years or older, will remain on the premises with the children until all are picked up

In the event of other serious weather emergencies such as tornadoes or hurricanes, staff and children will remain indoors away from windows and doors. First aid staff will be on hand to administer first aid, as needed, until emergency personnel can arrive. We have safe locations in the church office and basement of the church if the need arises. Parents will be notified after the immediate danger has passed.

If there is any question in your mind about the school closing, feel free to call or email Stepaway.

****Due to COVID-19 affecting the model of Monroe Public Schools in-person learning, school closings and delays for Stepaway due to inclement weather may be decided upon by the preschool director and board.**

Tuition Policy

We are a non-profit: We are a Christian, non-profit (501c3) preschool. Tuition is set each year to cover planned expenses, the greatest of which is teachers' salaries.

Tuition: Tuition is based on a yearly program price. For your convenience, this tuition can be paid in a single lump sum, or may be paid on an installment basis throughout the course of the school year. As a family enrolled in Stepaway Preschool, you agree to be responsible for the entire year's tuition.

Financial Hardship Assistance: Any family with financial difficulties can now apply for financial assistance through FAST (Financial Aid for School Tuition). FAST is a nationwide online resource for families seeking tuition help in tough times. Interested families will pay FAST a \$45 non-refundable application fee and then provide all required financial documentation to FAST. FAST will then suggest (or not) a scholarship amount based on the family's specific financial situation. Although we cannot guarantee that FAST will grant scholarship assistance, this process is the most neutral and objective way for Stepaway Preschool to respond to any family's hardship and ensure that their specific financial needs are addressed.

Nonpayment: Nonpayment, partial payment or seriously late payment (more than 4 weeks) will result in late payment fees of \$25 per month in addition to the required tuition payment. Enrollee's guardians agree to be responsible for all fees resulting from extended non-payment, including but not limited to late fees and collection fees incurred by Stepaway Preschool during the course of tuition debt collection. Non-payment will also result in loss of previously reserved enrollment spot(s) for any future school year. We reserve the right to fill unpaid spots from our waiting list in the event that debt collection protocols are required to be enacted for non-paying individuals.

Tuition is not prorated at any time. If your child starts school in the middle of a month, full tuition for that month is to be paid. The same applies for days your child is not in school, whether it is due to illness, vacation, snow days, holidays etc., or if you move in the middle of a month.

Early Student Withdrawal

Student enrollment is for the duration of the school year. Under extreme circumstances, not to include those noted above, a family may request that the preschool board evaluate the potential for withdrawal of this agreement. The preschool board will consider these requests on a case by case basis and respond no later than a period of fourteen days from submission. Upon approval of agreement termination, the enrolled family will be responsible for payment through the end of the month for which the child's final attendance occurs.

Sick Policy

Upon enrollment at Stepaway, parents/caregivers must provide an up to date medical form showing immunization dates and the child's most recent physical exam (must be renewed on a yearly basis). A current health form must be on file at the school at all times. It is the parent/caregiver's responsibility to obtain new and current forms as necessary during the school year.

For every child's protection, please do not bring your child to school if she/he has a fever. Your child must be fever free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

If your child has been vomiting in the evening or during the night, has diarrhea, complains of stomach ache or sore throat, has consistent eye or nose discharge/consistent coughing, etc. please do not bring your child to school regardless of temperature. Please notify the school as we do keep an illness report log.

If your child has been diagnosed with strep throat or scarlet fever, he/she must be on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Written notice from your child's doctor stating when they can return to school is requested.

If a diagnosis of conjunctivitis or impetigo has been made, your child must be on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours before returning to school. Written notice from your child's doctor stating when they can return to school is requested.

If your child has chicken pox, they may return to school once all of the pox is scabbed over, dried, and crusted.

If your child has any undiagnosed rash, we will ask you to take your child home and recommend seeking medical attention. Stepaway may require a doctor's note stating that the child is not contagious before returning to school.

If your child comes to school sick or becomes sick during school hours, the parent will be notified and must provide transportation to take the child home. Stepaway staff must consider the health of all children in the building and ask for understanding if a parent is contacted regarding picking their child up from school due to possible illness.

If your child has a known allergy and/or life threatening condition, your child's doctors must fill out the Emergency Health Care Plan papers. All ACTIONS indicated therein will be followed in the event of an incident. All teachers are certified to give approved medications to the children, if appropriate paperwork is filled out and submitted to us. Emergency health care plan forms are available upon request and are a necessity for children with allergies or life saving medications.

Please email or call us if your child is sick and will be absent from class.

Administration of Medication Policy

Stepaway Preschool will only administer emergency medications which include prescribed inhalers and premeasured commercially prepared injectable medication (i.e. Epi-pens, Auvi-Q, etc.), non-prescription topical medication, and **EMERGENCY** oral medications (i.e. Benadryl).

The parental responsibilities include:

- Providing the proper medication authorization forms
- Providing the proper medication, by correct name, with appropriate expiration date
- Providing/signing an emergency care plan if necessary/required
- Medication administration form must be signed by the authorized prescriber and the parent/guardian giving the preschool authorization to administer the medication
- All forms available at the preschool

The medication authorization form must include the following information:

- Child's Name
- Address
- Birthdate
- The date the medication order was written
- Medication name
- Correct dosage and method of administration
- Time to be administered and dates to start and end the medication
- Relevant side effects
- Prescriber's plan for management should side effects occur
- Notation whether the medication is a controlled drug
- List of allergies, if any and reactions or negative interactions with foods or drugs
- Specific instructions from prescriber how medication is to be given
- Name, address, phone, and signature of authorized prescriber ordering the drug
- Name, address, phone, and signature of parents giving permission for the administration of the drug by a staff member

Please note that there are many variations of the medication administration form that medical providers have access to. It is the parents responsibility to ensure that the medication administration form clearly states that is for licensed child care centers. Please understand that your child may not be able to attend if he/she does not have the proper authorization.

All medications must be in their original child resistant safety container and clearly labeled with the child's name, name of prescription, date of prescription, and directions for use.

- Except for nonprescription medications, premeasured commercially prepared injectable medications (i.e. Epipens), glucagon and asthma inhalant medications, all medications will be stored in a locked container and, if directed by a manufacturer, refrigerated.
- Controlled medications will be stored in accordance with 21a-262-10 of the RCSA.
- Non-prescription topical medications will be stored away from food and inaccessible to children.

Staff responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring the medication administration form is complete and that the medication being received matches the medication orders and stored as directed
- The center staff will keep accurate documentation of all medications administered. Included, but not limited in the documentation are: Name, address and DOB of the child Name of the medication and dosage Pharmacy name and prescription number Name of authorized prescriber The date & time the medication was administered The dose that was administered The level of cooperation of the child Any medications errors Food and medication allergies Signature of the staff administering Any comments Parents will be notified by (means of communication) when/if a child has been administered any prescription medication.
- Staff are trained in the administration of medication by a physician, physician assistant, APRN, or RN and renewed every three years.
- Training for premeasured commercially prepared injectable medications is renewed each year. At no time is an untrained staff allowed to administer prescription medications.
- All unused or expired medication shall be returned to the parent/ guardian or disposed of if it is not picked up within one week following the termination or the order, in the presence of at least one witness.
- The center shall keep a written record of the medications destroyed when shall be signed by both parties.

Class Make Ups

There will be no make-up classes for missed school unless snow days become excessive. It is up to the discretion of the preschool board to determine whether excessive snow days can be made up as additional days in June based on schedules aligning with the church and education building. Tuition is non-refundable if classes are missed due to travel or illness.

Toys

A special toy or “lovey”, such as a blanket or pacifier, may be brought to school for our young two’s group. Oftentimes, children will put these items aside and return to them on occasion for a sense of security, give them a hug, and then resume playing with toys and friends. These items are often helpful to a young child in easing into his or her class.

Toys from home are **discouraged in our three’s, four’s, and Pre-K** groups as the children often have trouble sharing these items and the desire of the teachers is for the children to use the carefully selected toys that are presented during guided playtime. If toys are brought, the child will be asked to keep the item in the cubby. The four year old class will have a sharing time during their circle time and specific guidelines are given about what is to be brought to school and their sharing day.

PLEASE LABEL ALL TOYS THAT ARE BROUGHT TO SCHOOL.

School Attire

Parents and families should send their preschool child in comfortable, washable, play clothes. These clothes may get dirty or paint spotted throughout the day as children are exploring and creating. **PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING AND BOOTS.** Boots should be large enough so that the child can put them on easily.

Try to dress your child in layers, which will allow you to add or subtract an article of clothing when changes in the temperature occur.

Sandals and dress shoes with slippery soles are not suitable for running or climbing on the equipment. If possible, provide a pair of sneakers or rubber-soled shoes for outdoor play.

Children at this age do have accidents and or spills that will necessitate a change of clothing. Please bring an extra set of clothing in a gallon sized zip lock with your child's name and class day written on it to keep in school.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is a vital and integral part of our school curriculum. Weather permitting the children will spend some part of each school day outdoors, including the winter months.

Dress children appropriately for the time of the year:

- Snowy weather = boots, hats, mittens, and snow pants are needed.
- Rainy weather = boots, raincoats, and hats are recommended.
- Sunny days = If you wish to use sunscreen products, please apply at home before school as it is a state law that childcare staff cannot apply it to your child.

Diapering

We do have available space for diapering. Each child will bring his or her own diaper, pull-ups, and/or wipes and plastic bag for disposal. We always have extra diapers/wipes available if needed. We ask that if you use our diapers to please replace them the following week. Children must be potty trained to join our lunch bunch program in the three year old classroom.

Snack

The school will provide snack each day for the children. Two food groups will be represented such as a cracker and a fruit. We will be selecting items that are familiar and comfortable to children. We will NOT include peanut and tree nut products. If your child is allergic to any foods, please let the director and teacher know during conferences at the beginning of the year so that we can plan accordingly. The proper paperwork must be completed before your child's first day of school in order for them to attend.

Lunch

The Pre-K, fours, and Lunch Bunch threes children will be provided a lunch period each day. Below is a list of nutritious items to help you in planning what to put in your child's lunch box or bag. **All lunch boxes must contain ice packs regardless of what the contents may be. This is a State regulation.**

Water or 100% fruit juice is recommended. If using a thermos, you can economize and mix ½ juice and ½ water to make your own juice drink. Please do not send in Hi-C, Kool-Aid, soda or drinks in 'soda pop' type squeeze bottles.

Idea List:

Small Sandwiches or wraps- ham & cheese, sunflower butter & banana, turkey
Bagels with cream cheese
Ham & cheese cubes
Hard-boiled eggs
Baggie of low sugar cereal

Add-ons:

Cheese stick, sliced veggies with dip, cheese & crackers, cut up fresh fruit, yogurt, raisins, pretzels, applesauce. Please slice all grapes.

No peanut, tree nuts, or sesame items are allowed during lunch. Please label food if there may be question (i.e. using sunbutter instead of peanut butter, please label).

Birthday and Holiday Celebrations

Birthdays are a special occasion to preschool children. Children often like to share these special days with their friends at school.

Parties: Your child is welcome to celebrate his or her birthday at school. Parents may send in a special treat, napkins, cups, juice, and one favor if they desire. Party arrangements must be cleared with the child's teacher in advance. If invitations are made for a party outside of school hours, an invitation must be included for every child in the class in order for Stepaway teachers to hand out.

Holidays: Christian holidays are celebrated at Stepaway Preschool. The music, art, and language arts are correlated with the holiday themes. We are also willing to adapt our program to include all diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Please discuss your customs and traditions with your child's teachers if you would like them to be represented in the class.

Handwashing Policy

Staff shall wash their hands:

Before and after changing a child's diaper
After toileting or assisting a child using the toilet
Before eating or handling food, or feeding children
After handling bodily fluids (saliva, nasal secretions, blood, vomit, etc.)
After handling soiled items, such as garbage
After handling animals/animal cages
Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Children shall wash their hands:

Before entering the classroom
Before and after each diaper change
After toileting
Before eating meals or snacks
After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
Before and after water or sensory play
After playground use/outdoor play
After handling animals/animal cages
Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Proper handwashing technique:

1. Wet the hands and apply a small amount of liquid soap to the hands
2. Rub hands together vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about two rounds of the "Happy Birthday" song!)
3. Wash all surfaces of the hands, including the backs of the hands, palms, wrists, between fingers, and fingernails
4. Rinse hands thoroughly to remove the soap lather
5. Dry hands with a single use disposable towel
6. Turn the faucet off with the towel.

Discipline Policy

Here at Stepaway Preschool, the goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control and move toward appropriate social behavior. Our staff will use developmentally appropriate methods utilized for resolving conflict including, but not limited to, positive guidance, setting clear limits and rules, and redirection.

- Children are encouraged to engage in a “talking it out” process as well as “using their words” to express their feelings when disputes arise.
- Staff will encourage children to acknowledge others’ feelings and find solutions using the children’s ideas wherever and whenever possible.
- Staff will encourage, model, and reflect positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support, and clearly defined rules.
- A child who may be disruptive or destructive of other children’s work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area.
- Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.
- Staff shall not, under any circumstances, be abusive in nature, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment.
- No child will be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the child or others, using the least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

Child Abuse & Neglect Policy

All of our staff have a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of any children involved in our center.

Child Abuse includes:

- Any non-accidental physical or mental injury (i.e. shaking, beating, burning) - Any form of sexual abuse (i.e. sexual exploitation)
- Neglect of a child (i.e. failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, education, mental care, appropriate supervision)
- Emotional abuse (i.e. excessive belittling, berating, or teasing which impairs the child's psychological growth)
- At risk behavior (i.e. placing a child in a situation which might endanger him by abuse or neglect).

Child Abuse is defined as:

- A child who has had non-accidental physical injuries inflicted upon him,
- Injuries which are at variance with the history given of them,
- Is in a condition, which is the result of maltreatment such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, and deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

Child neglect is defined as:

A child who has been:

- Abandoned
- Denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally or morally
- Allowed to live under circumstances, conditions or associations injurious to his wellbeing (CT statutes 46b-120)

Staff responsibilities: As childcare providers we are mandated by law to report any suspicion that a child is being abused, neglected or at risk.

Specifics on reporting a suspected case of abuse or neglect:

- Call the Department of Children and Families (open 24 hours a day) at 1-800-842-2288.
- The reporter's name is required, but may be kept confidential.
- Information needed: Name of child/Date of birth, address of child, phone number of child, name of parents or guardians, address of parents or guardians, phone number of parents or guardians
- Relevant information such as: physical or behavioral indicators, nature and extent of injury, maltreatment or neglect
- Exact description of what the reporter has observed
- Time and date of incident

- Information about previous injuries, if any
- Circumstances under which reporter learned of abuse
- Name of any person suspected of causing injury
- Any information reporter believes would be helpful
- Any action taken to help or treat the child
- Seek medical attention for the child – if needed Mandated reporters must report orally to DCF or a law enforcement agency within **12 hours** of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected. **Within 48 hours of making the report, the mandated reporter must submit a written report (DCF – 136) to DCF.**

Staff are protected by law from discrimination or retaliation for reporting suspected abuse or neglect (CT General Statutes, Section 17a-101e). All phone calls to DCF shall be documented and kept on file at the Center. A copy of all statements from staff and the DCF-136 shall also be kept on file.

*The management of this program supports a **zero tolerance for abuse and neglect** and will implement immediate action should there be an allegation that a staff member abused or neglected a child. The administration will protect the child, including immediate notification of a parent or guardian, once there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child in our program. Any staff member accused of abuse or neglect may be immediately removed from his or her position until DCF's investigation is completed. Based on whether the allegations were substantiated or not, the employee would either be dismissed from his/her position or allowed to return to work.*

Staff Training:

- Staff will be required to attend bi-annual staff meetings, held in September and February, focusing on the steps for reporting suspected abuse and neglect and the role of a mandated reporter.
- All new staff will be trained in these procedures prior to their start in the classroom.

Provisions for informing families of abuse and neglect policy:

A copy of this policy will be included in our parent information packet, and each family will be given a copy upon enrollment. A copy of this policy will also be posted on the parent board. When an accusation of abuse or neglect by a staff member is made, the Director must immediately inform the parents or guardians that a report has been made to DCF. Health care officials may need to talk to a child's parents to access the cause of the child's injuries and offer support and guidance.

Supervision of Children Policy

The staff/child ratio is:

1 staff member for every 4 children under the age of three years old

1 staff member for every 10 children over the age of three years old

- At no time should the group size exceed 8 children under the age of three years and/or 20 children over the age of three years old even if ratios are being observed.
- Group size shall be observed in the classroom, bathrooms, and outside
- Children must be supervised by sight and sound at all times including during transportation
- Staff shall position themselves to see as many children as possible
- When there is a mixed age group, the lower required ratio and group size for the age of the youngest child shall prevail.

No child/children should be left alone for any period of time

Field Trips:

- Staff/child ratios will be maintained while outside of the building
- Staff must bring each child's emergency contact information and the first aid kit on the field trip

Bathrooms:

- Staff must supervise children while they are using the bathroom

Playground/Outdoors:

- It will be the responsibility of all staff to ensure the safety of children on the playground. Supervision of children includes the following:
- A head count will be taken before leaving the building
- Children will be escorted by the staff to their designated play area
- Staff will encourage and demonstrate proper equipment usage and play
- Staff will circulate through the play area, supervising and interacting with the children in a positive manner
- Staff will coordinate positions so that all play activities and equipment is supervised.
- No staff person is allowed to sit or socialize with other staff during this time as the playground must be monitored/supervised at all times
- Staff may not leave children unattended or out of state-permitted ratios and groups sizes
- Children may not go inside for any reason (including to the bathroom); nor may they go back outside unless accompanied by the program staff

Woodchips:

Woodchips are used as surfacing for our playground. When children under 3 years of age are on the playground we shall:

- Be sure that all staff are aware that the woodchips pose a choking hazard to children under the age of three
- Have a phone outside at all times in case of an emergency
- Have at least one staff member that is CPR certified on the playground whenever there are children under the age of three using the playground.

Medical Emergency Procedure

In case of a medical emergency, a qualified staff member will attend to first aid as needed. Another staff member will notify the family of the child. Attempts will be made to consult with the child's physician/dentist. If neither is available, the program's medical consultants will be contacted. For extreme emergencies, 911 will be called. An ambulance will take the child and an accompanying staff member to the nearest hospital. The child's emergency permission form will be brought with them. A staff member will notify the family or caregiver to meet the child at the emergency room. Additional staff will be called in if necessary to maintain required ratios. In the event a child becomes ill while at the Center, parents will be notified and the child will be moved to a designated area where the child will be made comfortable. A staff person will remain with the child at all times.

An incident report form will be filled out. It is to be signed by the teachers present during the incident, the director, and a parent. A copy will be given to the parents. The original copy is to be placed in the school's file and a copy will be given to Stepney Baptist Church for their records.

The school should be notified of any change in your household that may affect your child; such as, the loss of a beloved pet or family member, visitors in the house, parent vacations, sickness or emergencies.

Please be sure that you have read and filled out your child's emergency information sheet completely.

Evacuation Procedure

Stepaway preschool is part of the Town of Monroe's *Emergency Management Evacuation Plan*. In case of an emergency or situation where evacuation is necessary, someone from the Monroe Town Hall or Police Department will call the school to notify us and they will tell us know which evacuation center to go to.

The director or a teacher will call the Board of Education school bus company and speak with the dispatcher. They will arrange to have a bus sent to the school to transport the children to the evacuation center that is announced. Teachers will obtain emergency cards before leaving the school and will leave a note on the door for parents telling which evacuation center we have gone to. Parents will be phoned as soon as possible and notified of where to pick up their children. Ratios will be maintained at all times and two staff 18 years or older will remain with the children until all children are picked up. In the event a parent cannot be reached, we will follow the *Left-child Policy*.

Emergency Fire Procedure

In the event of a fire, evacuation from the building will be through the closest fire exit. Staff will be responsible for supervising the children under their care and leading them to the fire exit. Immediately, the group will walk to the parsonage, safely away from the building, and line up to take a name to face attendance. Teachers are responsible for bringing attendance sheets for fast and accurate roll call. Director, or person in charge, is responsible for bringing a portable first aid kit and cell phone with them. Emergency files are kept at the parsonage year round in preparation for an emergency. Should it not be possible to return to the building, staff will keep children at the parsonage, church, or otherwise safe location nearby. Parents will be notified. In the event that no contact is made with parents or caregivers, we will follow the Left-Child policy.

Lock Down Procedure

In case of an emergency where it is necessary to keep children safe within the building due to an external threat, the children will be moved in small groups to the small rooms with no windows. If more space is needed and a windowed room is needed, the teachers will cover the windows with black cloth secured with velcro to prevent visibility into the space. If more space is required other rooms may be used. The teachers will bring an emergency pack into the room with them. The pack contains crackers and water, a first aid kit, any medicine that any child might need, a phone, the children's emergency cards, some books, and / or small toys.

If the threat is an internal one, the teachers will evacuate the building using the emergency exits and seek shelter in a neighboring building.

The director (or acting director in case of director's absence) will call the children's parents and request that each parent come to pick up their child. When the area is safe, each child will be individually dismissed. For dismissal from the school building parents will be asked to pull their car up to the double red doors facing the parking lot or the Vazzy's parking lot and call the school to request their child's dismissal.

Parents Grievance Policy

Stepaway preschool is committed to having open communication between teachers, the Director, and the Board of Directors. Part of this commitment is encouraging a positive atmosphere in which any problem, complaint, suggestion, or question receives a timely response from the director and the school board.

Stepaway strives to ensure fair and honest treatment of all families.

If you disagree with established rules, policies, or practices regarding Stepaway, you may express your concern to the director or the school board prior to the start of the school year to allow for evaluation, clarification, or your child's withdrawal from the program, if desired. If a situation occurs during the school year that you believe is unjust or inequitable, or if you have a problem or concern that presents itself during the course of the school year, it is your right to inform the director and try to informally resolve the problem. If this is not successful, you are encouraged to make use of the following steps.

1. Parent or caregiver will present the problem to the director after the incident occurs. The first step should be initiated as soon as possible and at least within five (5) business days of the incident. If the director is unavailable, or the parent believes it would be inappropriate to contact the director, the parent may present the problem directly to the school board. The director and/or the school board will document the problem.
2. The director will respond to the problem during the discussion or after consulting with the school board, as necessary. It is hoped that most problems will be resolved at this step.
3. If the parent feels that further consideration is required, the parent may, within ten (10) business days of the director's response refer the problem in writing to the school board.
4. The school board will counsel and advise the parent or caregiver and schedule a meeting with the director, if necessary.

The parent may, at their sole discretion, discontinue the complaint procedure at any step.

Not every problem can be resolved to everyone's total satisfaction. It is only through understanding and discussion of problems that parents and Stepaway staff can develop confidence in each other. This confidence is important to the operation of an effective and harmonious family experience.

**Stepaway reserves the right to terminate the relationship at any time, for any reason.*