



## **Policies and Parent Handbook**



## **First Steps Parent Quick Guide**

First Steps Child Care Center exists to provide caring, high quality care for every child. We work to develop caring, respectful, and positive relationships with children from infancy through school age by partnering with families to support each child's Christian growth and development.

### **Our Services**

We provide year-round child care, before school care, and after school care for up to 80 children ages 6 weeks through 13.

### **Our Hours**

We are open Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. except on select holidays. When there are weather emergencies, we are closed when the Oconomowoc Area School District is closed.

### **Available Schedules**

Child care (6 weeks through 4K): 1-5 days per week. We charge a daily rate or half-day rate per child, not on an hourly basis. Half-day schedules run from 6:00 a.m. through 12:30 p.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Before and after school care (K-8): 1 to 5 days per week.

### **Items You Provide if Needed**

Please be sure your child's items are all labeled with their name. Parents provide the following items:

- Infant formula or breast milk
- Food for breakfast (optional)
- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- Blanket sleepers (both summer and winter)
- Lotions (diaper cream, sunscreen, etc. Signed authorization is required)
- Two full changes of clothing including underwear, socks, pants, and shirts that are appropriate for the season
- Clothing suitable for outside play for each season including, hats, mittens, and boots

### **Peanut-free**

We are a peanut-free and tree nut-free facility.

### **Registration and Enrollment**

Registrations are accepted on a first come first served basis. Our nonrefundable registration fee is \$50 per child or \$75 per family. Additionally, each family will be charged an annual re-registration fee of \$30 per child or \$50 per family every twelve months.

Our registration packet includes a complete list of everything needed to register your child, including our policy handbook. The following items in the packet must be completed and returned to First Steps by the first day of attendance:

- Form DCF-62, "Child Care Enrollment"
- Form DCF-44, "Health History and Emergency Care Plan"
- Form DCF-104, "Alternate Arrival/Release Agreement" (if applicable)
- Form DCF-56, "Child Care Transportation Permission" (if applicable)
- Form DCF-61, "Child Care Intake for Child Under 2 Years" (if applicable)
- First week's child care fee and registration fee

The following items are due within 30 days after your child starts attending:

- Form DPH-4192, "Day Care Immunization Record"
- Form DCF-60, "Child Health Report" or record signed by a doctor

### **Pass Code**

You will be given an entry code on your child's first day at First Steps. This code will be used both to access our facility and sign your child in and out of our care.

### **Arrival and Departure**

When you drop off or pick up your child at First Steps you must:

- Sign your child in and out using our electronic attendance system located at the Parent Sign-in station.
- Accompany your child to their assigned classroom or play area.
- Pick up your child promptly according to your contracted pick-up time.

### **Absent Child**

Please call us by 8:30 a.m. if your child will not be attending on a scheduled day.

### **Vacations Days**

All parents will be given vacation days to use at their discretion. The number of vacation days varies based on your child's schedule:

- 5 days per week receives 10 vacation days per year
- 4 days per week receives 8 vacation days per year
- 3 days per week receives 6 vacation days per year
- 2 days per week receives 4 vacation days per year
- 1 day per week receives 2 vacation days per year

Vacation days may be used as sick days (call by 8:30 am the day your child is sick), vacation days (2-week notice required), or used for a holiday (2-week notice required). All holidays that fall on your child's registered day will be charged to you unless a vacation day is used.

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## Glossary

**Director** – The individual responsible for operating First Steps and ensuring we comply with state regulations. On a day-to-day basis, the Director may delegate some responsibilities to an assistant director or lead teacher as needed. In this document, Director refers to the person who holds the Director’s responsibilities at any given time.

**Parents** – One or both natural or adoptive parents of a child, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent or guardian in the absence of the child’s parent/guardian

**Staff Members** – Includes all First Steps employees and called workers

## Philosophy and Mission Statement

### **Philosophy**

First Steps Child Care Center (First Steps) offers children a nurturing environment where they can grow physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. Our focus is to open their eyes and hearts to what God has created for them. Through faith in the Gospel, the children at First Steps are motivated to express their love for Jesus in their everyday activities. Our curriculum is theme-based including Bible lessons, large motor activities, sensory play, art, music, dramatic play, story time, science, and math.

### **Mission Statement**

First Steps Child Care Center exists to provide caring, high quality care for every child. We work to develop caring, respectful, and positive relationships with children from infancy through school age by partnering with families to support a child's Christian growth and development.

First Steps Child Care Center is state licensed for 80 children ages 6 weeks through 13 years.

## Admission

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)1

## Open Door Policy

Communication is very important for success at First Steps. We encourage staff members, guests, parents, or volunteers to share their concerns, suggestions, questions, or ideas. Communication is crucial in our efforts to maximize every child's development.

## Hours of Operation

First Steps will be open Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

We will be closed the following holidays:

New Year's Day  
Memorial Day  
Fourth of July  
Labor Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Day After Thanksgiving  
Christmas Day

If a holiday falls on a Saturday we will be closed the Friday before the holiday and if the holiday falls on a Sunday we will be closed the Monday after the holiday.

## Weather Emergency Closings

See Contingency Plans – Emergency Weather Closings

## Weapons Policy

First Steps prohibits the possession of weapons on its property, including our vehicles. Parents, children, or staff members violating this policy will be referred to appropriate law enforcement agencies. Any person desiring to bring any object that could reasonably be considered a weapon to First Steps must seek and receive approval from the Director at least one business day in advance

## Parent Information Area

We will post the following items for parents to review at the front entrance on our parent information board: state license certificate, a complete copy of the parent handbook, results of our most recent licensing visit, and a copy of the licensing regulations.

## Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on First Steps property, including First Steps vehicles. This includes any form of tobacco product or any device intended to consume nicotine or vapor.

## Changes to the Parent Handbook and Policies

We may change any policy included in the parent handbook at our discretion. We will notify you of any upcoming changes via e-mail or written notice at least two weeks in advance.

## Facility Entry and Pass Code Procedures

You will be given an entry code on your child's first day at First Steps. This code will be used to both access our facility and sign your child in and out of our care.

## Arrival and Departure

When you drop off or pick up your child at First Steps you must:

- Sign your child in and out using our electronic attendance system located at the Parent Sign-in station. If our electronic system is not functioning properly we will provide a hard copy sheet for these purposes. Full printed names and signatures are required in such instances. Attendance records are kept for the duration of children's enrollment.
- Accompany your child to their assigned classroom or play area, supervise them in the hallways, and hold their hand or carry young children in our parking lot.
- Pick up your child promptly according to your contracted pick-up time.
- Accompany your child from the classrooms/play area and supervise them in the hallways, and hold their hand or carry young children in our parking lot.

## Authorized or Impaired Pick-Ups

Your child will only be allowed to leave with an authorized pick up person. You must provide verbal or written permission to our staff members to authorize an alternative pick up person. Any non-parent picking up your child will be required to show proper identification. If an unauthorized person arrives at First Steps to pick up your child we will notify you immediately. Your child will not be released except to an authorized individual.

We will not release your child to the care of any individual who appears to be impaired. We will notify you or your designated emergency contact person immediately. If we believe a situation endangers the safety of children or staff members, we will contact the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

## Both Parents' Right to Pick Up

Under Wisconsin state law both parents have the right to pick up their child unless a court document restricts that right. If you wish to exclude your child's other parent from the authorized pick up list, you must provide First Steps with copies of the required court documents. Until we receive such documents First Steps may release your child to either parent.

## **Absent Child**

If your child's arrival is delayed by more than 30 minutes after your scheduled arrival time, the Director will call you to determine if you will need child care that day.

## **Available Schedules**

We offer full- and part-time child care. First Steps has a two-day per week minimum for children 6 weeks through 4K, but no minimum for children enrolled in Kindergarten through eighth grade.

## **Classroom Transitions**

Attendance is taken daily in each classroom and your child will be signed in and out if they change classrooms during the day. Our staff members will take the attendance sheet with each child's name and birthdate with them whenever they are taking children to a new classroom or taking them outside.

As children change rooms at the beginning or the end of the day our staff members will share important information with each other regarding your child's daily activity and any special needs.

## **Confidentiality**

First Steps will not share any information about a child or a child's family with anyone who is not authorized to receive such information. This includes personal and medical information.

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

Our staff members are trained to understand and comply with all child abuse and neglect laws, including training in the signs of potential child abuse or neglect. Child care workers are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect. We are required by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.

## **Administration Structure**

- Director
- Assistant Director
- Lead teachers
- Assistant teachers

## **Enrollment Procedures**

All parents interested in enrolling their child will meet with the Director to tour First Steps, discuss specific needs for their child, and review our policies and procedures.

Our registration packet includes a complete list of everything needed to register your child along with our policy handbook. There is a registration form and nonrefundable fee that will hold your child's spot.

All of the following items which are included in your registration packet must be completed and returned to First Steps by the first day of attendance:

- Form DCF-62, “Child Care Enrollment”
- Form DCF-44, “Health History and Emergency Care Plan”
- Form DCF-104, “Alternate Arrival/Release Agreement” (if applicable)
- Form DCF-56, “Child Care Transportation Permission” (if applicable)
- Form DCF-61, “Child Care Intake for Child Under 2 Years” (if applicable)
- First week’s child care fee and registration fee

The following items are due within 30 days after your child starts attending:

- Form DPH-4192, “Day Care Immunization Record”
- Form DCF-60, “Child Health Report” or record signed by a doctor

### Items Provided by Parents

Please be sure your child’s items are all labeled with their name. Parents provide the following items:

- Infant formula or breast milk
- Food for breakfast (optional)
- Diapers
- Baby wipes
- Blanket sleepers (both summer and winter)
- Lotions (diaper cream, sunscreen, etc. Signed authorization is required)
- Two full changes of clothing including underwear, socks, pants, and shirts that are appropriate for the season
- Clothing suitable for outside play for each season including, hats, mittens, and boots

### Parent Visits

Parents are welcome to visit First Steps at any time during the hours of operation unless parental access is prohibited by court order. Parents must provide the Director with a copy of any court order for inclusion in your child’s file.

When you visit please understand that separating from a parent may cause temporary stress for your child depending on their age.

If you request a conference with your child’s teacher it will be scheduled after our regular business hours.

### Pets

First Steps does not permit animals in our facility except for service animals.

### Children’s Records

The Director will inform you when updates are needed to your child’s paperwork. You will be given 30 days’ advance notice when updated forms are required.

You may request that the Director review your child’s records with you in person at a mutually convenient time.

Our staff will maintain medical logbooks in each classroom to document any dispensed medications, illnesses, or injuries that may occur.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

As the Bible teaches, “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). Therefore, First Steps does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national and ethnic origin, or socioeconomic background in administration of its policies and programs.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

First Steps prohibits discrimination against children, parents, or staff members based on disability and will make accommodations for a child with disabilities as specified under Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Children’s Photos**

First Steps will not use any photo of your child without your prior approval.



## Discharge of Enrolled Children

Items required by state regulation 251.04 (2)(h)3

### Two Weeks' Notice

Parents who wish to end their child's enrollment at First Steps must provide a 2-week notice to the Director in writing. In the event of a mutual decision between parents and the Director to end a child's enrollment we will waive the 2-week notice requirement.

### Behavior Communication

First Steps staff members will have daily communication with you as you drop off and pick up your child. Daily logs will be kept for each child and shared with each parent. If your child is having a difficult time in the classroom the teacher and/or Director will discuss the specific circumstances with you.

First Steps will notify parents verbally regarding any incidents that involve their child. If a child continues to engage in age inappropriate behavior within 10 days of an initial incident, First Steps will issue parents a verbal warning. If a child continues to engage in age inappropriate behavior within 10 days after a verbal warning, First Steps will issue parents a written warning.

After documenting and discussing the situation with both the child's teacher and parents the Director may seek guidance from St. Matthew's pastors or outside sources to assist the child and family. If a workable solution cannot be found after discussions between the parents, the Director, the child's teacher(s), and the St. Matthew's Board of Early Childhood Ministries, First Steps may deem it necessary to terminate the child's enrollment.

To maintain the safety of your child and our staff members, we will follow our rules and policies when a child engages in age inappropriate behavior. We will document all incidents and our response to them.

### Enrollment Termination

If the cause for enrollment termination is due to behavioral issues, parents will be given up to 60 calendar days from the date of the written warning to arrange for an alternative child care provider.

A child may be discharged from First Steps for the following reasons:

- Parents' failure to pay fees on time
- Parents' failure to complete and return required forms
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Child's behavior
- Inability of our program to meet the needs of the child. The Director and staff members will consult with the parent concerning how any problems might be solved before ending the care arrangement.
- Other reasons as determined by the Director for the safety, integrity, or overall well-being of the children under our care, our staff members, or our program.

A child will never be discharged because of their race or gender. However, behavior that is inconsistent with the religious beliefs of St. Matthew's is cause for termination.

### **Appeal Process**

If a child's enrollment is terminated by First Steps, parents have 30 calendar days to appeal such action. The appeal must be in writing and provided to the Director.

## Fee Payments and Refunds

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(h)1

Fees are to be paid in advance and are due on the Friday for the following week of child care.

Parents may pay in advance using cash, check, or credit card on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis.

Our fees are based on the age and potty training level of your child. Our age brackets are as follows:

- 6 weeks to 2 years old
- 2 years old and/or not potty trained
- 3 or 4 years old and potty trained
- 5+ years old

We charge a daily rate or half-day rate per child, not on an hourly basis. Half-day schedules run from 6:00 a.m. through 12:30 p.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

### Lunch

A daily hot lunch is included in your 6:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. child care fee.

### Field Trip Fee

Any field trip costs are in addition to normal child care fees and will be passed along to parents.

### Late Payment Fee

Fees that are not paid in advance on the Friday preceding the following week's service will result in a \$20 late payment fee.

### Non-Sufficient Funds (NSF) or Overdraft Fee

There will be a \$35 NSF fee for insufficient funds or overdrafts.

### Late Pick Up Fee

A fee of \$1 per minute will be charged for any child not picked up by our 6:00 p.m. closing time.

### Multiple Child Discount

We offer a 10% discount for parents who have two or more children attending First Steps on a full-time basis five days a week. This discount will be applied toward your oldest child's rate.

### Registration

We offer child care services year-round. Registrations are accepted on a first come first served basis.

Our nonrefundable registration fee is \$50 per child or \$75 per family. Additionally, each family will be charged an annual re-registration fee of \$30 per child or \$50 per family every twelve months. If you choose not to enroll your child at First Steps during the summer months we will make every effort to hold your child's spot for the following fall. However, if enrollment nears capacity in your child's classroom we may require you to enroll your child for a minimum number of days during the summer to retain your child's spot.

### **Waiting List**

In the event we reach capacity in any age bracket or classroom we will maintain a waiting list on a first come first served basis. Parents wishing to add their child to our waiting list will be required to complete a registration and pay our nonrefundable registration fee.

### **Refunds**

Refunds for child care fees are only provided under special situations such as First Steps' inability to meet your child's needs, a parent's job loss, or significant family health concerns.

### **Vacations and Absences**

All parents will be given vacation days to use at their discretion. The number of vacation days varies based on your child's schedule:

- 5 days per week receives 10 vacation days per year
- 4 days per week receives 8 vacation days per year
- 3 days per week receives 6 vacation days per year
- 2 days per week receives 4 vacation days per year
- 1 day per week receives 2 vacation days per year

Vacation days may be used as sick days (call by 8:30 a.m. the day your child is sick), vacation days (2-week notice required), or used for a holiday (2-week notice required). All holidays that fall on your child's registered day will be charged to you unless a vacation day is used.

## **Child Education**

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(I)3

### **Religious Training**

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Our primary purpose is to provide child care that is built on the premise that all learning and wisdom is to be founded on the infallible Word of God. Accordingly, all subject matter taught at First Steps conforms to the Word of God. This pertains to the origin of life, the sciences, the history of the world, and God's plan of salvation for a world that is sinful and, therefore, would be lost forever without the knowledge of and faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin and eternal death.

### **Daily Schedules**

Between 6:00 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. arriving children will be assigned to one of our opening rooms.

One opening room will be located in the infant/toddler wing for children under age 3. One opening room will be located in the preschool wing for children age 3 and up.

At 7:30 a.m. all children will be taken to their regularly assigned room.

At 4:00 pm children may be reassigned to a different room depending on our child attendance. Under normal circumstances children will be reassigned into the room of the youngest remaining child in the infant/toddler wing and the preschool wing.

### **Substitute Days**

State regulations require us to meet specified child-to-staff member ratios. Parents must notify the Director of any changes to regularly scheduled days of attendance as soon as possible so we have the required number of staff present. Substitute days will be subject to availability.

First Steps is unable to allow make-up days for absences due to illness. Our fees are set to cover expenses when operating at full capacity. Therefore, there is no refund for absent days. You may use your vacation days for illness or unexpected absences.

### **Curriculum**

Children who attend First Steps will enjoy a variety of age-appropriate hands-on activities through HighScope curriculum. We offer activities that include fine motor skills, large motor skills, creative expression, social interaction, intellectual and cognitive growth, and outdoor play. Most important, however, is that each day will include "Jesus Time" to learn about Jesus and what He has done for us.

Lesson plans will be created weekly by the lead teacher in each classroom. They will be completed by Friday morning of the week prior to the planned week. All lesson plans will be reviewed and approved by the Director.

## **Cultural Diversity**

Children who attend First Steps will be introduced to different cultures consistent with the doctrinal beliefs of St. Matthew's.

## **Toilet Training**

Upon our agreement with a parent's request, children over the age of 18 months may be encouraged to start toilet training. Children must stay in diapers or pull-ups until they are fully toilet trained. Accidents are expected and children will never be disciplined for a toileting accident. Please dress your child in loose fitting clothes which are easier for them to pull up and down during toilet training.

## **Indoor Space**

Each classroom will be set up to allow children to have quiet time and personal space as appropriate as well as providing a variety of learning centers including art, dramatic play, manipulative, science, math, sensory, books, and puzzles.

## **Outdoor Play Time**

All children will be scheduled for outside playtime (weather-permitting) for a minimum of 20 minutes each morning and 20 minutes each afternoon.

## **Goals for Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)**

In order to individualize our program for each infant, a parent or the child's teacher will update each infant's goals every three months.

Infants will be allowed to sleep and eat as needed. You may provide us with your infant's schedule and our staff members will make every effort to follow it.

Non-walking children will not be left in one position for long periods of time. We will move them to different areas of the room, give them tummy time, and interact with them using books, music, and developmentally appropriate toys.

Lesson plans will be posted weekly in each classroom.

## **Goals for Toddlers (12 months to 24 months)**

Children will be introduced to a variety of activities such as music, finger play, small group activities, sensory, art, and play.

We will provide opportunities for parallel and small group play to encourage sharing, using kind words, and expressing feelings appropriately.

The teacher will set limits for children to help them learn appropriate behavior.

Daily schedules will be flexible, but each day will include time for structured activities, free choice activity, and outside play. We will coordinate with you in an effort to meet your child's scheduling needs to the best of our capabilities.

Lesson plans will be posted weekly in each classroom.

### Goals for Preschoolers

Children will be offered a variety of activities that include, but are certainly not limited to, letter recognition and early reading, music, art, pretend play, blocks, and large motor activities.

Children will be actively involved in problem solving as well as expressing and understanding their feelings and the feelings of others.

Preschoolers will follow a schedule that allows them to participate in large group and small group activities, free play, sensory play, dramatic play, art, and large motor activities.

Lesson plans are posted weekly in each classroom.

### Goals for School-Age Children

Children will be offered a variety of developmentally appropriate activities that include, but are certainly not limited to, arts and crafts, self-directed play, dramatic play, quiet reading time, fine and large motor activities both inside and outside, and help with their homework as time allows.

Children will be actively involved in problem solving as well as expressing and understanding their feelings and the feelings of others. These activities will be designed to build up their self-esteem and the self-esteem of their peers.

The children will be offered individual guidance based upon careful observation of each child's needs.

### Classroom Schedules

Our classroom schedules are divided by age groups.

Schedules for infants and toddlers (under the age of two) will be based off of the "Child Care Intake for Child Under 2 Years" form completed by parents at enrollment. Our teachers and/or parents update these forms every three months.

Schedules for preschoolers and school-age children will follow an age-appropriate classroom structure.

### Daily Schedule for Infants

**\*\*\*Subject to change to meet children's individual needs\*\*\***

6:00 - 9:00 a.m. Children arrive; bottles or breakfast provided by parents; diapers checked; tummy time and floor play; books and finger play (Jesus time)

9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Diapers checked; bottles given; staggered naptime

10:30 - 11:00 a.m. Outside time (weather permitting)

- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Diapers checked; bottles given
- 12:00 - 3:00 p.m. Staggered nap time; sensory activities, fine and large motor skills; individual art
- 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Diapers checked; bottles given
- 4:00 - 4:30 p.m. Outside time (weather permitting)
- 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. Diapers checked; bottles given; tummy time; floor play; depart

### Daily Schedule for Children 12 month to 24 months

- 6:00 - 7:30 a.m. Children arrive; bottles and/or breakfast provided by parents; diapers checked; free play
- 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Free play; books and songs; diapers and hand washing
- 8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Snack
- 9:00 - 10:15 a.m. Activity time (Jesus time); floor time with teachers; naptime if needed
- 10:15 - 10:45 a.m. Outside time (weather permitting)
- 10:45 - 11:00 a.m. Diapers checked and hand washing
- 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Lunch and bottles
- 12:00 - 2:30 p.m. Diapers checked; staggered nap time; books; quiet floor time with the teachers
- 2:30 - 3:00 p.m. Diapers checked and hand washing
- 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Snack and or bottles
- 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. Outside time (weather permitting) and free play
- 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Diapers checked; bottles; depart

### Daily Schedule for 2- to 3-Year Olds

- 6:00 - 7:30 a.m. Children arrive; breakfast if provided by parents; free play
- 7:30 - 9:00 a.m. Diapers checked or bathroom time and hand washing; books; puzzles; free play
- 9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Snack
- 9:30 - 10:00 a.m. Group time (calendar, story time, finger plays, and Jesus time)



10:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Art and/or sensory play
10:30 - 10:45 a.m.	Diapers checked; bathroom time; hand washing
10:45 - 11:15 a.m.	Outside time with teacher-led activity for 15 minutes (weather permitting) and inside large motor play
11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Hand washing and lunch
12:00 - 12:15 p.m.	Diapers checked; bathroom time; hand washing
12:15 - 2:30 p.m.	Nap time; quiet activity time (books, puzzles, coloring, and Jesus time)
2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Clean up; diapers checked; bathroom time; hand washing
3:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Snack
3:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Free play; books; songs; finger plays
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Outside time; diapers checked; bathroom time; hand washing
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Free play and depart

### Daily Schedule for 3- and 4-Year Olds

6:00 - 7:30 a.m.	Children arrive; breakfast if provided by parents; free play
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.	Bathroom time; hand washing; free play; books and puzzles
8:30 - 9:00 a.m.	Carpet time (calendar, weather, theme, and songs)
9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Bathroom time; hand washing; snack; outside time with teacher-led activity for 15 minutes (weather permitting)
10:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Bible time and activity
10:30 - 11:30 a.m.	Centers (sensory, readiness skill, art, and games)
11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Story and music time
12:00 - 12:45 p.m.	Bathroom time; hand washing; lunch
12:45 - 2:30 p.m.	Naptime; quiet activities (books, puzzles, and coloring)
2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Bathroom time; hand washing; snack
3:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Outside time (weather permitting)
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Art; sensory play; free play

5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Bathroom time; hand washing; free play

### **Daily Schedule for School-Age Students (School Days)**

6:00 - 7:20 a.m. Students arrive; breakfast if provided by parents; free play

7:20 - 8:15 a.m. Bathroom time; hand washing; free play; depart for school. Staggered departure times for St. Matthew's students (7:20 a.m.) and public school students (8:15 a.m.)

2:40 - 3:00 p.m. St. Matthew's students arrive; bathroom; handwashing

3:00 - 3:15 p.m. St. Matthew's students snack

3:15 - 4:15 p.m. St. Matthew's students homework and quiet activities

3:40 - 4:00 p.m. Public school students arrive; bathroom; handwashing

4:00 - 4:15 p.m. Public school students snack

4:15 - 5:00 p.m. Outside play (weather-permitting)

5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Free play and depart

### **Daily Schedule for School-Age Student (Non-School Days)**

6:00 - 7:30 a.m. Children arrive; breakfast if provided by parents; free play

7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Free play

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Morning meeting (calendar, jobs, and daily schedule)

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. Bathroom time; hand washing; snack

9:30 - 10:15 a.m. Group activity and/or art

10:15 - 11:00 a.m. Learning centers

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Bathroom time; hand washing; outside time with teacher-led activity for 15 minutes (weather permitting)

12:00 - 12:30 p.m. Hand washing and lunch

12:30 - 1:30 p.m. Quiet time (teacher-read story, self-reading, and journal time)

1:30 - 2:30 p.m. Outside play with teacher led-activity (weather-permitting)

2:30 - 3:00 p.m. Afternoon activity (science, math, or writing)

3:00 - 3:30 p.m.	Bathroom time; hand washing; snack
3:30 - 4:00 p.m.	Free play
4:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Outside play (weather permitting)
5:00 - 6:00 p.m.	Free play and depart

### **Communication**

We believe it is important to have face-to-face communication with you on a daily basis to keep you informed of your child’s successes and challenges. If you are interested, we also offer a free service that allows our staff members to update you throughout the day via e-mail and/or text as needed. Finally, we strongly encourage you to sit down with us at least once a year to discuss your child’s well-being and progress.

### **Transitions**

As we transition children between activities and classrooms during the day, we will help them by singing fun age-appropriate songs and teaching them the alphabet in sign language.

### **Field Trips**

Parents will be notified of any walking field trips at least 24 hours in advance. Our staff members will confirm that each child’s parent has submitted a signed permission slip for walking field trips on the “Child Care Enrollment” form DCF-62. If you have not authorized your child to participate in walking field trips we will provide alternative activities for your child.

Non-walking field trips will require us to rent a school bus for transportation. Parents will be given a field trip permission slip to sign and the form must be returned before your child will be permitted to go on the field trip. If a permission slip is not returned we will contact you to obtain verbal permission. If you approve we will have the permission slip ready for your signature when you pick up your child. If you do not approve we will provide alternative activities for your child.

Field trips will only be taken by children ages 3 and up.

### **Water Activities**

There is no swimming or wading pool at First Steps. We will offer children the opportunity to use water sensory tables under proper supervision.

## Child Guidance

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)5

### Crying Child

First Steps staff members will respond promptly to a crying child. If the child is an infant our staff members will check their diaper, review the last time they were fed, and monitor them for any health concerns.

If the child is not an infant, staff members will monitor them for any health concerns and distract them with an activity or move them to a different area. If after one hour of comforting by different staff members the child is inconsolable, we will contact a parent to coordinate the next steps to take.

### Discipline

Discipline is designed to help a child develop self-control, self-esteem, and respect for the rights of others. Children will be disciplined through positive guidance, redirection, and the setting of well-defined limits. We will teach your child how to apologize and receive forgiveness in situations where they have wronged someone. Jesus' love and forgiveness is also announced whenever a child corrects their own behavior. We continue to train children to be Jesus' children by exhibiting kindness, love, courtesy, cooperation, and respect for others. No child will be shamed, restrained, or disciplined in a physical manner even at a parent's request. We will use every situation as a learning moment to help guide the child's future behavior.

If a child's recurring behavior becomes a problem the Director and the child's teacher will work together with the parents to develop a plan to assist the child in learning age-appropriate behavior. We will document any incidents to help identify the triggers for inappropriate behavior.

### Time-Outs or Redirection

First Steps prefers to use redirection rather than time-outs when children act inappropriately. Redirection allows the child to step away from the situation that is causing a problem. Any child that needs redirection will be clearly told why they are being moved to a different area.

We will assist the child by using words or phrases that will help them identify what they are feeling. Examples include, "It looks like you are upset -- tell me what happened," "I can tell you are angry," "Count to ten," and "Take a deep breath."

When a staff member decides that a time-out is the best option for a child to regain their composure, it will only last up to the child's age in minutes. Time-outs will only be used for children ages 3 and up.

### Biting Policy

Biting is one of the most common and difficult behaviors to manage in a group child care setting. It is difficult for the victim, the biter, and our staff members.

When a child is bitten we will follow the specific steps listed below for the biter and the victim:

For the biter:

- The biter will be immediately removed without emotion using words such as “Stop. That is not okay.”
- The biter will not be allowed to return to play until a staff member has the opportunity to talk with them at a level the child can understand. For example, “I can see you want that ball, but I can’t let you hurt him to get it. You will need to wait for your turn.”
- After talking the biter will be redirected to another area to play.
- Staff members will document the incident in the medical log book and fill out our incident report for the parents to sign.

For the victim:

- We will immediately separate the victim from the biter.
- A staff member will comfort the victim.
- We will administer first aid as needed.
- Staff members will document the incident in the medical log book and fill out an incident report for the parents to sign.

If biting becomes severe, First Steps will take the following actions:

- Talk to the parents and identify any triggers that may be causing the biting.
- Require our staff members to document behavior before and after the biting occurs.
- If a child’s biting behavior continues after these steps the Director may seek additional professional resources for observing, evaluating, and correcting this behavior.

## Contingency Plans

Items required by state regulations 251.04(2)(i)6 and 251.06(3)

### Attendance

Attendance records will be kept in each classroom. Children's daily arrival and departure times will be recorded using our electronic attendance system. During the morning arrival and late afternoon pick-up, our teachers will be updated immediately as children are added to or removed from their care.

### Fire and Tornado Safety

Fire evacuation plans will be practiced each month. A fire/tornado evacuation plan will be posted near the door of each classroom. Tornado drills will be practiced each month from April through October. The Director will document the dates of the monthly fire drills, weekly smoke detector tests, and monthly tornado drills in compliance with state regulations.

### Severe Weather

In the event of a severe weather warning, our staff members will move children to their assigned interior bathroom, nap room, or flex room for safety. There will be a supply kit with a weather radio, flashlight, and a first aid kit in each designated safety area and at the front desk. The Director and teachers will bring attendance forms and emergency contact information with them.

### Emergency Evacuations

All available staff members will evacuate children through the nearest exit and assist anyone needing additional help during the evacuation. Teachers will bring along attendance forms for their classroom and the Director will bring along emergency contact numbers for all children.

Our staff members will take children to their designated safe area and conduct a head count to verify all children under their care are present. The Director and/or lead teachers will contact emergency responders as needed and notify parents.

If it is unsafe to return to our facility, children will be cared for at their designated safe space until they are picked up by their parents.

### Loss of Utility Services

If we lose the use of heat, water, or electricity prior to opening the Director will notify parents by 6:00 a.m. that we will be closed until the use of all services is restored.

If we lose the use of heat, water, or electricity during normal business hours, the Director will notify the parents and ask them to pick up their child if services are not restored within one hour.

### Weather Emergency Closings

When there are weather emergencies, we are closed when the Oconomowoc Area School District is closed.

## **Threats**

In the event First Steps receives a threat to our facilities or any occupants, we will contact appropriate law enforcement agencies immediately and the Director will notify parents as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the threat, the Director may decide to evacuate the facility and/or close for the day.

## **Missing Child**

In the event of a missing child, we will thoroughly search our entire facility in an effort to locate the missing child. If the missing child is not found during our search the Director will notify the child's parents and the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately.

## **Child Emergency Precautions**

First Steps will always have at least two staff members on site as a safety precaution.

One additional staff member will be on call as an emergency contact. Their contact information will be posted at the front desk. This additional staff member must be within 5 minutes of First Steps' facility.

We will always have a vehicle available to provide transportation to urgent care or an emergency room as needed.

## **Emergency Numbers**

Emergency numbers for fire, police, state Department of Family Services, and the poison control center will be posted at the front desk where all staff members have access to them.

## Health Care Policy

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)2

### Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

All First Steps staff members will be educated and trained in preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). We will take the following SIDS-prevention precautions for any child under the age of 12 months:

- All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep unless we receive signed authorization from the child's physician and a legal release signed by the parents.
- No bumper pads or soft toys will be allowed in a child's crib.
- If a blanket is used it will be tucked under the mattress.
- All sheets will be well-fitted and not loose.
- If a child falls asleep in a swing or a car seat they will be moved to their crib.

### Child Health Requirements

To reduce or prevent the spread of contagious diseases, First Steps requires that children with the following medical conditions or diseases remain at home:

- Fever of 101 or higher
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Diarrhea
  - If a child under 3 has more than two diarrhetic incidents within a 24 hour period
  - If a child is 3 or older has more than one diarrhetic incident within a 24 hour period
- Chicken pox
- Pertussis/whooping cough (until the child has been on antibiotics for 5 days)
- Mumps
- Hepatitis A
- Measles
- Head Lice
- Scabies (until all treatments are completed)
- Strep throat (until 24 hours after treatment has been started)
- Pink eye (until 24 hours after treatment has been started)
- An unidentified rash
- Constant, thick, colored nasal discharge

Children may return to First Steps if they are symptom-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication or have clearance from a health care provider. In accordance with the instructions of health care providers, if a child is required to take an antibiotic the child should not return to First Steps until the child has been on the antibiotic for at least 24 hours



## Disease Prevention

We will follow procedures on personal cleanliness and communicable diseases found in state regulations and the guidelines for the exclusion of children followed by the Waukesha County Department of Public Health.

Each classroom has a sink for hand washing with posted signs outlining the proper steps for hand washing. Children and staff members will be trained in the proper steps of hand washing.

Our staff members will inform you whenever your child is exposed to a communicable disease. Certain diseases must be reported to the public health department and our licensing specialist.

## Child Illness or Injury

Our staff members will take emergency contact information and a first aid kit with them whenever they take children on a field trip or away from our facility. Any injuries that occur on a field trip or off site will be recorded in the classroom medical logbook upon return to First Steps.

If a child becomes ill or seriously injured at First Steps or on a field trip, the Director will contact the child's parents immediately.

We will isolate sick children within sight and sound and make them as comfortable as possible. Parents should pick up ill children as soon as possible. If we are unable to notify a parent within one hour we will notify the child's emergency contact.

Superficial injuries will be washed with soap and water, covered up with a bandage, and treated with ice if needed. Parents will be notified about any minor injuries at pick-up.

Our staff members will wear protective gloves when treating injuries or cleaning up spills that involve blood or bodily fluid that contains blood. We will also wash our hands with soap and water after removing protective gloves and dispose of the protective gloves in plastic bags immediately. Any staff member who comes into contact with blood or body fluids containing blood will wash the affected area immediately with soap and water.

If a child comes into contact with blood or body fluids containing blood our staff members will thoroughly wash the child's affected area immediately with soap and water. If there is a spill involving bodily fluids our staff will thoroughly clean and disinfect the affected area.

All First Steps staff members will be trained in child CPR and have access to first aid supplies outside of each classroom and at the front desk.

If you decide to seek medical treatment for your child upon departing from First Steps, you must inform the Director immediately.

## Medications

First Steps staff members are able to dispense specific medications providing there is proper documentation and authorization to do so:

- All medication must be in its original packaging or container.
- All medication brought to First Steps will be kept securely in your child's classroom in a covered labeled container.
- For medication to be dispensed, a signed Authorization to Administer Medication Form from a parent must accompany all medications including the dosage amount, time to dispense, and any other special instructions for each medication. This form will be available at the front desk.
- We will review any medications dispensed with parents at pick-up.
- When you pick up your child we will inform you of any of your requested medications that we have dispensed to your child.

We will keep a written record (including type of medication given, dosage, time, date, and the name of the person administering the medication) in our medical log book each time our staff members dispenses medication. The Director will review all log books at least every six months.

### **Non-Medical Over-the-Counter Products**

We will only apply non-medical products that you provide such as sunscreen, insect repellent, lip balm, diaper creams, and all other non-medical products to your child if we have your signed authorization to do so.

### **Cleaning Policy**

Our staff members will be responsible for keeping their classrooms and working areas clean and sanitized. Classroom toys will be washed and sanitized daily in the infant and Toddler rooms. Any toy that is mouthed will be put in the wash and sanitize bin when the child is finished playing with it. All toys in the preschool and school age rooms will be washed and sanitized weekly. Indoor large equipment and shelving will be washed and sanitized weekly.

### **Infant and Toddler Diapering**

Our staff members will follow the diapering procedure that is posted by all classroom changing stations. We will wear gloves when changing a dirty diaper or in cases where bodily fluid is present. All soiled diapers will be placed in a hands-free garbage can. All soiled diapers will be bagged before being placed in the garbage can. Any soiled clothing will be bagged and sent home. Any soiled bedding will be promptly changed and washed.

## Nutrition

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)4

First Steps kitchen staff members will be trained on kitchen safety and will take the state-required four-hour nutrition and food safety training courses annually.

We provide your child with a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack while they are at First Steps. We plan to offer a meal or snack roughly every three hours. Children who arrive before 7:30 a.m. may bring their breakfast with them if desired.

We will encourage children to be self-sufficient and feed themselves independently. Snack and lunch times will be designed to be an enjoyable time. Our staff members will engage the children to encourage positive eating habits and to have conversations with them.

Eating surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized before and after snacks and lunch.

First Steps will follow the United State Department of Agriculture's (USDA) food requirements. Menus will be posted outside of the kitchen and in each classroom. We will update the posted menus with any menu changes as soon as possible.

Children with food allergies may substitute items on the menu, but they must still meet the USDA's food requirements. We will also allow parents to provide a substitute lunch (or portion of lunch) if their child has food allergies or is on a specific diet (ex: vegetarian, etc.). With parental permission we will post a child's food allergies in the classroom so all staff members are aware of them.

School-aged children will be offered a snack before and after school.

Children 12 months and under will be given formula or breast milk. Parents are responsible for preparing bottles at home and bringing them to First Steps ready to serve. Parents will supply infant cereal and jar foods when children are ready to start solid foods. All bottles and baby food jars must be labeled your child's name and the date it is brought to First Steps. We will always bottle-feed children by hand and never use props to hold the bottle in place. We will dispose of unused formula and breast milk one hour after serving. We will rinse all bottles and send them home for thorough washing.

First Steps will store all food off of the floor and, once opened, will store it in an airtight container. We will maintain proper temperature for refrigerators (40 degrees or colder) and freezers (0 degrees or colder).

We will not use food containers or cans unless they are free of dents, meet the USDA requirements, and are within the provider's recommended use date.

Our staff members will wash and sanitize all dishes in accordance with licensing regulations as posted in the kitchen. We will use a commercial dishwasher to clean dishes and air dry them using racks, baskets, or drain boards. We will use equipment and utensils that are easily cleanable, in good repair, non-toxic, and free of cracks and chips. Food preparation areas will be durable and the work surfaces will be smooth and easily cleanable. Our kitchen staff

members will follow all licensing regulations regarding hand washing and handling of food and equipment.

Parents may provide birthday and holiday treats, but they must be peanut-free and tree nut-free. Parents of a child with any food allergies are encouraged to provide alternative treats for their child that meet their specific needs.

First Steps is a peanut-free and tree nut-free facility.

## Transportation

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)9

### Driver Requirements

To drive a First Steps vehicle one must meet the following requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Have a valid Wisconsin operator's license for the type of vehicle driven
- Have at least one year of experience as a licensed driver
- Be a paid First Steps staff member
- Agree not to talk on a phone, text, or manipulate other electronic devices while driving
- Agree to drive lawfully

The Director will obtain a copy of the driving record of each First Step driver at least annually and review it for any traffic accidents or traffic violations. If a staff member's driving record indicates they could pose a danger to First Steps children they will no longer be permitted to drive for First Steps. The staff member's annual driving record will be placed in their personnel file.

### Vehicle Requirements

First Steps staff members will not use their personally-owned vehicle for transporting First Steps children except in the case of a medical emergency.

Under normal circumstances we will use one of the following options to transport your child:

- A vehicle owned by First Steps
- A vehicle provided by a transportation contractor such as Oconomowoc Transport

### No Child Left Unattended in Vehicles

Our staff members will not leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Once we arrive at our destination we will physically inspect the vehicle to ensure all children have exited. If we are using bus transportation, our staff members will walk all the way to the back of the bus to verify that all children have exited.

### Child Safety Restraints

All children under the age of 8 or weighing less than 80 pounds will be required to use a car seat or booster seat.

### Child Tracking Policy

Our staff members will keep track of the children under their care by using attendance sheets and face counts. Each staff member will ensure that all children under their care enter and exit transportation vehicles.

### **Emergency Information**

Our staff members will carry the following information in the First Steps vehicle they are driving:

- Each child's parental contact information and emergency contact information
- The name, address, and telephone number of each child's physician
- Written consent from each child's parent authorizing emergency medical treatment
- A complete list of children being transported in their vehicle
- A legible map of the route to and from our destination

### **Transporting Children with Disabilities**

One adult, in addition to the driver, must accompany a child with a disability that limits their ability to react in case of an emergency.

## Staff Member and Volunteer Orientation

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(i)8

First Steps staff members and volunteers will complete their orientation on or before their first day of employment or volunteerism. During the orientation the Director will review the following items from the state licensing checklist:

- First Steps' policies in this handbook
- Job responsibilities and job descriptions
- Schedule of activities
- Contingency plans for fire and tornado emergencies
- Child behavior management techniques
- Review procedures to reduce the risk of SIDS
- Procedures to follow when a child is absent or missing
- Review policies on child abuse and neglect, including mandatory reporting
- Process for knowing the whereabouts of all children under their care
- Procedures for tracking children when offsite or on field trips
- Training on childhood illnesses
- First aid training
- Fire extinguisher training
- Information on any special needs of a child
- Policies regarding sharing information about a child's special needs

First Steps requires that all of our staff members are active members of St. Matthew's or another Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) or Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) congregation.

## Staff Member Continuing Education

Items required by state regulation 251.04(2)(i)7

First Steps staff members who work 20 hours or fewer per week are required to complete 15 hours of continuing education every year. Staff members who work more than 20 hours per week are required to complete 25 hours of continuing education every year.

Continuing education will be documented and retained in each staff member's personnel file. Continuing education hours may be carried over for up to 2 years following the training if state regulations permit. Continuing education hours may be completed in class, online, via mail, or through independent readings related to early childhood education, child development, health practices, curriculum, or religious training for early childhood teachers and staff members.

First Steps will reimburse our staff members for 85% of their pre-approved continuing education costs. The Director must approve all courses prior to enrollment if a staff member wishes to be reimbursed. Staff members must submit their request for approval at least 2 weeks before the course begins. Courses that are not approved in advance will not be reimbursed.

The Director will hold monthly staff meetings. Continuing education may be provided as part of these staff meetings.

Our staff members are required to complete biennial CPR, AED, first aid, and child abuse and neglect training.



## **Administrator/Director Responsibilities and Qualifications**

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. As such, the Director will be a called worker of St. Matthew's. We also expect the Director to serve as a model of Christian faith in his or her life, in the community, and for the children under his or her care.

Additionally, we expect the Director to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that the Director:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment
- Earn and biennially maintain their certification in CPR, AED, and first aid prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment
- Complete all state-required child care training prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment

### **Responsibilities**

- Ensures and facilitates all aspects of the child care center to best serve children and families
- Provides supervision, consultations, leadership, guidance, and support to all staff members
- Conducts biannual evaluations of staff members
- Facilitates the recruitment, selection, hiring, and orientation of all staff members
- Schedules and leads monthly staff meetings
- Encourages and helps staff find continuing education classes to meet state requirements
- Ensures licensing requirements are met at all times
- Maintains and operates with the approved center budget
- Coordinates staff scheduling within the approved teacher – child ratios
- Oversees and helps market all elements of center enrollment
- Represents First Steps by participating in community events
- Attends First Steps functions
- Participates in professional and spiritual growth activities
- Serves as a facilitator between families and staff
- Prepares a warm, safe, and orderly environment at First Steps

- Uses good judgment to handle crisis situations
- Participates in professional and spiritual growth activities

### **St. Matthew's Program Responsibilities**

- Preschool Power Hour
- Cradle Roll
- Sunday Child Care
- Vacation Bible School

### **Education and Experience**

- The Director must have at least an Associate's degree from an accredited college or university and have completed all state-required child care licensing classes
- Experience in teaching in an early childhood program

## Lead Teacher Responsibilities and Qualifications

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Therefore, lead teachers must be a member of St. Matthew's or another WELS or ELS congregation. We also expect lead teachers to serve as models of Christian faith in their lives, in the community, and for the children under their care.

Additionally, we expect lead teachers to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that all lead teachers:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment
- Earn and biennially maintain their certification in CPR, AED, and first aid prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment
- Complete all state-required child care training prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment

### Responsibilities

- Plans, implements, and evaluates the curriculum in accordance with the mission, purpose, and philosophy of First Steps under the supervision of the Director
- Serves as a liaison with families to ensure smooth transition between home and First Steps
- Helps children transition from classroom to classroom as needed
- Creates developmentally appropriate weekly and monthly plans
- Supervises, trains, and evaluates assistants
- Develops and maintains an appropriate and nurturing classroom environment
- Keeps written plans of daily activities
- Keeps current developmental plans of the children in their class
- Attempts to meet the needs of each child to the best of their ability
- Reports to the parents about a child's progress
- Conducts parent conferences and meetings
- Provides written guidance for substitute teachers
- Knows and complies with the personnel policies
- Attends staff meetings and First Steps functions
- Participates in professional and spiritual growth activities
- Guides, evaluates, plans for, and supports children under their care

- Prepares a warm, safe, and orderly classroom environment
- Uses good judgment to handle crisis situations

**Education and Experience**

- A lead teacher must have at least an Associate's degree from an accredited college or university
- Experience in teaching in an early childhood program

## Assistant Teacher Responsibilities and Qualifications

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Therefore, assistant teachers must be a member of St. Matthew's or another Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation. We also expect assistant teachers to serve as models of Christian faith in their lives, in the community, and for the children under their care.

Additionally, we expect assistant teachers to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that all assistant teachers:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment
- Earn and biennially maintain their certification in CPR, AED, and first aid prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment
- Complete all state-required child care training prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment

### Responsibilities

- Assists the classroom teacher in supervising and managing the children under their care
- Interacts with, initiates, and encourages children in daily activities
- Assists the teacher in learning activities and planning
- Helps prepare the classroom environment, sets up centers, and prepares materials
- Helps manage children behavior using a Christ-centered, positive, and consistent approach
- Helps children grow and become independent
- Assists the teacher in record keeping and observations related to the children's development, health, and behavior
- Maintains good communication with parents
- Helps with general housekeeping tasks
- Uses good judgment to handle crisis situations
- Assists the teacher in other ways as needed
- Helps build and support a caring team
- Attends staff meetings and First Steps activities
- Participates in professional and spiritual growth activities

**Education and Experience**

- An assistant teacher must have at least an Associate's degree from an accredited college or university
- Experience working with young children

## Office Staff Responsibilities and Qualifications

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Therefore, office staff must be a member of St. Matthew's or another Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation. We also expect office staff to serve as models of Christian faith in their lives, in the community, and for the children under their care.

Additionally, we expect office staff to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that all office staff:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment
- Earn and biennially maintain their certification in CPR, AED, and first aid prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment

### Responsibilities

- Provides and maintains an environment where children may grow spiritually, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially
- Assists the Director with administrative duties and keeps First Steps' records current
- Prepares correspondence, memos, and reports using the correct format
- Ensures prompt handling of phone messages and First Steps visitors
- Makes purchases and maintains inventory of supplies and equipment
- Coordinates office equipment maintenance

### Education and Experience

- Graduate of an accredited high school or equivalent
- Maintains computer and keyboard skills
- Uses excellent grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Ability to organize work flow in a busy office environment
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Cultivates a positive first impression for parents and visitors

## Cook Responsibilities and Qualifications

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Therefore, cooks must be a member of St. Matthew's or another Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation. We also expect cooks to serve as models of Christian faith in their lives, in the community, and for the children under their care.

Additionally, we expect cooks to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that all cooks:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment
- Earn and biennially maintain their certification in CPR, AED, and first aid prior to or within 90 days after beginning employment

### Responsibilities

- Prepares all menus for morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack in a timely manner
- Implements the cycle menus in accordance with Wisconsin licensing requirements and follows USDA requirements
- Purchases food and supplies needed for meals and snacks
- Prepares, organizes, and delivers food to classrooms
- Cleans and maintains the kitchen, food service utensils, equipment, and food storage areas per Wisconsin licensing requirements
- Maintains licensing paperwork including menus, production records, monthly adjustment sheets, inventories, and cycle menus
- Posts all changes to the menu
- Accommodates children's nutritional and allergy needs
- Participates in monthly staff meetings and fulfills required kitchen and nutritional trainings
- Communicates and works efficiently with other staff members

### Education and Experience

- Graduate of an accredited high school or an equivalent
- Completes Wisconsin required food safety and nutrition classes annually



## Cleaner Responsibilities and Qualifications

Items required under state regulation 251.04(2)(h)2

First Steps is a ministry of St. Matthew's. Therefore, all cleaning staff must be a member of St. Matthew's or another Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod congregation. We also expect all cleaning staff to serve as models of Christian faith in their lives, in the community, and for the children under our care.

Additionally, we expect the cleaning staff to exhibit the following traits:

- Be positive and sensitive to children's needs
- Prays with and for others
- Acknowledges and respects others' feelings
- Works cooperatively with others
- Encourages good behavior and corrects inappropriate behavior
- Builds and strengthens positive relationships with children, parents, other staff members, and volunteers

To maintain our state licensing we also require that all cleaners:

- Undergo and pass a background check including thumb printing prior to employment
- Undergo and pass a pre-employment physical exam and tuberculosis (TB) skin test within 6 months prior to beginning employment

### Responsibilities

- Ensures that safety and health procedures are followed per state regulations.
- Cleans the lobby and all common areas including the flex room every day. Responsibilities include sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, dusting, cleaning windows, and emptying trash cans.
- Cleans all bathrooms every day. Responsibilities include cleaning the toilets, sinks, and drinking fountains; sweeping and washing the floors; taking out any trash; and wiping down the trash cans.
- Takes out trash from all classrooms and wipes down classroom trash cans daily.
- Collects dishes from all classrooms and cleans the kitchen after the afternoon snacks are served
- Collects laundry from all classrooms. Washes, dries, and folds all laundry.
- Maintains appropriate inventory of all cleaning supplies

### Education and Experience

- Must be at least 16 years old

## **Staff Member Responsibilities**

### **Daily Responsibilities**

Each classroom has a set of opening, nap time, closing, and weekly cleaning tasks. Below are guidelines for what must be completed each day. Our staff members are expected to familiarize themselves with their classroom specific duties and fulfill them on a daily basis.

### **Morning Duties**

Fill Spic & Span bottles; put away sanitized toys; straighten toys and shelves; re-stock supplies such as soap, paper towels, toilet paper, diapers, wipes, etc.; and complete room set-up for the day's lesson plan.

### **Noon or Naptime Duties**

Straighten shelves; sanitize toys; clean tables, chairs, and floors; plan the curriculum; wash dishes; complete daily activity sheets for children; and prepare for afternoon activities.

### **Afternoon Duties**

Wash or spray toys that have been mouthed by children with bleach solution and air dry; take trash to dumpster, sanitize trash can, and replace trash bag; put toys and equipment away; check outdoor play area for equipment that needs to be put away; sanitize tables, chairs, and shelves; wash dishes; launder soiled bedding; empty bleach solution; vacuum carpets; lock all program room doors after the last parent leaves for the day.

### **Staff Scheduling and Other Policies**

The Director will prepare staff member schedules weekly and distribute them by Tuesday afternoon for the following week.

We provide all staff members with a 30-minute unpaid break on days when they work 8 or more consecutive hours. We provide one 15-minute unpaid break for all staff members who work for less than 8 consecutive hours.

In most cases our staff members will be expected to eat their lunch with the children under their care.

Any staff member who works more than 40 hours per week will be paid overtime wages starting at the 41st hour. Overtime pay is one and half time normal pay.

First Steps staff members will receive holiday and vacation pay after they complete their 90-day probationary period. Sick days and days where we are closed due to weather are unpaid.

The Director will conduct staff member evaluations twice per year based on a staff member's date of hire. These evaluations will be used to guide our decision regarding pay increases.

## Full-Time Staff Member Additional Benefits

First Steps provides its year-round full-time (minimum 35 hours per week/1,820 hours per year) staff members with the following employee benefits:

- Forty hours of paid vacation per fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) after a staff member completes their 90-day probationary period. Paid vacation hours are pro-rated during a staff member's first fiscal year based on the month in which they complete their 90-day probationary period. Paid vacation hours expire on June 30 each year and may not be carried over to the following fiscal year.
- For each additional year of employment, staff members will be awarded eight additional hours of paid vacation per fiscal year up to a maximum of 80 hours per fiscal year.
- If a staff member would like to take additional time off after using all of their vacation days in a fiscal year, they may request additional unpaid time off from the Director. This additional time off may or may not be granted depending on our scheduling needs.
- Paid holidays (8 hours) when First Steps is scheduled to be closed on a weekday. Unscheduled closures such as snow days are not paid holidays.
- Health insurance benefits. First Steps will pay 100% of the premiums for group health insurance benefits (WELS VEBA plan 4).
  - If a staff member selects a different WELS VEBA health insurance plan the difference in plan premiums will be paid by the staff member via payroll deduction.
  - Full-time staff members may enroll additional family members for health insurance coverage, but they will be responsible paying the additional premiums resulting from this coverage through paycheck withholding.
- Defined contribution retirement plan (WELS Shepherd Plan) for staff members who regularly work at least 1,000 hours per year. Contributions will be made via paycheck withholding.
- Defined benefit plan (WELS Pension Plan) for all called workers who serve more than 20 hours per week.
- For all staff members who work at least 20 hour per week for five or more months of the year, we offer access to the following benefits at their own expense through paycheck withholding:
  - group term life insurance
  - group long-term disability insurance
  - group dental coverage
- Free child care for a staff member's children while they are working in their role at First Steps.
- Workers compensation insurance.

## Part-Time Staff Member Additional Benefits

First Steps provides its year-round part-time (minimum 20 hours per week/1,000 hours per year) staff members with the following employee benefits:

- Twenty hours of paid vacation per fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) after a staff member completes their 90-day probationary period. Paid vacation hours are pro-rated during a staff member's first fiscal year based on the month in which they complete their 90-day probationary period. Paid vacation hours expire on June 30 each year and may not be carried over to the following fiscal year.
- For each additional year of employment, staff members will be awarded four additional hours of paid vacation per fiscal year up to a maximum of 40 hours per fiscal year.

- Paid holidays (four hours) when First Steps is scheduled to be closed on a weekday. Unscheduled closures such as snow days are not paid holidays.
- If a staff member would like to take additional time off after using all of their vacation days in a fiscal year, they may request additional unpaid time off from the Director. This additional time off may or may not be granted depending on our scheduling needs.
- All staff vacation days need to be used during the fiscal year ending on June 30. New vacation days start July 1.
- Access to group health insurance benefit at their own expense for staff members who work for five or more months of the year. Premiums will be paid via paycheck withholding.
- Defined contribution retirement plan (WELS Shepherd Plan) for staff members who regularly work at least 1,000 hours per year. Contributions will be made via paycheck withholding.
- Defined benefit plan (WELS Pension Plan) for all called workers who serve more than 20 hours per week.
- For all staff members who work at least 20 hour per week for five or more months of the year, we offer access to the following benefits at their own expense through paycheck withholding:
  - group term life insurance
  - group long-term disability insurance
  - group dental coverage
- Free child care for a staff member's children while they are working in their role at First Steps.
- Workers compensation insurance.

\*Only year-round staff are eligible for vacation and holiday pay.

### **Staff Member Calendar Requirements**

Each hourly staff member is responsible for signing in and out each work day using our electronic attendance system. Staff members may not clock in more than 10 minutes before their scheduled shift and are expected to clock out immediately after their shift ends.

Staff members must submit requested time off to the Director at least two weeks in advance.

Any employee convicted of a crime must notify the Director no later than the next business day so state regulators can be notified within the proscribed timeframe.

Director may or may not approve requests based on staffing needs.

### **The Registry Membership**

All teachers are required to become a member of The Registry ([www.the-registry.org](http://www.the-registry.org)) within the first 90 days of employment. First Steps will cover the costs for our teachers' initial certificate and annual renewal.

### **Shaken Baby Training**

All First Steps staff members will be trained in shaken baby prevention.

### **Staff Member Personnel Files**

The Director will maintain a personnel file for each employee that will contain at a minimum the following required information and/or forms:

- Staff Record Form
- Staff Health Report
- Shaken Baby Syndrome training certification
- Background Information Disclosure
- Documentation of educational training
- First Steps' employment application
- Required tax forms (I-9, W4)
- Signed copy of First Steps' personnel policies
- Signed acknowledgement that employee received policy handbook
- Staff member biannual evaluations

### **Job Openings**

First Steps will post any job openings in St. Matthew's bulletins, at other area WELS and ELS churches, at Wisconsin Lutheran College, and other available means as appropriate.

### **Employment Inquiries**

Prospective First Steps staff members should contact the Director for more information about any open positions.

### **Hiring Practices**

The Director will provide all prospective staff members with a First Steps employment application. The Director will review all prospective staff members' applications and determine which, if any, will be called back for an interview. Interviews will be conducted by the Director and possibly a lead teacher. The Director will provide all newly hired staff members with information regarding orientation and training requirements.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

First Steps maintains a non-discrimination hiring policy and will not make hiring decisions on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or age.

### **Probationary Period**

First Steps has a 90-day probationary employment period for all newly hired staff members.

## **Impaired Staff**

Any staff members reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance will be required to leave immediately. If the Director believes a staff member's faculties are impaired while on the job, the staff member may be suspended or terminated immediately.

## **No Staff Smoking or Alcohol**

First Steps prohibits smoking and consuming alcohol on its property, including any First Steps vehicles. Smoking includes any form of tobacco product or any device intended to consume nicotine or vapor. Staff members who smoke are strongly discouraged from doing so immediately before or during their working hours as smoke can stay on clothing and hair for an extended period of time. Staff members must wash their hands immediately before returning to work after smoking offsite. Staff members violating this policy may be suspended or terminated immediately.

## **Staff Member Wage Bands**

A staff member's wages will be based on their individual child care experience and level of education. Below are broad descriptions of different bands in our staff members' wages:

Band 1 – Cleaner: 16 years or older.

Band 2 – Assistant teacher: 18 years or older, high school diploma or GED, completed no required child care classes, child care experience of less than one year.

Band 3 – Assistant teacher: 18 years or older, high school diploma or GED, completed some required child care classes, child care experience of one plus years.

Band 4A – Lead teacher: 18 years or older, high school diploma or GED, completed all required child care classes, child care experience of two plus years.

Band 4B – Office staff: 18 years or older, high school diploma or GED, knowledgeable in Word and Excel, preferably qualified to assist in a classroom when needed.

Band 4C – Cook: 18 years or older, high school diploma or GED; Capable of planning, preparing and cooking for up to 80 children and staff; Able to prepare monthly lunch calendars and shop for groceries; preferably qualified to assist in a classroom when needed.

Band 5 – Lead teacher: 18 years or older, at least an Associate's degree, completed all required and some additional child care classes, child care experience of two to five years.

Band 6 – Lead teacher: 18 years or older, at least an Associate's degree, completed all required and some additional child care classes, child care experience of five plus years.

Band 7 – Assistant Director: 21 years or older, at least an Associate's degree, completed all required and some additional child care classes, child care experience of five plus years.

## Staff Member Dress Code

First Steps expects our staff members to view themselves as professionals in our field and dress accordingly.

Dress and personal cleanliness standards contribute to the positive morale of employees and affect the image parents, children, visitors, and guests have of First Steps. Our dress code requires staff members to dress in a style that presents a neat appearance that promotes confidence and professionalism to the public.

First Steps enforces the following dress code for staff members, taking into consideration that our teachers and assistant teachers will frequently be playing on the floor with the children under their care:

- Staff members should maintain a neat and clean appearance at all times including hair, beards, and mustaches being well-groomed and of a length in conformity to any occupational health or safety standards.
- Staff members should dress in clothing that meets the following requirements:
  - Jeans: clean and in good repair
  - T-shirts: clean and in good repair not displaying in appropriate artwork or wording
  - Sweatshirts: clean and in good repair not displaying in appropriate artwork or wording
  - Leggings: only if tastefully worn with a longer top, tunic or skirt to approximately 2" above the knee
  - Shorts: No short shorts
- Staff members should wear conservative athletic or walking shoes, loafers, sneakers, boots, flats, dress heels, or leather deck-type shoes that are acceptable for work.
- Staff members should avoid the following attire which is not appropriate for work:
  - Torn, ripped, or frayed clothing
  - Stained clothing
  - Sweat pants
  - Leggings/stirrup pants unless worn with a tunic as described above
  - Mini-skirts or short-shorts
  - Shirts or T-shirts with large lettering logos or slogans
  - Halter tops, shirts, or tops that are backless, see-through, or show the midriff
  - Low cut, spaghetti straps, or tank tops without a jacket/sweater
  - Flip flops

Staff members who report for work inappropriately dressed will be sent home by the Director and required to return to work in proper attire. Staff members will not be paid for their time away from work due to dress code violations. The Director makes the final determination of what constitutes appropriate dress.

## Unacceptable Job Performance

First Steps aims to hire child care professionals that take pride in their work and comply with all policies and regulations. If a staff member is not living up to these expectations, the Director will take the following steps:

### STEP 1 Verbal Warning

If the Director determines that a staff member's job performance is not meeting First Steps' standards or that a staff member is in violation of any policy stated in this handbook, the Director will inform the staff member of the deficiency and the possible penalties if performance does not improve. The Director will also provide suggestions on ways to improve job performance.

Verbal warnings may be given for violation of First Steps' policies, failure to follow procedures, unsatisfactory performance, absenteeism, or tardiness. A written summary of a verbal warning will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff member and Director.

### STEP 2 Written Warning

The Director will issue a written warning after a staff member receives three verbal warnings for any reason within a period of six months.

Additionally, the Director will issue a written warning immediately if a staff member refuses to follow lawful instructions or commits any other serious policy violation that endangers the safety of a child or staff member.

The Director will also provide suggestions on ways to improve job performance.

Written warnings will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff member and the Director.

A staff member may receive only one written warning during a six month period. After one written warning has been issued, any further issue or failure to comply with First Steps policies and procedures may result in termination.

### STEP 3 Termination

The Director may terminate the employment of any staff member when progressive disciplinary steps fail to produce satisfactory and improved staff member performance.

Additionally, the Director may terminate a staff member's employment immediately for violations that may include (but are not limited to):

- Commitment of child abuse under Wisconsin law
- Abuse of a parent or another staff member
- Harassment of any kind
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work
- Theft
- Possession of a weapon on campus
- Violation of any policy where the stated penalty is termination

The above violations are only examples and are not meant to be all-inclusive. Disciplinary action up to and including termination may be taken immediately at the discretion of the Director.



### **Employee Termination Related to Whistle Blowing**

First Steps is committed to operating with the highest ethical standards and to providing the best possible working conditions. Staff members are encouraged to report to the Director any and all evidence of unethical or illegal behavior by a First Steps staff member, including (but not limited to):

- Instances of fraud
- Unethical business conduct
- Violations of state or federal law
- Substantial and specific danger to a staff member's or the public's health and safety

### **Grievance Policy**

Terminated staff members may file a written appeal within 72 hours with the St. Matthew's Board of Early Childhood Ministry if they feel their termination was unjustified.

### **Parking**

First Steps staff members are required to park in the designated staff parking area.

### **Staff Member Acknowledgement**

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand First Steps' policies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff member printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff member signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date