

Welcome

Space Coast Step By Step Early Learning Center is privately owned by Lynn Jenkins. The center is an expansion from Jenkins Large Family Child Care, established in 2002.

The intent of this handbook is to help you gain a better understanding of the center. The following pages contain mutually beneficial requirements that are necessary to ensure that we avoid any misunderstandings. It covers childcare policies, business policies, and my expectations.

Tender, love, and care make this center the best choice for you and your family and we are happy that you are giving us the opportunity to provide services for you and your family. We are honored to be a part of the most precious moments in your child's life. We do our best to make your child's nourishment, health, and development our business, as we are equipped to succeed.

Our staff is trained and dedicated to assisting your child as they grow mentally, emotionally, and physically. We maintain the highest standards of safety, sanitation, and staff training for your child's protection and well-being.

We are an early childhood development and education facility that has an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an opportune setting. Our focus is on the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities, through education in basic skills. Please read through this handbook carefully and contact Mrs. Jenkins if you have any questions or concerns.

Statement of Philosophy

The right to a safe and loving environment is what we strive to accomplish. When you begin the experience of realizing that you need child care, it becomes a choice that once searches long and hard to make. Our goal is to make our center and, its environment one of clean, warm safe, and a loving atmosphere; also that Christian education recognizes and teaches that all truth is from God. The purpose of Jesus Christ must be the theme in all learning processes of life. The commitment of our center is to assure our parents that their children are being provided with the best quality of service and care one can provide with confidence that their children are SAFE and LOVED. I believed children should have fun! After all, even the experts agree that preschool age children learn most through play. These carefree years are so short, and soon the children will be exposed to a much more structured form of learning. During

the month, many activities take place which help promote basic skills (letter & number recognition, color & shape recognition, large motor skills, small motor skills, etc.).

Parent Handbook

Communication:

Communication is very important! When we accept new families, we make sure that we can openly exchange any questions or concerns that may come up. Any questions, feedback, or discussions aimed towards a positive outcome for the children are always accepted. Private issues can be discussed in an exclusive setting outside of regular business hours or by telephone. In this case, it is encouraged that you call between the hours of 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Please be aware that Mrs. Jenkins may be busy during the day therefore, if you leave a voicemail, your call will be returned as soon as possible. We look forward to building a terrific relationship with you and your family!

Open Door Policy:

There is an open door policy in place for all parents. This indicates that parents are always welcome to call or drop in at the center to check on your child during regular business hours. Our open door policy does not mean that our doors will be left unlocked. We believe that it is extremely important to keep the doors locked for the safety of the children and staff. Unexpected visitors are not permitted to enter the center without permission. Your child's safety is our first priority. When considering our open door policy, please keep in mind that visitors cause children to react in an excited manner that may not normally occur when the children are at the center on a normal basis.

Admission/Tuition:

To comply with state regulations and to ensure your child's safety, all registration forms must be filled out **completely** and turned in, along with a **current Brevard County immunization and physical form**. The tuition fee is due on the first day of attendance. Our center is licensed to provide care for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years of age. Each child is placed into a classroom of their peers according to their age.

The standard tuition fees are based on a maximum of 10 hours a day, 5 days a week. Tuition is due the first day of each week at the time the child is dropped off at school. All the payments are to be turned in to the front office. Any payment made after **Tuesday** of each week will be assessed a **\$20 late fee**. If your account is not brought current by the following week, your child is not allowed to return to the center until the balance is paid in full. A **\$25 charge** will be assessed for any returned checks up to **3** times, after which you will be required to make all payments in cash or money order. As a qualified

child care center, it is pertinent that we maintain a stable staff and a quality program. In order to obtain this, we must acknowledge our fixed costs and our quality staff. Our success depends on your prompt payment, which allows us to fulfill our budget demands. There is no reduction in payment if your child misses occasional days due to illness or leisure. After your child has been enrolled for a full year without any breaks, you will be allotted two weeks of vacation without payment. In this case, written notification must be presented to Mrs. Jenkins at least **two weeks** in advance.

Weekly Tuition Rates:

Infants – 1 year old: \$180

1 year old: \$160

2 year old: \$145

3 year old: \$135

4-5 year old: 125

School Age: \$105 (full day)/\$105 (Before & After care)

All ages: \$35 daily rates

Taxes:

At the end of each year, you will be provided with a year-end summary of all daycare fees paid during the year for tax purposes. This form will be given to you in January of each year, or when your services have been terminated. You may also request a statement at any time.

Student File:

Each student has a file that is kept in the front office, secured with a lock and key. These files are reviewed periodically by a Children & Family Services representative. These files are not to be shared or removed from the front office. Only the director, office assistant, teachers, custodial parents, HRS representatives, Health Department representatives, or legal guardians are allowed to view a child's file.

Emergency Closing:

In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, we will follow the direction of the Brevard County Public School System. All parents will be contacted for further instruction if an emergency occurs during business hours. We also encourage you to monitor the local news and radio stations for notification of closings.

Hours of Operation:

Our hours of operation are from 6:00 a.m. until midnight. Please be aware that there is a state mandated maximum of **10 hours** that you child can be in care at the center.

Parking/Drop off/Pick up:

All children must be accompanied by an adult when entering and/or leaving the center. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to this rule. All children must be signed in and signed out daily by an adult. This provides us with a written record of the child's attendance, hours, and the person who has dropped off or picked up your child each day. Each child will only be released to those persons who have been authorized on the registration form. In the case that someone other than a person who has been previously authorized is picking up your child, please notify the office in writing or by phone call. Please inform that person that he or she will need to come into the office, present a **photo ID**, and give the password created during registration before the child is released to them.

Child's First Day/Week:

Prolonging your departure is difficult for both you and your child. It usually works best if you come in, leave your child in the care of the teacher, and leave as quickly as possible with a short, encouraging goodbye. Even if they seem hesitant, when you portray that you are happy and comfortable, they will pick up on your confidence and feel more at ease. This will help with a smooth transition into childcare. If your child is upset when you leave and he or she is not able to be comforted by a teacher, we will contact you. You are also free to call at any time to check on them.

Security:

All doors are kept locked with a security code. The special security code is given to all parents at the time of registration. This code will be used to open the doors that give you access to your children. We ask that you only share this code with those who will be picking up your child on a regular basis. The code will be changed periodically for safety measures. In this case, you will be given a written notification of the new code. No person will be permitted on to our property if they display behavior that is inconsistent with the expected positive conduct. This applies to parents, relatives, visitors, solicitors, or any one that is trying to gain entrance to the center. Smoking, foul language, lewd behavior, and belligerent behavior will **NOT** be tolerated. Everyone who steps onto our property is expected to conduct themselves in a proper, well-behaved manner.

Our property is under 24 hour video surveillance. Please be aware that by choosing to register your child with us, you are consenting that you and your child will be under surveillance during the time spent on the property.

Discipline Policy:

Rules and regulations are required for the safety and well-being of all children and staff. SC Step By Step Early Learning Center has a set of rules that are strictly enforced daily.

Our discipline policy centers on the redirection of the child: talking to the child about the rule he or she has broken and if he or she continues to break the rule, he or she will take a time out in the designated area for the time equal to 1 minute per age. During the child's time out period, he or she will be asked to reflect on the rule that he or she broke. When the time out period is over, the teacher will sit down and talk with the child about his or her behavior to ensure that the child understands the discipline and are equipped with the tools to make better choices in the future. If the child become unruly, the parent will be called and the child will be sent home for at least the remainder of the day. We encourage the children to make positive choices when interacting with other. We also encourage the children to use their words to express how they feel. In the event of excessive inappropriate behavior, the director and/or the parent will be called in to assist.

Any major misconduct directed against other children, the teacher, or property such as: fighting, biting, destruction of property, profanity, vulgarity (written or oral), stealing, cheating, dishonesty of any kind, verbal or physical threatening of school personnel, and use of any object that threatens the safety of others and repeated inappropriate behavior will automatically result in a conference in the director and notification of parents. Further action including, suspension, dismissal, other measures that are appropriate for the misconduct, may be taken.

These procedures and rules are used to provide a safe and loving environment for everyone. No hatred or discrimination of any kind will be tolerated at the center. All children are treated with equal care.

Parent Commitment:

We strongly encourage parent participation. Your role as a parent or guardian is essential to the success of your child. It is very important for you to be involved in your child's education and daily care.

We are always in need of volunteers in the children's classroom. This includes: party coordinators, special projects or events (cooking, holiday, program, etc.), reading, outside activities, activities, and field trips. Please try and commit yourself to: being involved in school activities, reading the school and classroom newsletters, checking your child's folder and cubby, and keeping the center updated with any changes in personal information (address, phone number, and etc.). Check with teachers or Mrs. Jenkins regarding any situations or problems before drawing conclusions. You may request a conference, note, or telephone call. Make sure your child's teacher is aware of any situations or extenuating circumstances that may be going on at home so that they are able to pay extra attention to your child's actions. If your child will miss a day or

any reason, please contact the center at least 24 hours prior, or by the time the child would have normally arrived in the morning. This is essential to the regulation of our daily plans.

Parent's responsibilities: supply 2 extra sets of clean clothing for all children up to the age of 5, diapers/pull-ups, baby wipes, bottles, pacifiers, teething toys, naptime blankets, and teething gel. All items must be labeled with your child's name.

Toys are **NOT** permitted to be brought to the center. We are not responsible for loss or damaged toys. We are fully equipped with age appropriate toys for all children. There are special days that the children are allowed to bring items from home and you will be notified of these days as they happen.

Daily Schedule:

Daily schedules are determined by the individual teacher and will be posted in each classroom. We introduce seven "domains" of development here at Space Coast Step by Step Early Learning Center: physical health: approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and communication, emergent literacy, cognitive development and general knowledge, and motor development. These domains are carried out during the years spent here with us at the right age appropriate time. Research shows that young children learn best through hands-on experiences that have been planned by knowledgeable teachers. To some it may look like just play, but it is active learning. We include indoor and outdoor activities, gross and fine motor skills, language and communication skills, art projects, music and story time, math, science, imaginative and creative play, creative cooking, show-and-tell, free play, and writing and listening. All of these activities will prepare your child for regular school. When young children explore things directly with their senses and practice new skills through play, they are learning in ways that are meaningful to them and their stage of development. Our day consists of working and playing together, problem solving, making choices, making mistakes and trying again are all a part of our developmentally appropriate program.

Dress Code:

Please dress your child in climate appropriate clothing. We ask that they wear closed toe shoes with socks daily. Please do not send your child in flip-flops, open toed shoes, cowboy boots, plastic, mesh, or dress shoes, as they are cute but they do not give your child good protection while on the playground. Please have your girls wear shorts under their dresses and skirts. Please **NO BEADS** in hair due to choking hazards. If your child has pierced ears, they must wear studs to the center (NO DANGLING EAR RINGS). We strongly suggest NO OTHER jewelry be worn to the center because we will not be responsible for any lost or damaged jewelry. Please label all jackets and sweaters.

Teacher/Parent Communication:

Daily sheets will be given to parents on a daily basis with an overview of your child's day (infants – toddlers) and weekly sheets will be given to the VPK students, unless something comes up on a specific day that the parent needs to be made aware of. Although communication is very important here at Step By Step and we understand that you are concerned with how your child's day went, please be aware that each teacher is responsible for supervising all children in their classroom during the day and it is unrealistic to expect them to update each parent verbally on a daily basis during work hours. If anything that occurs during the day that needs special attention, the teacher will notify the parent. You may schedule a conference with any teacher, as they will be happy to discuss your child with you at a scheduled time. Please feel free to let the Director know that you would like to set up a conference with your child's teacher. However, if a written note will satisfy your communication with a teacher, we advise you to take this option, as our teachers are very busy providing care for your children.

Weekly or monthly newsletters will either be provided to each parent or posted in the classroom, providing lesson and activity plans. The center will also provide a monthly newsletter with information pertaining to the entire center.

Birthdays:

Birthdays are special and we welcome celebrations here at Step By Step. If you would like to bring in treats for your child's special day to share with the class, please arrange a day and time with the director.

Educational Objectives:

Our goal is to prepare our students to become responsible, confident individuals. The foundation we offer is designed to promote the development of knowledge, wisdom, and critical thinking skills that are necessary to prepare each child to become a better person. We use curricula's that are approved by the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard to assure the progress and standards of our students. The first few years of your child's life many important skills and abilities are established, skills that are key to success in school and later life. We believe that it is important to monitor growth and development of our students, so that we can call early attention to any possible delays. Early attention often means delays can be solved and children can come up to par with their age standards. We are trained in the observation and screening of young children, therefore we will be screening them on scheduled basis according to age appropriate. We welcome your participation in these screening sessions, and we will be glad to explain the process to you. We will provide you with a summary of your child's progress and will suggest age-appropriate activities that you might do with your child. If the results point out areas of possible concerns, we will advise you on how to schedule a more detailed assessment for your child. All information on your child will be kept in confidence.

Meals:

All meals are provided and served through Step By Step Early Learning Center. We serve a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack for every student, each day. No food from home or restaurants are allowed to be brought in unless scheduled and approved by director on special days. Any food allergies are to be acknowledged upon registration. An allergy list for every child is posted in the kitchen.

Illness:

In order to maintain a healthy environment at our center, children with any symptoms of illness are not permitted to enter the center. If you child has a fever, chills, diarrhea, or has been showing a distinctive behavior change from normal within the last 24 hours, please keep them home. If they have a virus, this is the time period in which they are most contagious. Although we sanitize and practice hand washing all day, germs can still be transmitted. If you child becomes ill while at the center, you or a designated person on your chart will be contacted **immediately** to come pick the child up. Please read the Exclusion Policy carefully to gain a full understanding of what will and will not be allowed during any of these cases. Any communicable diseases that may occur with any of our students or staff, all family members in that classroom will be notified, for the safety of all children.

Health Records:

With the State of Florida Licensing Regulations, children must have current immunization and physical records on file at all times. It is the parent's responsibility to keep all medical records updated. The children's file will be checked three times a year by Environmental Health at unannounced times. If at any time medical records are found out of date, you may be called by the representative that is present or the director. Failure to provide information could result in the termination of your child.

Accidents/Incidents/Emergency:

Scratches and scrapes are inevitable when children play. These type of injuries will be treated with soap and Band-Aids. If anything more serious occurs, you will be notified immediately. Our center is authorized to obtain emergency medical assistance in the case that the parents cannot be reached. Authorization is given to utilize the services of a qualified physician to treat the child in the event of such emergency. A notarized statement for emergency care is required at the time of registration and is kept on file. Please let us know of any accidents that may have occurred at home or away from school by filling out a form at the front office at the time of drop off. If anything unusual is noticed about your child, that did not happen at the center, we will fill out a report and have you sign it when you pick up your child. Please help us keep these reports to a minimum by reporting these happenings to the front office.

Rest Time:

Our center has rest time shortly after lunch, in which the children are not required to sleep, but must rest quietly. We provide a sheeted mat or cot for the children to lay on. We ask you to provide a blanket for your child to use while resting. This blanket will be sent home every Friday for laundering and is to be returned on Monday.

Outdoor Play:

We spend quality time outside every day. (Weather permitting) Outside play is an important part of the children's learning development. Many muscles are developed while outside and a great deal of creativity is developed while playing outside.

Field Trips:

Written permission must be signed by the parent on the enrollment form and is kept in the child's file. This must be signed before we will take your child on any trips away from the center. Advanced notice is always given before any trips are taken. We offer many trips to places in order to enhance our children's knowledge. Chaperones are always needed!

Holidays:

The center is closed for the following holidays:

New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day (and the day after), Christmas Week

All days will be posted as a reminder prior to the exact day, so that proper preparation can be made. Full payment will still be required, even if a holiday falls throughout the week.

Transportation:

We provide transportation for school aged before & after care children for designated schools. Children must be at center by 7:00 a.m. in order to use this transportation opportunity. Please call ahead of time if you child will not be using the transportation system for any day.

Termination Policy:

I reserve the right to terminate for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay
- Failure to complete the required forms
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Failure of child to adjust to the child care after a reasonable amount of time
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
- My inability to meet the child's needs
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
- Serious illness of child or provider
- False information given by parent either verbally or in writing

I appreciate as much advance notice as possible when terminating, and I will give the same courtesy in return. You are required to give two-week written notice when you decide to terminate childcare. The two weeks will be paid in full, regardless of whether or not your child is in attendance.

I will give two-week's written notice of termination for which full tuition is due. This is to be paid whether or not your child is in attendance. I reserve the right to issue immediate termination in the case of extreme circumstances. In this situation, the two-week's payment of tuition is still required. Termination notice will not be accepted while provider or parents are on vacation. You may pay two-weeks fees in lieu of two-week's notice.

VPK Program

Florida Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK), Educational Standards:

The Constitutional Amendment approved by Florida's voters in 2002 requires that a high quality prekindergarten learning opportunity be available to all four-year-old children in the state. The program is free and participation is voluntary. The implementing legislation required the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to adopt performance standards for children in the VPK Education Program. Performance standards are examples of the knowledge and skills that children should have by the end of their VPK year and are based on way children naturally grow and develop.

To ensure that the VPK standards were based on the most current research and evidence-based, effective practice in the fields of early childhood education emergent literacy, DOE, through its Office of Early Learning and in collaboration with the Florida Center for Reading Research, established a Panel of Experts. The Panel included individuals with expertise in the area of early childhood with a research emphasis on emergent literacy, individuals with expertise in the area of early childhood with other research emphases, and early learning practitioners.

Our VPK teachers and staff are trained and equipped with the knowledge needed to teach your child what he or she needs to enter Kindergarten successfully. Our curriculums are approved by the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard.

Attendance:

The sign in and out sheet must be done daily (no exceptions). The parent monthly certification form must be signed monthly. The students must attend 540 hours for the fall term or 300 hours for the summer term in order to be considered completed. The hours for VPK will be from 9am till 12pm daily corresponding with the Brevard Schools schedule. To attend just these 3 hours a day for no charge, you may drop off no earlier than 8:45 and they must be picked up no later than 12:15, any time before or after these designated hours you will be charged the before and after fee. Your child must have a written note for any absences in order to be put in their file. Please contact us when they are not going to be able to attend for whatever reason, to make arrangements for making up hours of work.

Infants:

All infants have their own designated cubby for their supplies, therefore, diaper bags are not necessary. Toddler grams will be sent home daily and will indicate what needs to be restocked for your child's care. **All** supplies brought to the center need to be labeled with your child's name.

Diapering:

The diapering surface is waterproof and free of cracks. After use, the changing table is cleaned and sprayed with bleach and a water solution for disinfecting and cleaning. Soiled diapers and wipes are immediately thrown away. Hands of child and care giver are washed thoroughly after each changing. Diapers are changed as needed and are checked often. Creams, ointments and powders are not routinely used. In the case that these products are needed it will be discussed with parents before applying.

Infants Sleep Arrangements:

State Child Care Regulations state that all infants must sleep on their back. No wedges may be used to prop the child. All recommendations by the *SIDS Back to Sleep Program* are followed when caring for a sleeping infant. Please remember, your infant does need tummy time to strengthen their arms and back while awake. Back positioning is recommended for sleeping only. Infants are slept on their back in crib with a light blanket.