

Staff Handbook

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Owner/Director: Nicole Aman

Assistant Director: Emily Meineke

On-Site Supervisor: Natalia Woody

“Where children take their first steps to success.

**History**

Nicole and Dean Aman opened First Steps Learning Center in May of 2017. Nicole, helping at her mother’s in-home daycare for many years, knew children were her passion and pursued her degree in Early Childhood Education. She taught pre-k for 6 years and ran a BASP for three years before becoming Assistant Director for a childcare center in Coralville. After a year, she became Director at the facility. It has been a lifelong dream to own and operate her own center and, in the fall of 2016, she and her husband decided it was time to make that dream come true.

First Steps is in the former Grant Wood AEA building on Holiday Rd., which was built in the 1980’s. They had outgrown their space and the building sat vacant until it was purchased in January of 2017. Renovations started in February and turned the existing office space into a childcare center.

**Mission Statement**

First Steps Learning Center Inc. believes in providing a quality childcare program for all families in the community. From infants through school age children, our program provides a safe and nurturing environment to foster kids’ social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development through their daily activities. We are committed to our families, to give them the peace of mind that comes from knowing their kids spend their time in a great childcare facility.

**Equal Opportunity Employer**

We are an equal opportunity employer and we do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or any other classification protected by federal, state, or local law. This policy applies to all aspects of employment and application for employment with First Steps Learning Center.

**Facility**

First Steps has six classrooms and a gym. Classrooms are set up to meet QRS guidelines with different developmentally appropriate areas for children to learn and explore. Rooms are equipped with drinking fountains and bathrooms/sinks that meet ADA standards. The gym is used for school-age children in the before and after school program and for the younger ones when the weather isn’t good enough to get out for large motor skills time. The building has a secured entrance and can only be entered with a 4-digit code. This code is given out on the first day of care and is not to be shared.

**Compensation and Work Hours**

**Pay Period**

Pay periods will be bi-weekly on Friday’s and direct deposit will be used. A staff’s last paycheck will not be direct deposited, and staff will need to make arrangements to pick up a paper check from Nicole on pay day. Employees are responsible for checking and verifying that all information on pay stubs are correct and make any necessary changes with the Director or Assistant Director, when necessary, as soon as possible.

**Work Hours**

Our workday begins at 6:30 am and ends at 6:00 pm. All employees are expected to be in their designated areas at the start of their shift and ready to work. If employees have children, they need to be dropped off in their respective rooms prior to clocking in. Employees however are to not be clocked in any earlier than 5 minutes prior to start of shift, unless otherwise authorized by the Director or Assistant Director. Staff are expected to leave the building at the end of their shift after they have clocked out unless they are waiting in the office. Staff are not allowed to go hang out in other classrooms off the clock.

**Timekeeping Procedures**

We will be using Time Clock Wizard for our time keeping software. The time clock will be inside the office only. Staff will be given a password and username on their first day of working. Staff are not permitted to clock more than 5 minutes before their scheduled time unless a member of management gives the ok. It is the staff’s responsibility to check their hours at the end of each pay period before payroll is submitted to catch any errors in clocking in/out. Any errors that have resulted from staff not checking their timecard or requesting PTO will not be fixed! If it is the error of office staff, I will reissue another direct deposit.

**Orientation of Staff and Trainings**

**Orientation of Staff**

At First Steps Learning Center our hiring process begins with a regular interview, followed by a working interview. This is done to make sure employees understand the job and the duties involved. Being a daycare provider is not just being a warm body in the room or babysitting. After both parties have decided they want to continue with the hiring process, paperwork is given, and an orientation will take place. During the orientation, we will go over the rules and regulations of the Center including, but not limited to, DHS regulations, classroom duties, employee expectations, staff board, trainings etc.

**Trainings**

Employees will be expected to complete trainings for their job. First Steps Learning Center will sign staff up and pay for these trainings. Staff are expected to complete 10 Continuing Education training hours within their first year of hire. Examples of classes include Applebaum conferences, 4C’s conferences, and ISU Extension classes. Staff also need to complete the following within the first three months of hire:

\*Essentials Training. (Counts towards CE the first time around, 10 hrs.)

\*First Aid/CPR/Universal Precautions. (Renew every 2 years).

\*Mandatory Reporting. (Renew every 5 years).

The Director or Assistant Director will take care of enrolling all staff for classes.

If staff leave within 1 year of their date of hire or 1 year from the date of a training, either on their own or let go, the cost of the trainings that have been paid for by the Center will be expected to be paid back and will be deducted from their last check:

Essential’s training: $50

 Mandatory Reporting: $20

 Think Safe Training (UP/CPR/First Aid): $55

 UP only: $10

 Background check: $15

**Benefits For Fulltime Employee’s:**

**PTO/Sick Time**:

\*After 90-day probation:

20 PTO hours, 10 hours of sick time.

\*At 6 months:

20 hours PTO, 20 hours of sick time.

\*Yearly in January:

1 year receive: 40 PTO hours, 30 hours of sick time.

3 years receive: 80 PTO hours, 50 hours of sick time.

5 years: 120 PTO, 50 hours of sick time.

6-10 years: 120 PTO, 70 hours of sick time.

10+ years: 120 PTO, 90 hours of sick time.

\*Sick days will be used for when staff call in sick, go home early due to being sick or having to care for someone who is sick. Once these days are gone, staff will not be paid for any excess sick days/leaving early due to illness, nor can they use regular PTO. (This is subject to the owner’s discretion).

\*Unused PTO/Sick Days: At the end of the calendar year staff may choose to have half of their PTO paid out in their first check in January. OR staff can choose to carry over half of their PTO ONLY at a max of 40 PTO hours. Sick time will be paid out in the first check in January and will not be able to be carried over.

\*PTO can only be used if you take off a day(s), leave early for a scheduled appt, or leave during your shift for an appt and come back. If you are scheduled in a room and get off early due to lack of kids, you can choose to leave early and not be paid, or you can fulfill the remainder of your shift by helping in the room, cleaning, office work, etc.

Example: Staff is scheduled open-x number of kids. Their shift would end at 4:30. You are low on kids and other kids leave early so you are now in ratio at 3pm. You can choose to leave and not be paid (not use PTO) or you can stay and continue to help in the room or whatever the Director chooses to have you do for the remainder of your shift. **Staff must check in with the office when in ratio before going home or staying in their room.**

\*Staff can only bank a maximum of 120 PTO hours at any given time.

\*You must put in your 2-week notice AND work those 2 weeks to use any PTO you have left, not going over 80 hours total.

\*A Roth IRA is available to enroll where First Steps will match up to 3% after staff have been employed for 1 full year at full time status.

\*If you are a full-time staff and become part time for any reason, you will not receive any full-time benefits. If you return to full time, you will be placed back on a 90-day probation and then start earning full time benefits.

\*Staff that are full time ONLY during the summer months do not qualify for full time benefits.

**Holidays: AFTER 90 DAY PROBABTION PERIOD: (If your scheduled day off falls on a Holiday you will not be paid for that Holiday.)**

New Year’s Day Day after Thanksgiving (not paid)

Memorial Day Christmas Eve

Independence Day

Friday Before School Starts Christmas Day

Labor Day New Year’s Eve- Close at 5PM

Thanksgiving Day

* If holiday falls on Saturday, it will be observed Friday. If it falls on a Sunday it will be observed on Monday.
* Staff will receive paid holidays after their 90-day probation period.
* If a holiday falls on your scheduled day off, you will not be paid for that day and you will work 4, 10-hour shifts.

**Discounted Child Care-for full time staff only**

Your first child will be at no cost. Second or more children will be at full price tuition.

**ALL EMPLOYEES**

**Breaks:**

Iowa Labor Laws require employers to grant a meal period of at least thirty (30) minutes to employees under the age of sixteen (16) scheduled to work five (5) or more consecutive hours. Iowa Code 92.7; IA Div. of Labor Wage FAQs.

Iowa does not have any laws requiring an employer to provide a meal period or breaks to employees sixteen (16) years of age or older, thus the Federal rule applies. The Federal rule does not require an employer to provide either a meal (lunch) period or breaks. However, if an employer chooses to do so, breaks, usually of the type lasting less than twenty (20) minutes, must be paid. Meal or lunch periods (usually thirty (30) minutes or more) do not need to be paid, so long as the employee is free to do as they wish during the meal or lunch period.

This being stated, if you would like a break, please let your Center Directors know so that they can schedule you one to ensure that the center always maintains ratios per DHS Rules. **If you need longer than 30 minutes for a break, you must get prior approval from the office. You must clock out for ALL breaks regardless of how long is taken or who the staff is-no exceptions!**

**Leave of Absences**

You must submit a written notice at least two weeks in advance to the Director for consideration. Final approval is given based on needs of the business. No more than two staff will be granted time off on the same day. Please check the staff bored for dates that are closed for taking time off. If you do not receive your time off request back, then it has been granted.

**Bereavement-Full Time Staff Only (after 90-day probation)**

In the event of the death of a spouse, partner, child, stepchild, mother, father, sister, brother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, stepmother, stepfather, or grandparents, you will be granted 2 days paid time off to take care of any funeral arrangements or family affairs. Any additional time may be taken if it has the Directors approval.

**Maternity Leave-Full Time Staff Only, after working full time for 1 year**

A leave of absence of up to 8 weeks with a doctor’s note can be used for pregnancy and childbirth, according to applicable State Law. Only 3 of those weeks will be paid if you have worked full time for a year prior to going on maternity leave. Any additional time past 3 weeks will be unpaid unless PTO is used. The time off needs to be communicated to the center Directors so that alternate arrangements can be made as necessary business needs can be in order.

**Military Leave-All Staff**

An employee who is a member of the Armed Forces Reserve, or the National Guard that are required to attend annual active duty for training or other short-term Reserve or Guard duty, or if an employee is drafted for military service, they would be eligible for unpaid military leave. Proof of service will be required to the center Directors before leave is granted. Employees are eligible for military leave and reinstatement benefits as required by Law.

**Jury/Witness Duty-All Staff**

Employees will be granted time off to serve on a Jury without pay. Time off will be given in accordance with Iowa Law. Please contact the center Directors immediately upon receiving Jury summons, or subpoenas to appear in Court. A copy of Jury duty summons and any other associated paperwork are required to be submitted to the Director along with anytime-off requests.

**Social Media Policy**

The use of social media has certain risks and responsibilities. To assist our employees in making responsible social media choices we have established guidelines for employees to follow.

For this policy, social media includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any kind on the internet, including the employees own or someone else’s web blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking, web bulletin board or chat room, affiliated with First Steps Learning Center, as well as any other electronic form of communication.

When representing First Steps Learning Center, employees should ensure their postings are consistent with the ethics, communications, discrimination, and harassment policies and expectations. Employees are solely responsible for what they post online. Employees should avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening, or intimidating, that disparage customers, employees, or suppliers, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of unacceptable conduct include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone’s reputation, or posts that contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by Law. Inappropriate postings that include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may be subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

First Steps prides itself on the close personal relationships staff form with the families. However, relationships need to be kept professional at work and outside of work. Staff should not be communicating with parent’s issues that arise in the center, as that is the job of the director**. (Example, if you test positive for COVID it is NOT your job to notify parents in the building. That is the Directors responsibility.)**

**Health and Safety**

First Steps Learning Center is a smoke free environment. It is required by State Law that we do not allow smoking anywhere in or directly outside of the building. In addition, smoking is not allowed in Center vehicles. Employees who wish to smoke may do so in their own vehicles. ALL cigarette butts must be placed in a trash receptacle, not on the grass or parking area of the Center. Staff must wash their hands upon returning to their rooms and make sure they refrain from smelling like smoke. (Use spray, gum, etc.)

**Curriculum Planning**

Curriculum at First Steps Learning Center includes teacher-directed, child-initiated activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive abilities.

The childcare component of the program is for children - infants to two years of age.

**Infant Program**

The infant room follows each child’s eating and napping schedule provided by the parents. Play times are stimulating and interactions are provided to meet each child’s developmental needs. All infants are given tummy time throughout the day, read to, and are provided with toys to help develop their grasping skills and hand eye coordination.

**One’s Program**

In these classrooms, they follow a more structured routine and incorporate some group times into their daily schedule. Daily lesson plans are developed to help foster the social and emotional skills needed to succeed. They have a variety of toys to help build their vocabulary, small and large motor skills.

**Two Years-Pre-K Program**

Starting at age two, children are introduced to a preschool curriculum. Lesson plans are designed by the lead teachers of each room and are developmentally appropriate, focusing on school readiness and social/emotional development. Learning centers are made available to help teach children about themselves and their world, and group times are incorporated into the daily schedule.

**School-Age Program**

A school-age program for children in kindergarten through sixth grade is available. We provide care on all no school days, breaks, and holidays that when the center is open. We provide transport to and from the following schools: Wickham, Central, Van Allen, Garner, and Tiffin.

**Program Activities**

All classrooms will have a written daily schedule that includes both structured and unstructured time. Schedules will be flexible to allow children to make choices in their activities to help promote decision-making and independence.

# Enrichment activities

Throughout the year, First Steps Learning Center will offer a variety of classes that parents can choose to sign up for. Some of the activities will be out of pocket costs if you choose to sign up.

Examples of activities may include, but not limited to: Little Sports Torts

 Tippi Toes

 Brown Deer Buddies

Our School-age program will be partnering with the Brown Deer Nursing Home through the school. Children will be visiting once a week to read and play games to help promote a sense of community and cultivate/foster giving back. (On hold due to COVID.)

**Room Size and Ratios**

**AGE** **Ratio**

6 weeks to 2 years 1:4

2 years 1:6

3 years 1:8

4 years 1:12

5 years to 12 years 1:15

First Steps Learning Center’s total capacity is 141 children. Classrooms are divided by age and the following is what each classroom is licensed for:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Room: | Age: | Licensed: | Room: | Age: | Licensed: |
| Infants | 6wks-1 year | 12 | Junior Pre-K | 3-4-year old’s | 24 |
| Ones A | 12-18 months | 9 | Pre-K | 4-5-year old’s | 30 |
| Ones B | 18-24 months | 8 | School Age | 5-12-year old’s | 39 |
| Preschool | 2-3-year old’s | 20 |  |  |  |

**Daily Duties for Classrooms**

**Morning Duties**

All sanitized toys are put away, complete room set up for the day, greet parents and children as they begin to arrive, and make sure that the attendance sheet is signed.

**Nap-time Duties**

Straighten up toy shelves, cleaning of tables/chairs/floors/bathrooms, curriculum planning, make sure daily sheets are up to date, and prep for the afternoon.

**Afternoon/Closing Duties**

Greet parents as they pick up, check children out on attendance sheet, sanitize toys, take trash out to dumpster, and replace the trash bag, vacuum, restock items for the classroom with paper towels/toilet paper/diapers/wipes/ or any other items needed for the room. More closing duties may need to be done, per the lead teacher of the room.

**Guidance Strategies**

**Reasons for Misbehavior**

* Children want to test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
* They experience different sets of expectations between home and school.
* They want to assert themselves and their independence.
* They feel ill, bored, hungry, or sleepy.
* They have been previously “rewarded” for misbehavior by adult attention.

**Preventing Misbehavior**

* Set clear, consistent classroom rules that all staff follow (Ex. Gentle touches, walking feet).
* Make the environment safe and worry-free.
* Show interest in child’s activities.
* Focus on desired behavior, rather than ones to be avoided.
* Give clear directions, one at a time.
* Say “Yes” whenever possible.
* Set a good example, you are their role models.

**Responding to Misbehavior**

* Redirection – This means getting the child’s attention and introducing them to another activity. This method should be used as much as possible.
* Logical consequences – Child should see how behavior and consequences are related, Example; Timmy stands on his chair, so his teacher reminds him not to stand on his chair because he could fall and get hurt, which would make him sad.
* Participate in solution – If a child does something then they help fix or clean up. If a child causes another distress, then they should help in relieving that.
* Natural consequences – This is also known as learning the hard way; Example: Laura plays with her books and refuses to put them away, then one day she loses one and must replace it: This method may ONLY be used if it does NOT harm their safety or health.
* Take a break or calm down chair - Sometimes a child needs to be completely removed for their own, or others safety. This should only be used when other strategies have been tried, or others safety is in question.

**Useful Phrases**

Instead of: ’No’ or ‘Don’t’-Say: ‘Please Stop’, ‘That is not OK’, ‘That is not a choice’.

Instead of: ‘No Running’- Say: ‘Please use your walking feet’, ‘We only run outside’.

Instead of: ‘Stop crying’ - Say: ‘I need you to use your words to tell me what’s wrong’.

Instead of: ‘I said Yes’ (to a child that said no to you) -Say: ‘No is not a choice, I need you to…’

**Discipline Policy**

We believe that children learn through their environment and by the example of their teachers/caregivers. We understand that children are not perfect and will misbehave and test their limits. With this in mind, we have carefully set up each classroom’s environment to ensure each child will succeed and anticipate problems before they occur. Lead Teachers have a clear, set policy for the rules of their room and encourage positive behavior. We encourage the children to work on their problem-solving skills and help them to use words to solve conflicts.

Each room will have a calming area with both pictures and words as strategies to calm down. This area is a safe place where children can go, when they start to feel frustrated and need a break from their normal routine. Children can look at books, talk it out, or draw it out to help get them back on track.

* First Steps Learning Center will never use any form of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment means punishment inflicted directly on the body, including but not limited to: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, twisting, pulling, squeezing hurtfully, demanding excessive physical exercise that most children cannot pleasurably do, forced rest, adoption of bizarre positions, compelling a child to eat or put soap/food/spices/foreign substances in the child’s mouth, exposing a child to extreme temperatures without proper clothing or protection, isolating a child in an adjacent room/hallway/closet/dark area/play area/any area where the child is not supervised, trying to restrict movement by binding or strapping in a seat except in a car seat when traveling in a vehicle, taping, using or withholding food as punishment or reward, or taking away physical activity/outdoor time as punishment.
* Staff will not punish, demean, or humiliate children that are learning to use the toilet.
* Any form of emotional abuse including rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, isolating, or corrupting a child.
* Abusive, profane, or sarcastic language or verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or their family.
* Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment.

**Biting**

Even in the best childcare programs, periodic outbreaks of biting occur among infants and toddlers, sometimes preschoolers and occasionally older children. This is an unavoidable consequence of grouping young children together. Children bite for a variety of reasons, including teething, sensory exploration, stress, attention, hunger, and frustration. Biting can be frustrating and stressful for the children, parents, and teachers, and is not something to blame on the children, parents, or their teachers.

When biting occurs, it is important that the teachers remain calm and not show anger or frustration towards the child. Teachers will calmly let the child know that biting is not ok and will remove the child from the situation so that the focus of attention can be on the child that was bitten. The child who bit will be talked to about different strategies they can use the next time such as using words, get a teacher for help.

When biting becomes an ongoing issue, it is important to find out the reason behind it. Teachers will do observations and work closely with the parents to determine the reason behind the biting. Once a reason is determined, teachers can work on strategies to prevent the biting from occurring.

**First Aid for biting**

1. Wear gloves and clean the bite mark with soap and water. Run water over the area for 5 minutes.

2. Apply an ice pack to help minimize swelling and pain.

3. Apply a Band-Aid if the skin was broken.

4. If skin was broken parents will be notified.

5. Write up a detailed incident report for both children involved

All information is confidential, and names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents.

**Volunteers**

All volunteers must complete all paperwork as required by licensing and/or the Center. First Steps Learning Center welcomes volunteers to come help in our classrooms and on field trips and special activities. Please stop in the office if you would like to volunteer.

**Field Trips**

It is required by DHS that every child have a signed Field Trip permission on file. However, at First Steps Learning Center only children in Pre-K and School Age will participate in field trips away from the center.

A separate permission slip is required for each activity and must be turned in with the parent’s signature, for that child to attend that field trip. All center transportation policies will be followed, and center vehicles will be used to transport the children to and from the designated field trip. Field trips require an extra staff member or a volunteer. All volunteers will be required to complete a volunteer statement before attending the activity.

**Transportation**

First Steps Learning Center’s vehicles are used when transporting children to and from school and on field trips. All children must be fastened in an approved safety seat, seat belt, or harness that is appropriate for that child’s age and/or weight and is installed and used in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions for the car seat and motor vehicle. It is each parent’s responsibility to provide an appropriate restraint system to the center on the day of each field trip or for transporting to and from school.

The following rules will be followed in First Steps Learning Center’s Vehicles:

* There is no eating, drinking, or chewing gum while in the vehicle.
* Children must wait until the vehicle comes to a complete stop and the driver gives the “ok” before unbuckling themselves.
* Children will refrain from loud voices, fighting, inappropriate language, and acting rudely or abusive towards other children, the driver, or the vehicle.
* Children must immediately find a seat and buckle themselves in, using the appropriate restraint.

**Nutrition**

First Steps Learning Center serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. All meals are prepared on-site by our kitchen staff and meet the guidelines for the Child & Adult Care Food Program.

Children will be encouraged to try the foods on their plate, but they will not be forced to try something or make a “happy” plate. Food with never be withheld as a form of punishment. Mealtimes should be enjoyable and a time for children to work on their social skills and manners. Teachers are expected to sit with the children and model these behaviors.

Menus are posted for the current week outside the kitchen and all rooms. Copies of the menus will be available up by the office for parents to take home as well.

Infants through two-year old’s will be served breast milk, formula, or whole milk, and children over two years will be served 1% milk. A doctor’s note must be provided to serve milk other than those types specified, and it must meet the nutritional guidelines of the Child and Adult Food Program. Special treats brought from home for holidays, parties, or birthdays are allowed. Please check with your child’s teacher for any allergies in the room.

Parents with children that cannot eat the center’s food must provide us with breast milk/formula, cereal, or baby food until the child is ready to eat the center’s food. Infants are fed on their own schedules as provided by the parents. However, infants do not benefit from rigid feeding schedules.

All formula and breast milk bottles are good for one hour from the start-time of feeding. If a bottle is not finished, any remaining milk will be thrown away.

**Dietary Modifications**

All children with a special dietary need must have a dietary modification sheet on file at First Steps. This sheet must be filled out by the parent and doctor, if applicable. If child has food restrictions, First Steps Learning Center will substitute out the offending item on the menu. Food from home is discouraged, but if it must be brought from home it must meet all the nutritional requirements for the intended meal and any leftovers will be thrown out. We will not be able to store the food in the fridge or freezer or warm up the food. It must go straight from the child’s cubby to the table. If a child has a special dietary need, an Allergy Action Plan must be completed by their physician and placed in the child’s file.

**Parent Relationships**

Many of our employees become well acquainted with the parents of the children. This is important to providing quality care, but there are guidelines that must be followed by the employees.

* Address parents by their first name
* Never speak about an issue with a child in front of that child or other children
* When stating a concern about a child, always give at least two positives about that child. Don’t focus only on the negative.
* Avoid using phrases like “I don’t know”. Instead say “I’m not certain of that answer let me get back to you”.
* Conversation at drop off and pick up time should be brief; your main responsibility is the supervision of the children.

**Dress Code**

Employees are expected to observe the 3 Cs for appropriate work attire:

**Comfortable** – Employees are expected to play with the children on their level whenever it is appropriate. To do this, employees must be dressed comfortably in clothing that allows free movement and activity. Employees must wear clothes that they are comfortable getting dirty or that may become stained through activities they are doing alongside of the children. Flip-flops and sneakers are acceptable footwear.

**Clean-** All clothing should appear clean, with no stains, rips, or tears and must smell appropriate. This also applies to personal hygiene. Showering, using deodorant is expected. Perfume and cologne can be worn, but must be done so lightly, as this can cause headaches. Perfume and cologne should not be used in place of a shower.

**Courteous**- Employees interact with children and parents daily and should dress professionally. Clothing containing alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, vulgar saying, or suggestive wording/imagery is not allowed. Clothing that is never appropriate for the work environment includes halter tops, spaghetti strap tank tops, strapless (tube) tops, clothing that is ill-fitting (too tight or too baggy) short skirts/dresses/or shorts, sweatpants, excessively torn jeans or shorts, super low-rise jeans or shorts, or any clothing that exposes undergarments. If you must pull your shorts/dress/skirt down when you stand up, they are too short!

It is expected that employees represent First Steps Learning Center in a professional, respectable manner. Any employee not following the dress code may be asked to leave and return dressed appropriately.

Painted and fake nails are allowed but must be kept short!

**Disciplinary Policy**

For any disciplinary action not warranting immediate dismissal, First Steps may take the following actions:

* Verbal Warning - Verbal warning will be documented, discussed, and signed by employee and Director and/or Assistant Director.
* Written Warning – 1st -
* Written Warning – 2nd
* Suspension or Termination

Depending on the nature, frequency, and or severity of the offense, some of the listed steps may be repeated, or skipped. First Steps may impose any of these actions regardless of whether all the identified sequence of steps have been taken. First Steps Learning Center is a non-contractual, or ‘at will’, business. This means that employees can be terminated at the will of First Steps for any, or no, reason. All disciplinary actions will be kept on record in the employee’s personal file and considered when an employee is evaluated for promotion, review, and/or wage increase.

**Cell Phone/Watch Policy**

Cell Phones and Watches are not allowed during awake times in the classroom. The only time they may be permitted is during nap time once ALL children are asleep; if the room you work in does not have a nap time you are not allowed on your phone or watch. If you are on your cell phone or watch during awake time you are considered out of ratio in your room. Cell phones should be left in your bag/purse and not out on the counters, tables, etc. Failure to follow this can result in termination of employment.

**Company belongings**

Upon employment and thereafter, employees may be issued supplies or other Center equipment. This equipment is essential in job duties and may be expensive or difficult to replace. When using Center property, employees are expected to use care and follow operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines. Employees are responsible for the general condition of the Center’s equipment and issued supplies. Director or Assistant Director should be notified immediately when any equipment is broken, damaged, or in need of repair. Immediate response to damages and needs for repair can prevent further damage or potential injury to employee or others. Any unauthorized use of Center equipment or use in an excessive, improper, careless, destructive, or unsafe manner can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**Personal belongings**

Coats, backpacks, purses, etc. must be safely placed on provided hooks, out of reach of children. First Steps Learning Center is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Any employee caught leaving First Steps premises with anything other than personal belongings without the Owner/Directors consent may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. First Steps reserves the right to question the employee and/or search the employee’s belongings, including desks and other storage items that these items may be found in, at any time, without notice, while on First Steps property.

**Employee Relations**

**Visitors in the workplace**

To ensure the safety and security of First Steps Learning Center employees and its property, all visitors to the workplace must be pre-authorized by the Director and will only be allowed in designated areas. Visitors must also sign in and out at the office. Any visitors not in designated areas, or not signed in, will be asked to leave immediately.

**Suggestions**

Many excellent ideas for improvement come from the employees. Employees with suggestions or ideas that will improve procedures or working conditions, reduce costs or errors or in any other way benefit First Steps, its employees and or client, are encouraged to share their ideas by writing them down and giving them to the Director or Assistant Director.

**Open Door Policy**

First Steps maintains an open-door policy regarding employee concerns. Employees are encouraged to share their concerns, seek information, provide input, and resolve problems and/or issues through the Director and or the Assistant Director. Directors are expected to listen to employee concerns, to encourage their input and to seek resolution to the problems and or issues. Failure to report minor issues can result in major issues if left unresolved. All concerns and issues are held in the utmost respect and confidentiality to the employees.

**Communication**

First Steps makes use of a staff board and staff meetings to communicate important Center information. Employees may not post any material on this board without approval by the Director or Assistant Director.

**\*Staff emails will be sent out and it is the responsibility of the staff to apply to them in a timely matter.**

**Personal Files**

Personnel files are confidentially maintained on all employees of First Steps Learning Center. These files contain work related information including performance evaluations, disciplinary records, CE trainings, or other pertinent information. If Employee has any changes to phone number, address, tax withholding information, etc. employees need to inform Director or Assistant Director immediately. It is the employee’s responsibility to make any changes and present them in writing, verbal communication does not guarantee a change.

**Mandatory Reporter**

All staff are Mandatory Reporters and must complete a two-hour class that is renewed every five years.

Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation First Steps Learning Center will report to the Department of Human Services, as required by state and local laws, any instance where there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse, neglect, or exploitation may have occurred. Failure to report any suspected case of abuse could result in revocation of our license, immediate termination, or suspension of employment and/or individuals could be criminally charged for failing to report.

Section 232.69 of the Iowa Code requires that every employee of a licensed day care or preschool facility who, in the course of employment, reasonably believes a child has suffered sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental injury, child prostitution, denial of critical care, bestiality in the presence of the child, manufacture of a dangerous substance, or is in possession of a dangerous substance, shall immediately report the suspected abuse directly to the Department of Human Services.

Section 232.70 of the Iowa Code requires that each report made by a mandatory reporter, as defined in Section 232.69, shall be made both orally and in writing. The oral report must be made by telephone or otherwise to the Department of Human Services. IF the person making the report has reason to believe that immediate protection of the child is advisable, that person shall also make an oral report to an appropriate law enforcement agency. The written report must be made to the Department of Human Services within 48 hours after the oral report

By law, the oral and written reports shall contain the following information, or as much thereof as the person making the report is able to furnish:

1. Names and home address of the child and his parents or other persons believe to be responsible for his care.
2. Child’s present whereabouts if not the same as the parent’s or other person’s home address.
3. Child’s age.
4. Nature and extent of the child’s injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries.
5. Name, age, and condition of other children in the same home.
6. Any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injury to the child, the identity of the person or persons responsible for the injury, or in providing assistance to the child.
7. Name and address of the person making the report.

*Legal sanctions for failure to report are as follows:*

1. Any mandatory reporter who knowingly and willfully fails to report a suspected care of child abuse is guilty of a simple misdemeanor.
2. Any mandatory reporter who knowingly fails to report is civilly liable for damages proximately caused by such failure (Legal Reference 232.75). Any mandatory reporter who, in good faith, makes a report of child abuse or participates in the investigation of a child abuse has immunity from any liability, civil, or criminal. Records and/or information pertaining to the abuse may by release to the child’s abuse investigator without release required in other situation (Legal Reference 232.73)

All parents/guardians receive this notice in their handbook:

Dear parents: The people who care for your child have a special status under the law. They’re mandatory reporters. They don’t really report “child abuse”. What they must report is their suspicion that someone may have purposely hurt your child. They have no choice under the law. Trained investigators decide whether abuse took place. All children get bumps, bruises, scrapes as part of growing up. It is important however that you tell your child’s teacher/caregiver about any unusual injuries or conditions. Sincerely, Child Care Consultant

To Report Child Abuse Anytime, Call: TOLL FREE STATEWIDE (1-800-362-2178). You may call collect.

**Abuse Allegations against an Employee**

If an employee is being investigated for an abuse allegation by DHS, First Steps Learning Center administration will take the following steps:

\*Cooperate with and review the allegation statements with the DHS investigator.

\*Take action concerning the employee’s work status. The specific action will depend on the individual situation but will likely fall within one of the following options:

 1. The employee may continue working during the allegation investigation with or without modifications to job duties/responsibilities.

 2. The employee could be suspended with pay until the investigation is complete.

 3. The employee could be suspended without pay until the investigation is complete.

Licensing Consultant

Heidi Brown

855 S. Dubuque Street, Suite 102

Iowa City, Iowa 52240

319-688-5733

A copy of the licensing standards is available on the Department of Human Services website. (Chapter 109 of Administration Rules)

**Acknowledgment of Receipt**

**(Please return to office)**

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of First Steps Learning Center’s Employee Handbook and acknowledge my obligation to read and comply with its contents. I understand that the handbook is intended to provide an overview of First Steps personnel policies and does not necessarily represent all such enforced policies. First Steps has the right to add, change or replace any policy at any time without notice.

I also understand that my employment and compensation are for no fixed term and may be terminated by the employer at any time without cause or notice, for any reason not prohibited by law. Likewise, I may resign at any time. I understand and agree no person other than the Director has any authority to enter any written or oral agreement different than what is stated.

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Employee Signature Date

Office use only below this line

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Completed and signed all paperwork

 W-2

 I-9 form

Acknowledge of receipt

 Physical

 Volunteer/Substitute form

 Direct Deposit Form

 Emergency Contact Form

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Director/ Assistant Director Signature Date