

January | 2024



First Step
... Every Step is Precious ...

Parents Hand Book

Welcome to First Step

Table of Contents

First Step	4
Daily Schedule	5
Learning Tools	6
Outside.....	6
Inside.....	6
Children's Personal Items	7
Communication Tools.....	7
Parent/Staff Conferences	7
End-of-Year Assessments.....	8
Admissions & Withdrawal	8
Enrolment Requirements.....	8
Registration Requirements	8
Registration Package.....	9
Class Times & Investment / Fees.....	9
Family's Request for Withdrawal & Registration	9
Facility's Request for Withdrawal	9
Registration Priority.....	10
Yearly Calendar Information	10
Holidays & Breaks	10
Photography/Media	11
Class Photos	11
Questions Parents Ask	11
Can I drop by during class time?	11
How will I know how my child is doing?	11
How do I deal with my child's separation for the first days of child center?.....	12
How does play help my child learn?	12
Will my child learn to read and write?	13
Do I qualify for subsidy dollars?.....	13
What do I need to send with my child each day?	14
Policies & Procedures	14
Absence	14
Child Abuse.....	14

Confidentiality.....	14
Conflict Resolution	14
Criminal Record Checks.....	15
Drop-Off & Pick-Up	15
Emergency Evacuation Procedures.....	15
Guidance	16
Supervision.....	17
Holiday Celebrations.....	18
Illness	18
Inclusion	20
Inspection Visits.....	20
Lateness	20
Medication	20
Missing Child Procedures.....	20
Nutrition & Snacks	22
Safety on Outings & Field Trips	22
Sunscreen	22
Emergency Closure Policy.....	23

First Step

“Your Childs First Step to a Lifetime of Learning”.

Thank you for visiting First Step Daycare Center.

First Step is a nurturing Daycare Centre for children aged one to five-years old. At First Step we are committed to providing a welcoming, caring, educational, and multicultural environment.

Our Philosophy is based on the internationally acclaimed Reggio Emilia approach, based on fostering children’s interests, children are taught about the importance of preserving our natural environment through hands-on activities such as planting vegetable gardens.

We strive to operate sustainably – by using organic products wherever possible, and natural materials in our playrooms such as, organic wooden toys, tables, benches and light table.

It is also our goal to exceed Canadian standards for health and safety and to ensure the well being of children and staff.

We see ourselves as teachers, caregivers and, above all, partners dedicated to working with families and helping children realize their fullest potential.

Why Choose First Steps for Your Daycare?

We offer:

- A Welcoming Home not a Facility. Our location is in a safe home setting neighborhood of North Vancouver. We provide an ample space to our children in every age group.
- A home environment with Fewer Kids, Less Traffic, Less Sickness, Up Close & personal, better Bonding, Great Attachment, and Family Relationship.

- A team of qualified and experienced Early Childhood Education staff with integrity and a passion for their chosen field of work
- A variety of scheduling options
- Solid knowledge about what it really means for your child to be “ready for kindergarten” and how to accomplish that
- An approach to learning that respects your child’s individual temperament, stage of development, likes and dislikes
- Daily routines that are flexible, not rigid, and responsive to your child’s needs
- Formal and informal opportunities for you to communicate with staff about how your child is doing
- Newsletters to keep you informed about class activities

We encourage you to think about what you want for your child and to do your research on available child center programs. Have a question about how we do things and why? Please just ask!

Daily Schedule

Time	Title
08:00 – 08:30	Free Play / Dramatic Play / Cooking / Baking
08:30 – 09:30	Morning Snack
09:30 – 10:30	Atelier (open art) / Science Exploration/ Music Dance / Puzzles / Life Skills
10:30 – 12:00	Field Trips / Outdoor Adventures Water/Sand Play / Projects and Research
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch & Clean Up
1:00 – 2:30	Nap Time
3:00 – 4:00	Afternoon Snack
4:00 – 5:00	Free Play

Learning Tools

Outside

As fresh air, sunlight and yes, rain, are very important for children's healthy growth, we will regularly go out on little adventures throughout our neighborhood. These experiences are fun, memorable and a natural teaching tool to help children understand the larger world around them.

Our center is located close to Murdo Frazer Park and its beautiful forest. Other destinations include the local corner store; post office, Fire hall and the neighborhood grocery store. We also have longer field trips to places such as museums, the North Vancouver library and community gardens.

Your child will enjoy the fun, stimulation and discovery of our many outings and field trips, which are incorporated into our classes so that the learning outcomes continue long after they are over.

Inside

Our child center room is spacious, warm and comforting. It is designed around children's needs and is set up to foster children's development.

Our learning tools are inspiring and challenging. Some of the hands-on indoor learning tools your child will be using in our child center include:

Tabletop manipulative toys floor toys, light table, balls beanbags sand water carpentry

Felt boards, arts dress-up, crafts puppets housekeeping

Some of the indoor activities your child will take part in include:

Songs Circle time Yoga Games Music Sharing time

Whatever our environment, outside or inside, we promote an enchanting, enjoyable, stress- free atmosphere where the children are encouraged to learn about and gradually demonstrate sharing, teamwork, self-control and independence. They acquire language skills and problem- solving techniques in their play process. All of this helps their developmental growth and prepares them for kindergarten and beyond.

Children's Personal Items

Please provide a pair of inside shoes (with your child's name written on the inside) that will be left at the center. They will be kept in your child's own special cubby box. Inside shoes help to keep our floor space clean and allow us to use it for more activities.

We understand that children sometimes want to bring in toys and personal items from home, however these items can get lost in our very active environment. This would be disruptive to the class and upsetting to your child, so please leave these items at home.

Communication Tools

Our communication tools are designed to ensure that you are fully aware of what is happening in your child's child center class.

The bulletin/white board located in our center provides up to date information on our program, class activities, useful resources and other related topics.

During special events and activities, our newsletter is sent out by e-mail. It is full of past, present and future monthly activities, events, projects, songs, tips and much more.

Parent/Staff Conferences

We invite you to talk to staff anytime, contact us by e-mail (info@Firststeps.ca), or make an appointment to meet with us to share information on any aspect of your child's progress at child center. Our door is always open.

End-of-Year Assessments

At the end of the school year, you may receive an assessment of your child's growth and development in a variety of areas. Nothing will come as a surprise to you, as you will receive informal feedback on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

Admissions & Withdrawal

Enrolment Requirements

We welcome children from 0 to 3 years of age. Toilet trained before starting program is preferred for older children but we can make some exceptions, so speak to us on the matter.

Registration Requirements

To register your child in First Steps Child Centre Program, we require:

- A completed Registration Form Package
- A completed Immunization Form & Record
- General Consent Form
- Registration occurs within the center. A non-refundable registration fee of \$50, and a deposit equivalent to one month's fees is required at the time of registration, that goes toward your child's the last month of attending the center.
- Payments can be made by cash, post dated cheque and or e-transfer.
- Fees are due the 1st of each month.

Any cheques returned from your financial institution will incur an NSF fee of \$50.

Registration Package

All registration packages and information are available at our child center or from our website (<http://www.myfirststep.ca>).

Class Times & Investment / Fees

Time: 7:30am – 5:30pm			
Infant / Toddler		3-5 Years Old	
5 days/week	\$-----month	5 days/week	\$-----month
3 days/week	\$-----month	3 days/week	\$-----month
2 days/week	\$-----month	2 days/week	\$-----month
All tuition include breakfast –open snacks-lunch / day			
<i>(Prices are subject to change without notice)</i>			

(Drop Off Program) providing space is available

Hours: \$20/hour

Times: 8:00am – 5:00pm

Note: To register your child in First Step's drop off program, we require the same forms as the one above. Please contact us for availability and dates.

Family's Request for Withdrawal & Registration

A deposit equivalent to one month's fees is required at the time of registration, if you wish to withdraw or make changes from the program early, you must give a full sixty days notice in writing by the 1st day of the month prior to the change for a full refund of your deposit. Failure to do so will mean that your deposit is forfeited.

Facility's Request for Withdrawal

First Steps Center LTD. can terminate its services to a family under the following circumstances:

- If fees for services are not paid in full and on time and suitable arrangements cannot be agreed upon;

- If the center is unable to satisfactorily resolve a problem with a family;
- If a family member harasses, threatens or commits a violent or unlawful act toward a staff member, child or other family involved in the program;
- If, in the assessment of the staff, a child is unable to be safely managed in a group of children within the given adult-to-child ratio. In this case, termination of services will be a measure of last resort.

Registration Priority

Our registration takes place as follows:

1. Families currently enrolled in our program
2. Previously registered families (siblings) that are on our waitlist
3. Families on our waitlist
4. General public

Yearly Calendar Information

Holidays & Breaks

We strive to match the holidays and seasonal breaks of Vancouver public schools.

	Summer	Winter
Year 2024-25	July– Aug	Dec– Jan

Please Note: Centre will be closed on Easter Mon, in April.

Photography/Media

At first Step we emphasis on documenting children's thoughts and progression of thinking by capturing memories that occur at our center and during our events and field trips. Photography and or videography maybe used to capture children's thoughts and explanations and their visual representations such as drawing, art work etc. We may also receive requests from media for photographic, audio or video material of our programs and activities. Included in your registration package is a request for permission to photograph your child. Please discuss any concerns you may have about your child being video or photographed with the centers director upon entering the program.

Class Photos

During the school year a professional photographer may take individual and group photographs of the children. They are a wonderful memento for parents and you will have a variety of options if you wish to order them.

Questions Parents Ask

Can I drop by during class time?

Yes but please be aware that your child's behavior can vary with sudden changes at the center.

How will I know how my child is doing?

Just ask! We firmly believe that giving you honest, helpful feedback when you ask for it, even on a moment's notice, to help you understand how and what your child is doing in child center, is one of our greatest skills, and one that can be overlooked by child center. We are also committed to letting you know if any issues come up with your child that we think we should talk to you about.

How do I deal with my child's separation for the first days of child center?

Separation anxiety in children is very natural. Children do grow out of this condition, generally by four years of age. If your child has tantrums, yells, is clingy or cries a lot, be reassured that these are all normal reactions and show that they have a loving bond with you. Most children tend to stop crying about three or four minutes after their parent leaves. Separation anxiety can come and go for a while, however children soon learn to adapt and this does not cause them long-term harm.

We recommend that you try these useful tips to help ease this transition:

- If possible, visit the child center, teachers or other children prior to the first day.
- Have a quick good-bye with a hug, kiss, or special wave.
- Let them know who will be picking them up.
- Do not sneak out as this can make your child distrustful.
- Do not bribe your child.

Once you leave, remember that you are leaving your child with staff who genuinely cares about them, who are skilled at getting to know them, and who have experience assisting parents and children with this process.

How does play help my child learn?

Although adults generally separate “working” and “playing” it is important to remember that playing is the work of young children.

As your child plays they connect their play objects to what they are thinking and observing in the world. Play allows them to learn math and spatial concepts, language skills, gross and fine motor skills, social skills, and to express themselves emotionally and creatively.

Play is how children naturally learn about themselves and the world around them. That is why high quality child center make play-based learning the core of their programs.

Will my child learn to read and write?

We do not “teach” reading and writing per se. That is not the purpose of child center. Your child may be able to read and write before kindergarten but that depends on many factors. The purpose of child center is to assist your child to be physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and linguistically ready for kindergarten.

If you are anxious about this question, please talk to our staff about the skills and developmental stages that kindergarten teachers hope to see in their new students in order for them to be truly successful in school.

Do I qualify for subsidy dollars?

You may be qualified to receive government subsidy dollars to reduce the cost of child center. To find out if you qualify, please contact:

Child Care Subsidy Service Centre

PO Box 9953 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria, BC V8W 9R3

Tel: 1-888-338-6622

Fax: 1-877-544-0699

Online applications can be found at:

<http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/application.htm>

Please make sure that you meet your deadlines for filing with the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre, as we require their confirmation on all amounts you are eligible to receive prior to the first of each month that fees are due.

If we do not have this confirmation, you will be required to pay the fees in full and receive credit for them when we receive the confirmation.

What do I need to send with my child each day?

Your child's inside shoes are kept at the center. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather, muddy buddies and rain boots are important for the rain as we do a lot of puddle jumping! Otherwise all you need to send with them is a healthy snack in a labeled snack bag and a labeled water bottle to leave at school or bring back and forth each class. If anything else is ever needed, you will be given plenty of notice beforehand.

Policies & Procedures

Absence

If your child will be away for any reason please notify us as soon as possible, as it may change our daily class planning. Email is the best way, as we do not always answer the phone.

Child Abuse

We are required by law to report any suspected or disclosed abuse of a child by anyone to the Ministry for Children and Family Development. In this situation, we are not allowed to notify the child's parents unless we are instructed to do so by the Ministry.

Confidentiality

We have a strict policy of confidentiality. Anything said between staff members, between staff and parents, or between staff and management is kept completely confidential.

In addition, we respect the children by not speaking to any other family member about a child that is not theirs. If two children are involved in an incident together, we will explain what happened to the parents without naming the other child.

Conflict Resolution

We are committed to providing a caring and supportive environment for our children and families. You are strongly encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns about your

child's program or our procedures with staff. If a conflict arises, our goal is to resolve differences of opinion and find solutions that everyone can accept.

If a problem continues, we can arrange a meeting between families, staff and management to define the issues, state differing points of view, and identify possible solutions.

If you wish to appeal a decision, you can have a further meeting with the Director, Nasi Dadashi. The Directors' decision will be final.

If the issue has still not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may file a complaint with Community Care Facilities Licensing of Vancouver Coastal Health.

In the case of persistent conflicts, when all reasonable attempts to solve problems have failed, the family will be asked to make other child center arrangements (see "Facility's Request for Withdrawal").

Criminal Record Checks

All staff members, Early Childhood Education students, or volunteers that have any involvement with our program are first required to provide us with a Criminal Record Check as per our childcare license from Vancouver Coastal Health.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up

To ensure the safety of all our children, we have a strict policy for signing in and signing out when each child arrives and leaves the center. Your child will only be released to you or to the person who dropped them off. Anyone else who arrives to pick up your child must be listed on your child's registration form and must provide photo ID to staff unless you have informed us prior. In this situation, staff members would still exercise caution and contact you if they were concerned about the pick-up for any reason.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Fire drills are held once a month as required by the fire authorities. The Director sounds a bell and the staff follows the emergency evacuation procedure for the center. Staff

members have children line up quickly and quietly. They then take a first aid kit, attendance sheets and the children to a designated location to conduct a head count and attendance.

The Director gathers emergency cards, keys, and staff in/out sheets; checks all rooms, washrooms and closets; and meets staff at the designated location. The Director also records information from the event: the date and time it took place and how long it took to evacuate everyone. This information is then posted for viewing in the center.

Earthquake and fire drills are held once a month. During the drill children are taught to stay away from windows and to “duck, cover and hold” until shaking and or smoke stops.

Staff members have children line up quickly and quietly if required to leave the building. They then take a first aid kit, attendance sheets and the children to a designated location to conduct a head count and attendance.

The Director gathers emergency cards, keys and staff in/out sheets; checks all rooms, washrooms and closets; and meets staff at the designated location.

In the event of a real fire, earthquake or other emergency, parents (or others listed on their child’s registration form) will be contacted immediately.

Our emergency routes are posted in the center. Please make yourself familiar with this information, and be sure to keep your contact information up to date.

Guidance

Our program is designed to maximize fun and learning and minimize any problems with children’s behavior. We prevent problems by ensuring that our classroom environment is stimulating and rewarding and is set up to meet the children’s stages of development and individual needs. In addition, our staffs have realistic expectations with clear limitations for the children, and use a gentle, positive approach at all times.

If your child needs guidance, staff will speak to them at their eye level, using positive words and tones, to help them understand. The focus will be on the behavior and they will be redirected to a new activity if necessary.

We do not use a punitive “time-out” method of separating a child from everyone if his or her behavior is disruptive. However, staff uses a “time-in” method, but only if a child needs time away from other children to settle down. In that case, a staff member will sit with your child (for no longer than one minute for each year of your child’s age) to help them to calm down and understand what has just happened.

If all our strategies are not effective, we will meet with you to decide on other appropriate actions.

Under no circumstances do we ever use corporal punishment of any kind.

If any child endangers the safety of others, we have to remove them immediately from the program.

We ask you to keep us informed of any changes, big or small, in your child’s life and/or routine, as this can cause behavioral changes in your child at child center.

Supervision

We have the duty of care to provide adequate supervision of children at all times.

Supervision is one of the key requirements in the prevention of accidents and injury throughout the center. It also promotes positive, responsive, and intentional learning environments for children and child care providers.

We supervise children to ensure the potential for accidents and injury to children is reduced and the safety for children when participating in excursions.

- We Conduct regular safety checks of the program premises and equipment to remove hazards;
- Position equipment and arrange the environment to allow caregivers to supervise the children’s play, rest, and toilet areas;

- Know which individuals are authorized to pick-up a child from the program in place of a parent;
- Notice when children arrive and leave the program, ensuring that both arrival and departure times are accurately recorded;
- Remember where emergency medications, first aid kits, and emergency contact numbers are kept; and monitor children are all at times.

Holiday Celebrations

We honor and celebrate all Canada's major holidays and celebrations in our child center. In addition, we will incorporate other cultural celebrations, as much as we are capable of, out of respect for the children in our program and the diversity of our community. If you would like us to celebrate something meaningful to your family that is not already on our calendar, please let us know at least one month in advance and we will do our best to accommodate your request. If there are celebrations you prefer your child not be involved in, please discuss this with us prior to the date so we can accommodate your preference.

Illness

Health and Safety Requirements

Prior to admission, parents are asked to complete their child's medical form, and to have a record of all immunizations.

Every precaution will be taken to ensure the safety of children attending; as such parents must call in if their child is out sick and to communicate the symptoms

We have created the following policy using both Community Services and Public Health Services Guidelines. Please read over the following information carefully as it will be strictly enforced.

If your child is ill, they will need your loving care and should not be at child center the day their symptoms appear. They are permitted to return after being free of symptoms for

a 48-hour period. For the sake of all the children and staff at the center, we cannot make exceptions to this policy.

If your child has exhibited any of these symptoms please keep your child at home.

Thank you for respect and consideration of teachers, other classmates and parents.

- Fever of 38.5°C (100°F) or higher
- Consecutive bouts of diarrhea
- Vomited within the past 24 hours
- Skin infection and or undiagnosed rash, eye infection.
- Signs of infectious disease Parasite related conditions (impetigo, scabies, head lice, etc.)
- Acute cold with running nose or eyes, sore throat has been on antibiotics for less than 24 hours.

Your child may return to the center when his/her health has returned back to the following: Fever has remained below 38.5 (100°F) for 24 hours without medication.

Child has had at least one normal bowel movement 24 hours has passed since last bout of vomiting.

A doctor has examined the child and he/she has received medical clearance for an infection or parasite related condition. Please check with staff if you have any questions.

If your child becomes ill while at child center, they will be cared for in a quiet area and you will be notified to come and pick them up.

In case of emergency, 911 will be called and your child will be taken to hospital, accompanied by a staff member who will bring the child's emergency card and medical information. You will be notified immediately.

Inclusion

We are committed to including, not excluding, children. If your child has special needs please let us know. We will not turn a child away if we can accommodate their special requirements, together with you and/or with community resources.

Inspection Visits

First Steps is a private facility licensed by Vancouver Coastal Health, who will make regular inspection visits to ensure we are following all required safety procedures. This includes checking all equipment and programs. All inspection reports will be posted and/or on file in our center for viewing anytime.

Lateness

All families are expected to follow our hours of operation. We cannot tolerate lateness as it is disruptive to our program and does not meet our childcare standards. If there is an emergency that forces you to be late for picking up your child, you must contact us immediately so we can agree on other arrangements.

Medication

All medications must be stored by staff in an appropriate lock box or approved area. They must be in original prescription containers, labeled with your child's information and dosage. If your child is being treated with over-the-counter medication, you must provide a doctor's note with instructions and your child's name. We also require you and a staff member to fill out a form when you arrive at the center with your child.

Missing Child Procedures

Entrances to and from the child center are always supervised by at least one member of staff at drop-off and pick-up times. We use child safety gates for additional security and can lock the center doors once all children have been dropped off.

If a child goes missing from the center, we follow this procedure:

- The person in charge carries out a thorough search of the building and outdoor area.
- Attendance is checked to make sure no other child has gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security.
- The person in charge talks to staff to establish what happened.
- If the child is not found, the child's parent is contacted and the police are called.
- The person in charge contacts Vancouver Coastal Health as soon as possible.

On outings, children are counted and assigned to specific staff members. If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending, we follow this procedure:

- Staff on the outing asks children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity.
- The person in charge is informed (if they are not on the outing), and they then make their way to the venue to aid the search, to be the point of contact for police, and to support staff.
- Staff takes the remaining children back to the center.
- The person in charge of the child center contacts the child's parent, who makes their way to the center or outing (as decided by the person in charge).
- Staff contacts the police and report the child as missing.
- In an indoor venue, staff contacts the venue's security that will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The person in charge contacts Vancouver Coastal Health as soon as possible.

Nutrition & Snacks

We believe in healthy food choices, which promote positive growth and development in children. Please provide your child with food items that are healthy and from a couple of food groups according to the Canada Food Guide.

During snack time children are taught about table manners, cleanliness, and food choices to promote healthy living.

Also, we ensure that the appropriate modifications are made to snack planning for children with allergies or other dietary requirements.

First step has a strict No Peanut Policy. Please pack lunches without peanut butter, peanuts or peanut oils. Make sure products contain no peanuts, contain no traces of peanuts, and are not manufactured in a facility or on equipment that processes peanuts.

Safety on Outings & Field Trips

One or two adults accompany the class when they walk to and from the park or go on other outings depending on staff/child ratios for that class. We always carry a first aid kit and emergency cards, and teach the children about safety, stranger tips and rules to follow when outside the center.

On walks, children are required to walk in pairs, holding a rope and/or independent walking in the group and adults are positioned at the front, middle and end of the group of children. For planned field trips, you will receive detailed information including transportation plans, ratio numbers and forms to fill out well in advance of the event.

Sunscreen

On days where there is bright sun or sun with snow on the ground, we expect you to put sunscreen on your child before arriving to class. If an unexpected situation arises and your child needs sunscreen, we may apply our own, unless you have instructed us otherwise beforehand.

Emergency Closure Policy

Closure due to weather conditions:

First Step may find it necessary to close the center due to severe inclement weather, when normal operation would pose a significant danger to our staff, children and their families, The center must adhere to the Municipality, school board, etc. for closure in case of inclement weather.

Closure due to unforeseen circumstances:

Unforeseen circumstances (i.e. storm damage, power outages, equipment failure, disaster or other temporary problems), First Step may be instructed to close or evacuate by other regulatory bodies such as the Ministry of Education, or the local Fire or Police Department.

Closure due to Teachers/Staff Health & Safety:

Although we try our best, however in the unlikely and unforeseen event when one or both teachers are unable to attend the center due to health & safety. Parents, Guardians will be informed by telephone or and E-mail should the center be closed, or early closer, you will be asked to pick up your children as soon as possible.

To assist with this process, ensure that contact information is up-to-date.

Your child will have a rewarding, fun, safe learning experience at First Steps.

Have more questions?

Just call or e-mail us.

Want to schedule a visit?

Contact us as soon as possible.

Ready to register your child?

See page 8-9 of this handbook.

Already registered?

Be sure to read the entire handbook.