

First Steps Daycare

We can make our plans but the Lord determines our steps.
Proverbs 16:9



Parent Handbook

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Our Mission

The mission of First Steps Daycare is to encourage our children to know God. In partnership with home and church, we want to reach out with the love of Christ, nurturing each child in an environment of compassion, equipping them with knowledge and skills for responsible Christian citizenship in the community and in the world. We want to help the children grow, mature, and blossom into whom God has created them to be.

Daycare Ministry Objectives

- Teach, by word and example, the love of God shown through Jesus Christ so each child realizes their uniqueness and value to God.
- Provide children with a safe, nurturing environment in which they may mature and progress socially, academically, emotionally, physically, cognitively and spiritually.
- Prepare young children for future success by building a base of knowledge, instilling a love for learning, and encouraging their natural curiosity and desire to learn.
- Help children see they are part of a community and as such, learn respect for both persons and property of others.
- Challenge children to excel in their own areas of interest as well as expose them to new areas of learning.
- Help children explore God's world.
- Teach children social skills necessary to interact appropriately with their peers and adults.
- Give children creative outlets and opportunities to use their imaginations.
- Show children there is an accepting, comfortable place in addition to the home.

Our Philosophy of Education

Children are gifts from God. They are born with an innate desire to learn and they learn best by doing. With this in mind, our program is designed to nurture a child's natural curiosity about the world in which they live by giving them a rich variety of learning opportunities. We offer a program that addresses the whole child – academically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, physically, and most importantly, spiritually.

Church Authority

Because First Steps Daycare is a ministry of the First Steps Church of God, religion will be taught according to the faith and beliefs of this local church and with the global movement of Church of God, Anderson IN. Staff will use the Bible and materials supplied by the First Steps Church of God and the Program Director of First Steps Daycare for the daily curriculum in the classroom. Chapel will be conducted once a week and will be led by the Pastor.

Tuition & Care Information

Hours of Operation 6:00am – 6:00pm

Annual registration fee for all children (January)
\$35 per child

Infants and Toddlers: 6 weeks through 2 years old
\$125 per week

Preschool: 3 through 5 years old
\$110 per week

School age: 5 through 12 years old (summer break full time)
\$100 per week

School age: 5 through 12 years old (part time during school year)
Before School Care (6:00am – 7:30am) and/or After School Care (3:30pm – 6:00pm)
\$50 per week

Ratios: 6 weeks through 2 years old– 1 teacher per 4 children
3 to 5 year olds – 1 teacher per 10 children
Before and after school age students – 1 teacher per 15 students

Daycare Hours and Schedules Offered

Our center offers childcare from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Each child's hours of attendance are determined by their registration and the class they attend.

Children newborn through 5 years old can attend full time, between 6:00am and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Before and after school care is available for children 5 – 12 years old to cover the hours of 6:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. and/or 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. For these school age children we also offer a summer break full time program, between 6:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Registration Process and Required Forms

To register with First Steps Daycare you must turn in a complete registration packet to the office annually (every January). The **Registration Form**, accompanied by the \$35 registration fee paid in full, confirms your decision to enroll and holds your child's place in the center for that year. Next you will be asked to have your child's doctor fill out and sign the **Child Medical Examination Form** and bring the child's **Immunization Record**. It is very important to bring back our form signed and dated. All health forms are good for one year from the date the doctor completes the form. The signature page of the **Parent Handbook** confirms you have received our policies and procedures, and that you have read and understand them. When you have finished reading, please sign this page and turn it in. The rest of the handbook is for your records and review. Lastly you will be given a **Supply List**. We ask that you please bring the supplies from the list of your child's age group on their first day of attendance each year. It is important to remember that the office must have all of the above completed by the first day each year your child is scheduled to attend.

Children turning 3 years old cannot graduate from the 2 year old room until they are fully potty trained. This means that the child must be able to care for toileting needs independently, including clothing adjustments. We recommend clothing without buttons or difficult snaps for children who have not yet mastered fine motor skills. Staff will provide supervision and monitoring of children while they are using the restrooms. If a child has a toileting accident, the restrooms are used for an emergency changing area.

First Steps Daycare admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to the center. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational or admissions policies. Admission is reviewable before acceptance.

Payment Policy

Once a child is enrolled at First Steps Daycare, the office will provide the family with a **Daycare Contract** showing the schedule chosen on the registration forms and the correct weekly tuition. The parent and the director will sign the agreement, it will be placed in the child's file, and a copy will be provided to parents. If you would like to change the schedule your child attends, you must contact the director so a **Change Form** can be signed and submitted.

Tuition is due on Monday of every week. Timely tuition payment helps the center to run smoothly and efficiently. If you want to arrange to pay your tuition on another schedule, it must be approved by the Director and noted on your Daycare Contract.

In our center tuition remains the same even if the center is closed for a holiday, must be closed for a snow day, a child takes sick days, or if you choose to take vacation.

Payment must be given in person to the Director or the Floor Manager. The teachers are not authorized to accept payments. Please make checks or money orders payable to First Steps Daycare and write your child's name in the memo section on the check or money order. Payment may also be made by credit/debit card in the front office. You can also set up an automatic payment with your bank through "Bill Pay" and have the bank send us the tuition check. Families who are in arrears with tuition payments will be denied services at the beginning of the next week until the previous week's tuition balance has been paid in full.

Child Withdrawal From the Center or Termination of Services

Enrolling a child at First Steps Daycare is an annual commitment; however, if a situation arises and a family chooses to withdraw from the center we request they provide the office with written notice 30 days before the child's last day. Tuition will continue to be charged by the office until this notice is received by the office, so prompt notification aids us with correct billing. In cases of emergency we will work with families.

If our school can no longer provide care for a child for any reason the Director is responsible for informing the parents. When possible the center will give the family two weeks' notice. In situations involving an emergency or center safety, notice may be given effective without delay.

Supervision of Children

Children MUST be signed in at the front office with the Director or Floor Manager by their parent or the adult responsible for drop off every day, using that person's full name. This is for safety and ensures proper classroom rosters. If when a child arrives the Director or Floor Manager is away from the office, it is the parent's responsibility to locate them and then sign the child in.

In the same way, each student must also be signed out each day by an approved adult, using their full name. For more information on approved adults, please see our policy on releasing children.

Each classroom teacher is responsible for the children on her/his roster. All children must remain with the responsible teacher at all times.

Releasing Children

First Steps Daycare will only release a child to an approved person who has been listed in a child's registration packet. It is very important for parents to keep contact information and approved pick up list information current, including any deletions. If a new person is added the parent must give permission to the school in writing. When any person arrives to pick a child up that the Director or Floor Manager in charge is not familiar with, they will be asked to provide picture identification. It is a good idea to remind relatives or friends to bring identification with them to avoid delays. Please remember, this rule is for your child's safety and we will enforce it.

Late Pick-up

It is extremely important that children are picked up promptly at the end of their registered time. Rooms are organized according to State ratios and extra children may cause us to add staff to cover the additional numbers. Those who are late to pick up their child(ren) may be charged a late fee. This late fee will be \$10 for every 15 minutes late the child is left at the center. If you are running late, please call the center. If any child has not been picked up ten minutes after closing time, parents will be called, followed by emergency contacts. If we are unable to reach an authorized person the closing staff member will call the director. The director will determine if calling the police and/or the Department of Human Services is necessary.

Annual Calendar

Please note the days that First Steps Daycare are **closed** annually will be: **New Years Day, Memorial Day, 4th of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Black Friday, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.**

Birthdays

We try to make children's birthdays a special occasion. Typically, we sing, eat a special snack, etc. Parents are invited to send a special snack but remember these must be commercially prepared and address classroom food allergies. Parents may NOT bring homemade treats for consumption at the daycare. Birthday party invitations are welcome if they include the whole class and are distributed in the children's cubbies.

Halloween

Halloween is a popular holiday. As a Christian daycare our focus on Christ is paramount. Any celebration surrounding Halloween should focus on non-occult theme, i.e. no witches, ghosts, warlocks, monsters, etc. On Halloween Day or the weekday closest to Halloween, the daycare will host a Costume Day. Children may wear costumes to school only if they can easily get in and out of them so they can take care of their bathroom needs. Costumes should be appropriate for a Christian daycare setting.

Other Holidays

Christmas and Easter activities will have the birth and resurrection of Jesus as their main theme. We will have a Thanksgiving celebration emphasizing giving thanks for what God has given us. And Valentine's Day will focus on God's love for us and us showing God's love to others. Other holidays may be celebrated as well. All celebrations will be listed in the monthly newsletter giving parents information about what is planned and how they can participate.

Supplies

At the beginning of each year each child will be given a supply list of things they need to bring to the center. Some things will be specifically for the child to use and will be marked and kept in their cubby, and some items will be shared in their classroom.

Items from Home

Items from home are problematic at the daycare. They are easily broken or lost and are very hard to share. Children's toys should be left at home. When children bring a toy to play with at school, the rule of thumb is to look at it and admire it with the child when they arrive, then hand it to a parent to save for them. If it becomes a problem, a chat with parents usually helps. Exceptions: A child having trouble separating will often bring a cuddly toy. This is developmentally appropriate and should be dealt with on an individual basis. The children may also keep a cuddly toy in their cubby for use at rest time if needed. Our daycare is not responsible if something is lost or broken. School age students' personal items must be kept in their backpacks unless they have permission from their teacher to have it out.

Dress Code

Children should come to school dressed appropriately for a Christian environment. All clothing must be modest and appropriate for the day's activities. If girls wear dresses or skirts they must be an appropriate length, and they must wear shorts underneath for ease when playing. For the children's safety all children must wear socks and closed-toe shoes at all times while on the premises. T-shirts should not bear slogans or logos that are not in alignment with Christian values.

Please be aware that many children in our center are just mastering independence with fasteners. Children are required to make their own clothing adjustments when they go to the restroom. Overalls, buttons and difficult snaps are best avoided.

Christian Content

Because we are a Christian daycare our entire curriculum is based on Christian principles and content. First and foremost this is done through the example of our staff as they demonstrate the love of God to the children. Ages 3 years and older attend chapel once each week and have daily Bible time in the class. We open our days in prayer and ask for God's blessing over our meals and rest. We welcome people of all faiths, but firmly believe that a strong foundation in our Christian faith is essential to our children and teach from that perspective.

Curriculum

Our Program Director is responsible for planning well-rounded, age-appropriate curriculum for the center. This includes academic work, play-based and hands-on activities, and enrichment in areas such as Art, Music, and Physical Education.

Elementary students are busy with appropriate activities while on site. There will be homework assistance available, as well as age-appropriate materials and projects for filling free time.

Field Trips

School age children may take off site field trips. When these trips are planned information will be sent home and a **Field Trip Permission Slip** must be signed and turned in to the Director at the center. Without these permission slips your child will not be able to attend the trip. Permission may NOT be given over the phone.

Church

First Steps Daycare is owned and operated by the First Steps Church of God located across the street from the center. The center may utilize the church for chapel and other activities throughout the week. The children will be walked back and forth from the daycare to the church by their teachers or adult volunteers.

Discipline Policy

We believe that proper discipline is one of the ways we nurture children and show them we care. By setting clear and reasonable boundaries for children and enforcing them consistently we provide an atmosphere that is safe and creates trust. We must always remember that children follow our examples in how they treat the people and things around them. We hope to inspire kindness and respect through our example.

Our daycare has a list of class rules. Teachers explain all rules to the children clearly. When rules are not followed the teacher will respond in the following ways. Depending on the type of behavior some or all steps may be taken or skipped to keep the classroom safe. In most cases the teacher will start by going to the student and giving a verbal correction. The teacher may then redirect the student from the activity or area where the rule is being broken. The teacher may ask the student to take a few minutes to calm down and think about the choices that were being made. In all situations the teacher will explain the rule and the discipline given before the student returns to the activity.

We will solve minor behavior issues as they occur and not every instance requires parental involvement; however, in serious cases or if behavior is repeated the teacher may ask the child to go speak with the director, the director may call the parents to inform them of the behavior, and/or the child may be sent home. Parents are responsible for any school property their child damages. Under no circumstances is physical or verbal punishment ever permitted.

Behavior and Biting

Inappropriate physical behavior such as biting, spitting, kicking and hitting is not acceptable at our center. While we understand that young children are often still working on communication and social skills, each child must behave safely. If such an incident occurs, the child's teacher will help the child understand that being unsafe is not allowed. If the incident continues to occur repeatedly the parents will be contacted.

Biting, though rare, is a serious concern for children. If biting occurs, an **Accident/Injury Report** will be sent home to both children's parents. Names will not be used. If the bite breaks skin both parents will be called and the child may be sent home.

Bullying

First Steps Daycare has a zero tolerance bullying policy. Any bullying incidents will be taken straight to the Director who will contact both families involved and deal with the issue immediately. If the issue cannot be resolved it could result in termination of daycare services.

Babysitting or Transporting

It is strongly recommended that staff do NOT babysit children who are enrolled in First Steps Daycare. If they do, they must be very clear to the family that they are acting independently of the daycare and that the daycare CANNOT be liable for their actions.

Staff may never, under any circumstances, transport any child who is enrolled in the daycare during daycare hours, to and from work, unless the child is their own.

Meals and Snacks

Nursery: (6 weeks through 1 year old)

It is the parents responsibility to provide all bottles and food necessary for their child. Please write out a schedule of when and how much your child should be fed each day. A refrigerator is available in the nursery. Bottles will be warmed unless instructions given otherwise.

Toddlers: (2 years old)

A light morning and afternoon snack along with a lunch will be provided. If you want your child to have breakfast in the center please send it with them and let their teacher know. Please provide a sippy cup with your child's name on it.

All Other Full Time Children: (ages 3 years old and up)

A light morning and afternoon snack along with a lunch will be provided. If you want your child to have breakfast in the center please send it with them and let their teacher know. Older children will be introduced to the concept of sharing, pouring into a cup, general table manners, and clean-up.

Rest Time

All children ages 5 years and younger enrolled in our center are required to rest after lunch. All children are required to rest for at least an hour. Quiet activities are permissible during this period. Children will not be forced to sleep. Children should bring a nap mat, a blanket, a pillow with a case, and any or other comfort item that helps them to rest well. Please mark your child's items clearly. All bedding will be sent home weekly to be washed.

Parent Communication

Communication between home and the center is important in insuring a successful daily experience for each child and making sure families and the center are "on the same page." With this in mind, there are several avenues to facilitate effective communication.

- Each child is assigned a cubby to hold personal belongings, communication to parents, their daily work and more. Each class sends home a monthly newsletter and a daily **My Day at First Steps** form. Please check your child's cubby for information during pick up, and read these items as they provide valuable information about your child's daily activities.
- Teachers will also communicate with parents during pick up and drop off about the day's activities, and both parents and teachers may request to meet to discuss the child.
- Super important notices are posted in the main lobby of the center on the bulletin board to give notice of school closure dates, class parties, etc.
- The Director is available by phone, Facebook, or email. Please feel free to contact her directly.

Photographs

Staff may take pictures in the center to document student achievements and to create a sense of participation for each child. These pictures may be posted in the center, but for privacy the students' full names will never be listed with their pictures. School families are advised NOT to put pictures of school children, other than their own child, on their Facebook page when taking pictures at the center or church.

Closures Due to Weather

First Steps Daycare reserves the right to make their own decision and close if they decide the weather merits it. Please listen to local radio stations 98.5 and 104.3 FM for closure information. The information will also be sent out on our facebook page and messenger if your family has agreed to join. On snowy mornings it is always the parent's right to wait and bring their child in when they feel they can safely do so. If an "early pick up" is needed due to inclement weather, parents will be called by the center and strongly encouraged to pick up their child in a timely manner.

Inclement Weather Policy

We strive for a minimum of thirty minutes of outdoor play in the morning and thirty minutes of outdoor play in the afternoon every day. This means that we often go outside when it is cold or when there may be snow on the playground. We recommend that your child has a hat, gloves, boots and a warm jacket available so they may play comfortably. On days when it is too cold to safely be outside we may shorten the time and/or play indoor games.

In the summer and fall there are occasionally days when the weather is exceptionally hot. On such days the staff is responsible for keeping the children safe. Outdoor times may be shortened and water will be provided for the children.

Before and After School Buses

Farmington public school buses can be scheduled to pick up and drop off students at our center. The parents are responsible to set this up for their children through the school district. The center is not responsible for public school children's transportation.

Health and Wellness

Your child's health is a matter of major importance to us. A child who appears to be or complains of being ill will be taken to the director. The child's temperature will be taken, and based on this and all apparent symptoms it will be determined whether the child is well enough to remain at school. Some of the symptoms we will look for are:

- Temperature over 100° F
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Rash
- Fatigue, irritability, or listlessness
- Coughing
- Discharge from the eyes or ears
- Nasal discharge that is not clear or is persistent
- Earache
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea
- Head Lice
- Open sores with or without drainage

This is not meant to be a comprehensive list.

If your child has had any of the symptoms listed above in the previous twenty-four hours, we ask that you keep them home. This benefits other families as well as your child. When we are all conscientious to stay home while contagious, the school has fewer outbreaks of illness. Also, we all recover more quickly when given the appropriate time to rest and be cared for. We ask that you call to inform us when your child will be absent due to illness.

Notification of Parents

It is the Director's responsibility to notify parents, in writing, when communicable diseases or parasites are found in the daycare. She will do this the same day the discovery is made. At all times, the confidentiality of caregivers and children will be maintained.

Immunizations

Some children at our school are not fully immunized due to their parents' religious preferences or personal beliefs, or because of a medical exemption. If you choose to exempt your child from the required immunizations, you must sign a written exemption form that states the reason for such an exemption and that your child is in good health. This statement will be included in your child's file in place of the standard immunization record.

Medication

All children needing medication of any kind will have to have it administered to them by their own parents. The staff at First Steps Daycare does NOT administer any medications. No medications can be stored in backpacks, cubbies, or any other location during school hours. Medication is defined as anything over the counter or prescription that is given or applied to a child.

Allergies

We understand that allergies are a very serious concern for some children and we work hard to keep our students safe. If your child has any allergies please be sure to disclose them at the time of enrollment. This enables us to create a plan and monitor your child's exposure. In severe cases medication may be kept at school, but it must be accompanied by a doctor's treatment plan and Medication Administration forms.

Injuries or Accidents

Whenever a child is injured or involved in an accident the staff present will fill out an **Accident/Injury Report**. The staff member, the director, and the parent will sign it. Once all signatures are collected, a copy will be given to the parent and the original will be retained in the child's file. Should an accident, injury or emergency occur the following procedures will be followed: first, the staff will provide all necessary emergency care, including basic first aid; if necessary one staff member will call a parent and in case of emergency 911 will be called.

Sunscreen Application

First Steps Daycare does not provide or apply sunscreen to children. Please apply sunscreen as needed before bringing your child to school.

Locked Doors

For safety reasons, side and back external doors will be secure at all times. Families may access the center only through the front entrance.

Tornado Drill and Emergency Policy

In the event of a tornado all present shall be moved to safe locations. The designated safe locations for the center are the 3 restrooms and the center lobby. Teachers will take their sign-in books with them and take roll once the class has safely reached their evacuation location. The Director or Floor Manager will check the school premises to ensure that all children are safe. Children will sit along the walls of the restrooms or lobby and tuck their heads in on their knees to protect their faces. All present shall remain in this position until an all clear is given. The center shall conduct random drills every 3 months to keep all staff and children aware of the policy.

Fire Drill and Emergency Policy

In the event of a fire all present shall be evacuated from the building and moved to a safe location. The designated evacuation location for the center is the church across the street. Teachers will take their sign-in books with them and take roll once the class has safely reached the evacuation location. The Director or Floor Manager will check the center to ensure that all children have been evacuated. Children will sit quietly, and all present shall remain in this location until an all clear is given. The center shall conduct random drills every 3 months to keep all staff and children aware of this policy,

Emergency Closures

In the event that the building becomes unsafe for use during a school day we will follow the above fire evacuation procedure. Once everyone has been evacuated, the church staff and Director will decide what steps are necessary. First Steps Church of God is our designated off-site evacuation location and if the situation is unsafe or the weather is severe we will cross the street to the church. Teachers will complete roll after any relocation. Parents will be contacted when students are in a safe location.

Emergency Procedures

If an emergency occurs First Steps Daycare follows this procedure:

- 1) Ensure the safety of all students.
- 2) Call 911.
- 3) Provide any emergency care needed, including First Aid.
- 4) Contact the child's parent, legal guardian or emergency contact.
- 5) Contact appropriate authorities to report the incident within twenty-four hours.

Not all steps may be necessary in all situations.

Missing Children

If at any time a teacher checks the student list against the class and cannot locate a student the following steps will be taken:

- 1) The teacher will inform all staff and a careful search of the building will be conducted.
- 2) The Director or Floor Manager will contact the police, the child's parents, and the Center for Missing Children.

If the child is found all subsequent steps will be cancelled.

Child Abuse

We take the safety of our students very seriously, and do not tolerate child abuse. If our staff has concerns that any form of abuse (physical, verbal, emotional or psychological) is occurring, they are mandated by law to report it to Department of Human Services. Once a report has been made investigators have the right to conduct interviews and collect information including names, addresses and telephone numbers of those involved.

Regularly Planned Review

First Steps Daycare will hold a regularly planned review of our policies and procedures. This review will be conducted by the Director and the Board of Directors annually to ensure and maintain high program quality. All families are encouraged to speak to the Director with any suggestions or issues they would like addressed in this review.

Visitors and Volunteers

Volunteers are a wonderful asset to our center and we welcome them. This includes parent helpers, grandparents, church members, and others. All visitors to the center, including volunteers, must announce themselves and sign in with the Director or Floor Manager. They will then be given a visitor's tag. If someone enters the building and does not receive their tag staff will approach them to inquire about their presence. If they are unable to give a legitimate reason for being at the center they will be asked to leave.

Parent Acknowledgement

I have read, understand, and agree to all the policies and procedures contained in the First Steps Daycare Parent Handbook.

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

Director Signature _____ Date _____