

Introduction

At Small Steps Center we understand that one of the toughest decisions you'll ever make is where to start your child's first preschool experience. We are a proud small center with a low student per teacher ratio so we can provide the best quality education and care for your child ages: 2.9 to 7 years old. Small Steps Center is an EEC (Early Education and Care) certified preschool for children ages 2.9 to 7 years old. Our fun, safe, secure and enriching environment is the perfect place for your child to be cared for by EEC certified teachers, and learn in their unique ways. We look forward to telling you more about ourselves to help make this decision a little easier. We are confident that once you get to know us, you will find that we are the best place to help nurture, teach and develop the needs of your child.

Mission

Our mission at Small Steps Center is to provide the best quality education and care to all children in our community. Small Steps Center welcomes children and families of all cultural backgrounds and beliefs. We strive to provide an optimal learning experience for children, families, and staff. It is our priority to create a positive, caring atmosphere so that children feel safe and loved. We promote children's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development through learning, play and positive relationships. A sense of positive self-esteem can only be developed if a child feels as though they can succeed, and it is our mission to help all children succeed. Our team of educators are passionate, and committed in **“Building A Better Future for Children Small Steps at a time”**.

Philosophy

Here at Small Steps Center, we strongly believe that children learn best in an environment that is filled with opportunities to grow. We promote a safe and stimulating environment while allowing children to express themselves. A child's mind is like a sponge as it absorbs information directly from the environment and uses that information to develop socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Our learning center allows children to develop close bonds with other children and adults in their lives. It is our goal that these bonds will help children become strong adults, and enables them to strive both academically and socially. We strongly believe that respect for children, families, and diverse culture is a central component to our teaching process. It is our goal that we foster the growth of positive self-esteem and self-confidence in all children and families that we serve.

Small Steps Center of Walpole is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. They are located at 1 Washington Street Suite 20, Taunton, Massachusetts 02780. They may be contacted at 617-472-2881 for program's compliance history.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Small Steps Center is a private corporation. We welcome children and families of all racial, ethnic, cultural backgrounds and beliefs.

SSC will not discriminate in providing service to children and families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs, marital status, or any disability. We will accept special needs children and children with physical limitations **ONLY** if our current facilities and staff availability can provide for their well-being. The fact that special needs children and children with physical limitations may pose challenges that are beyond what SSC personnel are capable of meeting, and/or may burden available staff improperly, thus detracting from staff ability to deliver services and care to other children in the program. SSC will accept applications and review whether we are capable of accepting and serving a particular child, consisting with the Commonwealth's Department of Early Education and Care guidelines.

A Word from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)

EEC is the agency that oversees the early education and care and after school services for families in Massachusetts. As the agency that licenses preschools and child care and after school program, EEC has quality standards for all licensed programs to ensure high educational value, as well as health and safety. Having a license means that Small Steps Center has demonstrated that we meet the standards outlined in the EEC regulations.

For information about SSC regulations compliance history, you may contact our local EEC regional office, whose contact information is as follows:

Group Child Care Licensor: Beth Conary

Address: 1250 Hancock Street, Suite 120-S, Quincy, MA 02169

Telephone: 617-979-8612 Ext. 28612

Email: Beth.Conary@MassMail.State.MA.US

Background Record Checks

By law any person who is going to be working in the early childhood education and care industry must complete and sign to have their background investigate (DSS Background Record Check) and for EEC approval. We will be notified if no criminal history and no DSS (Data Security Standard) background Record Check history exists and we are approved to access Background Record Check data. We and the licensor will be notified if the potential employees or volunteers Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check shows a criminal history that requires further review. If a CORI or DSS requires further review, the decision will be made by the EEC committee based on the nature of your criminal history or abuse or neglect background

Curriculum/Program Plans

Small Steps Center understands that children's minds and bodies develop best when they are exposed to a wide variety of activities that challenge them physically and intellectually, without being frustrating. Fun, safe, secure, and developmentally appropriate materials will invite children to explore and develop their own abilities, talent and interests. SSC will also provide materials, and focus on activities that reflect a variety of different cultures, thus help children develop a sense of pride in their own heritage, and respect for other cultures. Allowing children to make choices among variety of materials or activities, fosters independence, and allows them to exercise their unique preferences.

Small Steps Center uses a state of Massachusetts and EEC approved curriculum and lesson plans, on a daily, weekly, and month basis, which will provide all educators with the instrumental guidelines necessary for developing age appropriate learning activities. A well-balanced curriculum gives learning an experience that will support the social, emotional, physical, intellectual and language development of all children. The curriculum will:

- Development language and linguistics age appropriate activities
- Provide for the development, interest and temperament of individual children
- Support school readiness and/or educational development

SSC will also ensure the following:

- Sufficient quantity and variety of materials and equipment to engage all children.
- Materials and equipment that encourage active physical play and quiet play time.
- Materials and equipment that are visible and readily accessible to the children.
- Materials that promote imagination and creativity are available.
- Quiet area that is visible for a child who seeks or needs time alone.

Hours of Operation

The Small Steps Center Preschool Program hours of operation are as follows:

- Regular daily schedule: 7:00 AM– 6:30 PM.
- Summer and school vacation: 7:00 AM. – 6:30 PM.

At Small Steps Center, we offer both full and part time. Full-time is considered from four to five days per week and part-time is considered three days or less per week.

Parents may call or drop in to see their children at any time but we would appreciate you taking into consideration our schedule when calling or dropping in. Please do remember that visitors usually cause disruption and also cause children to react in an excited manner.

** Note: Small Steps Center is closed for individual school holidays and snow days.*

Program Daily Schedule: During the school year

7:00AM	–	8:30AM	Center opens - children arrive, free choice of early morning stations
8:35AM	–	9:00AM	Clean-up, wash hands and eat morning snack as a group
9:05AM	–	9:45AM	Circle time, morning story telling
9:50AM	–	10:20AM	Group activities, outside playtime (weather permitting)
10:25AM	–	11:05AM	Program Enrichment Activity
11:05AM	–	11:45AM	Choice time: Free choice of play and structured activities
11:50AM	–	12:25PM	Clean-up, wash hands and eat lunch as a group
12:30PM	–	2:35PM	Nap and rest time
2:40PM	–	3:00PM	Up from nap/rest time, wash-up,
3:05PM	–	3:35PM	Eat afternoon snack as a group
3:40PM	–	4:40PM	Program Enrichment Activity
4:45PM	–	6:30PM	Choice Time: arts and crafts, board games, blocks/legos, books, dramatic play, science, sports, relaxation area and outside play time
6:30PM	–		Closing time

** Time between activities is allowed if necessary for flexible transition for children in care.*

Holidays and Vacations Calendar

Small Steps Center follows the Walpole Public School calendar. The following is a list of holidays that Small Step Center will be closed: (**applicable for 2017 only**)

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day **** (PDD)**
- Good Friday
- Patriots' Day
- Memorial Day
- 4th of July Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day **** (PDD)**
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving break (**2 days: Thursday and Friday**)
- Christmas break (**3 days**)

****Note: If any of these holidays falls on a weekend, we will then be closed either on a Friday or Monday. Also, please refer to the SSC Snow/Emergency Closing Policy in this handbook for information regarding emergency closings and notification.***

***** PDD: Professional Development Day***

Staff/Child Ratio

The staff to child ratio at the SSC preschool program is 10 per one educator. This is a requirement by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). However, whenever is possible, our program strives for lower ratios to best serve the children, to ensure better quality, and safety of care provided to all children.

Supervision of Staff

It is SSC's purpose to provide the best quality education and care to all children, and as a team effort; we will accomplish this mission on a daily basis. SSC management personnel will ensure that SSC educators arrive promptly on time and ready to lead children to their daily routines and activities each day. SSC will use the following guidelines to build an effective team.

- Provide educators with the tools they need to do their jobs
- Provide an ongoing training process
- Help educators set goals to improve performance
- Become a resource
- Hold educators accountable
- Foster development and problem solving skills

- Establish an ongoing communication
- Build team effort
- Address performance appraisal

Staff Obligations

Small Steps Center provides equal employment opportunity in compliance with all federal, state and local laws governing non-discrimination. We believe in equal employment opportunity and it is our policy to recruit and promote persons on the basis of individual merit. The new employee orientation package and checklist must be completed before an employee can start working directly with children at our center. Employees at Small Steps Center will be exposed to certain information that is considered confidential. This information is not available to the public and should not be shared with anyone outside of Small Steps Center. Your duty as an employee is to maintain the confidentiality of Small Steps Center and customer information. The Director and employee will go through the package and the checklist of all major components. At the end, the employee and the director sign the form, the original is filed in the employee's file and the employee receives a copy

Staff Meetings

We will have a staff and supervision meeting once a month. Short meetings may happen at nap time or break time, but longer or larger meetings may need to be in the evening after the children have gone home. Reasons for our staff meetings are to share information, share opinions, solve problems, skills training, and group support. Our meeting is not going to be just a one-sided presentation, but can be a time of sharing, brainstorming and interacting.

Children's Records and Confidentiality

SSC has a strict policy regarding records and confidentiality, thereby only appropriate staff personnel and the Department Of Early Education and Care have access to these files. As part of a state mandatory renewal process, a licensor is allowed to review a child's file when conducting a licensing study (browsing through state mandated forms, health records, and etc.) or if any other incident that requires EEC investigations.

Parents/Guardians have the right to add, change, or amend any information in their child's file, but must notify the director or administrator personnel. Also, please be aware that in the case of

separated parents/guardians who are not raising a child in the same household, then both are able to amend file information and add emergency contact persons.

SSC is required by EEC to store all children's files upon termination of enrollment, for the period mandated by EEC regulations. SSC will not release any information from a child's record without written permission of the parents/guardians.

Enrollment Policy

We at Small Steps Center will not discriminate for the following, race, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, and political belief. If after a visit you and your child decide to enroll, we will offer an orientation for both you and your child about our program. In addition, please provide us with information about your child and your family's interest and needs as well as other therapeutic, educational, social and support services received by your child.

There are several forms here at Small Steps Center that is part of our enrollment packet. This enrollment packet must be completed and turned into us before we assume responsibility of caring for your child. This is not only required by state licensing guidelines but to ensure that you child will get the very best possible care.

All forms will be reviewed semi-annually, and if there are any changes to any of the enrollment packet forms, then please notify us to update your records. The following are forms that are required by our center:

- Applicant Form
- Policy Agreement Form
- Financial Agreement Form
- Medical Information Form
- Physician's Physical Examination Form and Immunization History
- Emergency Medical Authorization and Transportation Form
- Authorized Pick-up and Emergency Contact Information
- Permission Slip Form
- Parent to Teacher Communication Confidential Form

****Note: If you have any questions or concerns regarding the completion of these forms, please feel free you ask us.***

Tuition and Fee Procedures

Tuition is due on the 1st of every month (due on Friday before the starting week). Weekly installment payment plan is also available for parents who want to pay with credit card (which will be auto deducted every Monday).

The tuition policy is as follows:

- A \$20 late fee will be charged if no payment is received before the 1st of the month.
- A written notice will be issued if payment has not been received by the 5th of the month.
- A written notice with an additional \$15 late fee (total of \$35 in late fees) will be issued on the 10th of the month.
- A written notice warning will be issued on the 15th day of the month if no payment is received.
- After 2 written warning notices, a written termination notice will be given.

Our rates: 5 days – is \$315.00 per week

4 days – is \$270.00 per week

3 days – is \$200.00 per week

2 days – is \$150.00 per week

The Family may add or reduce the number of days the child is signed up for **BUT** must provide a two weeks' notice of services. Otherwise, original rate will be charged (apply for a reduction in services only)

Our tuition and fees flat rates are computed with the following factors in mind. We ask you to please pay on time since the success of our center depends upon the prompt payment of tuition/fees in order to take care of day-to-day expenses that are encountered.

- Educators wages and benefits (Social Security and Medicare)
- Teaching supplies (craft/activity/curriculum supplies, computer, books, toys and play equipment)
- Educators' continuing education
- Building rent, heat, electricity, telephone, maintenance, and insurance liability coverage
- Snack and beverage supplies

Once enrolled, monthly tuition must be paid for the child care spot regardless of child absences, a family scheduled trip or vacation, or any other break in care. Tuition is charged for snow/emergency closings and some holidays. Small Steps Center cannot hold an enrollment spot for any child whose parent/guardian wishes to take a break from care. Tuition that is paid for one day cannot be credited to another day.

There is a 10% discount for the second child in the same family and a 15% discount for the third child.

If at any point a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child(ren) from the after school program, **a one-month notice is mandatory for all families**. If the child is withdrawn without notice the family must pay for that month.

Please be advised that SSC closes at **6:30 p.m. SHARP**. All children must be signed-out by 6:30pm. If a child is still signed into care after 6:30, a late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed, payable to site staff for each minute that you are late. This policy is strictly enforced. If you are running late you must make every effort to notify the site staff. If we do not hear from you and/or we are unable to reach you, we will begin calling emergency contacts for pick-up by 6:45pm. **After the 5th late pick-up you will be charged \$2 per minute.**

Bounced Checks

There will be a fee of \$35 incurred as a result of the returned check. If the second check is returned within 60 days, only cash will be accepted thereafter. Our services may be halted until full payment of tuition and non-sufficient funds is made in cash. Fees are the financial responsibility of the parents/guardians

Attendance:

All parents must sign their child in and out each day. The sign in and out form will be located by the door when you walk in. The sign in and out form is also good in maintaining your child's record, hours, and the person who brought and picked up your child each day. The staff will also take daily attendance that logs the child's arrival and departure times and also any unusual arrivals and departures. We must have a method of knowing exactly how many children are present at any given moment throughout hours of operation.

Absentee Procedures

Our tuition fees are based on enrollment not on attendance. To maintain a reserved space, fees must be paid during your child absences due to illness, holidays, vacations, snow/emergency closing, or for any other reasons. **Tuition that is paid for one day cannot be credited to another day.** If your child is going to be absent due to any reason please notifies us in the morning or a day before. You may leave a message at any time before then. Please refer to the above in the **Tuition and Fee Procedures** in regards to absentee procedures. Please note we not follow up on absences if you do not hear from you.

Arrival (Drop Off) and Departure (Pick Up) Policy

We would appreciate that all children are to arrive at the center clean and fed unless arriving just before a snack or meal time.

Please make your drop off brief because the longer you prolong the departure, the harder it gets. *It is normal for some children as well as parents to have difficulty separating; especially when your child is crying but a hug and a warm kiss goodbye, and some reassuring words that you will be back later to pick your child up is all that is needed.* Our supervision of your child begins when you drop your child off at our center and ends when you and your child walk out.

It is not only required by EEC regulation but also but state law to release the child only to his/her parents/guardians, or someone else the parents designate on the Authorized Pick-up and Emergency Contact Form. If someone other than the parent (family members or baby sitter) is to pick up the child, please notify us ahead of time. In addition, to verify they are the right person, we will check I.D. of people that will be picking up your child. If a pick-up person arrives at the program without proper identification and staff members on site cannot identify the pick-up person with complete certainty, the pick-up person will be asked to leave and return with proper identification. Sample forms of identification allowed by SSC are as follows: State Issued I.D. card, Driver's License, and Passport. Staff members will not be responsible and are not allowed for transporting a child at any time.

Parents/guardians or the authorized persons must sign out the child for the day at pick up time. Under no circumstances can a child leave the program for the day without adult supervision and without a parent/guardian signing out. In addition, SSC will not released a child to a pick-up person who we feel cannot safely supervise the child after pick-up time, such as intoxicated, or display dangerous or harmful behavior. Once a child is signed out by the parent or other authorized person, then the child is the parent's and the authorized person's responsibility.

Siblings who are older than 18 years old of age will be allowed to pick-up their own siblings only (not a cousin or friend), but the same procedure also applies that the older siblings must produce a valid photo I.D. (school I.D. card and etc.)

When parents pick up their child, please do not forget to sign out your child, as well as check for notices, bills, receipts and other belongings in your child's cubby hole.

***Please Notes:**

* SSC closes at **6:30 p.m.** Please refer to **Tuition and Fee Procedures section** for more detail.

** SSC is not responsible for a child until they arrive at the program.*

** SSC is not responsible for a child after they depart from the program.*

Basic Agreement and Personal Belongings

SSC and staff are not responsible for any loss or breakage of personal items and that is why we prefer that children do not bring toys or valuable items from home. Young children can have a difficult time sharing with others and this can cause some disagreement among the children. Exceptions for this policy are when we have show and tell day or a favorite sleepy toy for naptime.

To ensure safety and loss or breakage items, the following rules have been established:

- Please do not let your child bring or wear expensive or valuable items/clothing to the program.
- Children should wear sturdy, closed-toed shoes and socks during the program, or have them available in a backpack for outside play time.
- We suggest that each child have an extra set of clothes, including underwear.
- Label all belongings and clothing with your child's name

Supplies

The following items are to be supply by parents:

- Diapers/pull-ups, wipes, powders/ointments, blanket and sheet for naptime, toothbrush and toothpaste, extra change of clothes (replace when soiled), sunscreen, and bug spray for summer.

*** Note : No draw string clothing or loose fitting jewelry.**

Rest and Quiet Activity

Small Steps Center will provide each child with a mat but parents must provide blanket. A child can also bring in their favorite stuffed animal or sleepy toy for naptime. If you do not want your child to sleep, we will have quiet activity with adequate lighting and supervision of your child.

Nutrition and Food Suggestion List

SSC will provide snack for each child daily at a regularly scheduled time in accordance with the guideline of the Early Education and Care (please refers to the **Program Daily Schedule**). Parents may also send snacks from home but please try to pack healthy snacks. If your child has allergies, we must be notified of this in writing. We will need to have a written instruction describing the condition and foods the child is not permitted to eat. We will substitute an appropriate snack for any child with allergies. **We are a nut free center program.** No items that contain nuts are allowed to be brought and eaten here. If you would like to bring in a treat for your child's group, please notify to your child's staff lead teacher or one of the administrators for any dietary or medical restrictions.

Parents/guardians are required to pack a lunch and a choice of beverage with their children from home. Lunches will not be refrigerated by the program so send you child's lunch in an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack.

SSC promotes healthy eating. The followings are examples of high nutrition lunches and snacks:

- **Lunch:** whole wheat bread sandwiches, pasta, chicken with brown rice, soy butter and jelly sandwich, healthy macaroni and cheese, chicken or tuna salad, turkey, and etc.
- **Snacks:** fruits, applesauce, yogurt, carrot sticks, crackers and cheese, graham/animal crackers, cottage cheese, low-fat granola bar, and etc.

**Note: Our staffs are trained in USDA Nutritional Guidelines and choke hazards in young children.*

Tooth Brushing

If you child attends SSC during full sessions (more than 8 hours per day), we will give your child an opportunity to brush their teeth after lunch. A permission form will be given out and parent/guardian must fill out and sign as to whether you would like your child to brush his or her teeth while in our care. Parents/guardian must provide your child with a toothbrush, toothpaste, and a toothbrush cover, if you choose to have your child brush their teeth .

Plans for Transitions

A child's first day at pre-school will be an exciting and emotional event for the whole family. As a parent the thought of sending your child off to pre-school could well be slightly traumatic and for children the reality of starting 'school' can be a scary yet highly anticipated event.

Small Steps Center is designed to help children transition from life in the family, or a child care center, to the more formal school system. We are designed to develop children's communication, problem solving and thinking skills and to familiarize them with the routines and rhythms of school life.

As mentioned in our Mission, it is our mission to help all children succeed, and it is our priority to create a positive and caring environment so that children feel safe and loved. Our experienced and trained staff of educators will work to help ease any worries or fears of parents/guardians or children during transitions.

Children who are new to SSC require special attention, therefore, our goal is to help ease with transitions, so all involved feel comfortable and quickly adjust. To assist with transitions into our program, the following plans will be implemented:

1. Welcoming Children

- Be prepared in advance for a child new to the center.
- Welcome the child warmly, on his/her eye level.
- Walk the child around the center and showing him/her the different areas.
- Introduce the child to the other children and introduce the group to the new child.
- Introduce the child to the staff/educators.
- Make sure of the child's name, the spelling and pronunciation.
- Read through the child profile.
- Pair the child with a buddy in similar age and gender.
- Explain the routine and let the child know what will be happening next.
- Call the parent/guardian of a new child if it is requested to let the parent/guardian know that the child is doing okay.
- At the end of the day, follow-up with the child and ask how was your first day? Did you have fun? And tell the child that we will see you tomorrow.

2. Transitions between activities:

- We will make certain that all transitions must be completed in a safe, timely, predictable and unhurried manner.
- Activities are planned and organized in advanced to avoid children waiting
- Children will be informed about transitions prior to their occurrence.
- Transitions between activities will be smooth and flexible.
- Children will not always be expected to move as a group from one activity to another
- Visual, verbal and auditory cues will be used to support children's transitions.
- Transitions from indoor to outdoors will be conducted in a safe manner.
- Attendance will be taken prior to going outside (name to face), as well as when we are outside, and vice versa when returning back to the classroom
- Educators will give transition warnings/heads-up at the 10, 5, and 2 minutes warning time.

3. *Transitions when children are preparing to exit our program*, we will:

- Collaborate and share information to the child's new care provider or into a different routine (with parental permission).
- The staff/educator will work with the child to tell other children about the child's planned departure and in most cases will plan a special snack or other acknowledgement for the departing child on their last day.
- Staff/educator will communicate with the permission and request from the parent/guardian with the new provider to best help with transition out of care.

Family Involvement

Small Steps Center invites parent involvement. "When parents and families have the supports and resources they need to facilitate children's healthy development, they are building a strong foundation for future growth." SSC will engage in a supportive partnership around the child to build mutual understanding and consistency for the child. All staff members will support parent(s) as the primary educators of their child (the basic obligations of families) and will be respectful of the home and culture. As a partnership, we will keep each other well informed about the child and our program.

- **Communication** - Communication is very important when a new family is accepted into our center. It is our hope that we can share openly about any concerns or questions that may arise. We welcome questions, feedback, or discussions that you may have regarding a positive outcome for your child. Sensitive issues that may concern you or your child will be discussed in private at a mutually beneficial time. If you need to talk in length, make an appointment for a meeting or a phone conversation during quiet hours (1:15 PM – 2:15 PM). There is a verbal and/or written communication system for sharing information between staff and parents/families. Changes in a child's physical or emotional state, especially problems or significant developments will be brought to the parent's attention as soon as they arise. Please also tell the staff if there are any significant changes happening at home. Also, at pick-up time, parents can check with the afternoon educator to discuss your child's after school care.
- **Notices** – Parents are informed about the program through regular means such as notices distributed in a child's cubby, postings on our SSC Facebook private page, email, and/or by telephone calls.

- **Visiting** – It is helpful to discuss visiting plans with the staff in advance to coordinate the visit and please do remember that visitors usually cause disruption and also cause children to react in an excited manner. If parents visit spontaneously, please check beforehand to avoid a schedule conflict, such as a nature walk, outside playtime, or sports related activities.
- **Parent Participation** – Parents and families are welcome and encouraged to be involved in the program in various ways (birthday celebrations at lunchtime or afternoon snack time, special guest reader, holidays gathering).
- **Parent Input** – SSC welcomes parents input in the development of our program policies. SSC will coordinate a meeting with the parent(s) to discuss necessary recommendations for improvement.
- **Meeting/Conference** – Parent/Teacher conferences can be requested at an appropriate time to the child’s progress at home and at our after school program. The educating staff will provide parents with a written update of their child’s skills, interests, and the necessary developmental assessment.
- **Transition** – SSC and parents will communicate and help ensure that children experience smooth transitions from SSC to another program or to the next step of their development.

****Whenever a parent is in the center, the parent is responsible for following the center rules with his/her child. ****

Volunteers and Student Interns

SSC will only accept volunteers and students on an as needed basis, and will be chosen for their ability to meet the needs of the children in care. They have to be over the age of 16 and will be under the direct visual supervision of an EEC qualified educator at all times. Furthermore, volunteers and students interns will follow the same guidelines as hiring procedures:

- Background Record Check
- Health record
- Orientation
- Staff Information form
- Confidential agreement
- Training

Weather Emergencies: Delayed Opening and Cancellation

When there are inclement weather conditions, as well as other emergencies related to Walpole & the surrounding Norfolk County MA area that may affect the opening, closing or delayed opening of our program, Small Steps Center will act in accordance with the **Town of Walpole** and recommendations by the town council regarding closing of schools.

If the Walpole schools are closed before the start of the school day due to inclement weather or emergency, the SSC is also **closed**. If the Walpole Schools have a delayed opening, it has no effect on SSC After School Program. We will **open** as usual (*Applicable for SSC After school Program only!*).

In the event of a severe storm or other national, local, or statewide emergency, during the time children are in the Walpole Schools or in our program; SSC will also be **closed** earlier than the regular 6:30 dismissal time. All parents/guardians will be contacted in a timely manner and asked to pick-up their children by the time designated.

**Note: In such cases, there may be delays in picking up the children at their schools, but we will pick them all up.*

For cancellations or delayed opening announcements please check with Fox News 25 or www.myfoxboston.com and look for Small Steps Center of Walpole. Parents/Guardians may also be able to get an update on the SSC of Walpole Facebook personal page.

Emergency Preparedness

In order to keep our program participants safe and to comply with EEC and state law, we are required to develop a contingency plan and procedures in the event of fire, natural disaster, or other situation requiring evacuation of the building and other emergencies.

All of our staff members will have access to a working telephone for receiving and making telephone calls during all hours of program operation whether on or off the premises whenever they are responsible for supervising children.

The exit sign is located above the front door, and the evacuation procedures are posted by all the doors as well.

The following is our evacuation plan:

When the decision is made to evacuate the center facility, the Director and/or the lead administrator will make the announcement in the most expeditious way possible that all persons are to evacuate to their assigned assembly area and await further instruction. The center is to be evacuated completely. The Director and/or the lead administrator will notify appropriate personnel and communicate what type of emergency is present.

****In the event of an actual fire, the Director and the lead administrator will be responsible to notify 9-1-1 of the emergency from a cell phone outside the building once the evacuation is complete.**

Center staff will evacuate their children as follows:

All educators shall be responsible to gather all of the children and supervise an orderly evacuation to the designated assembly area (outside in the front of the building). All educators are also responsible to bring all attendance sheets, child rosters, and information sheets. Upon arriving at the designated evacuation assembly area, all children must be physically accounted for against the sign-in log and the results reported to the director immediately. In the event that a child listed as present is missing, all groups will take individual group attendance again and one of the administrators will go back inside the building and check all areas again. If the child is not located, the parent/guardian will be called immediately and the police will also be called to assist.

For inclement weather, if possible, take appropriate supplies to protect the children.

The center Director and other available personnel will assist the staff with the evacuation and then proceed to perform their assigned duties.

****Note: Under no circumstances is staff to stop for any of their own or children's personal belongings, including, jackets, shoes, purses, etc.***

Sheltering in Place

In the event of severe weather or other emergencies creating a power outage, loss of heat or water, plans will depend on the severity and probable duration of the emergency. If the director and administration team believe it is safer to remain on site until the emergency has ended, the center will notify parents by phone of its intention and remain in the building.

If we must leave the center (facility), we will transport the children via foot, hired van and/or staff cars to the nearest and safest shelter (church, fire station, police station, and etc). Parents will be called and appropriate notices will be placed on the front door.

****In the event of a potential threat from an intruder**, a specific signal will alert the staff to use the **“lock-down” procedures** designed to keep children and staff safe within the facility until police or other emergency responders can respond and eliminate the threat. The director and/or an administrator will call 911 to alert the police. All doors will be locked immediately by staff personnel, while staff educators gather all the children away from the door, and keep them quiet and as calm as possible. If there is a more secure space, such as a closet and/or a bathroom, it may be best to gather the children there. Staff will communicate through text messaging.

In the event when an intruder enters the building, if possible it may be best for some if not all occupants to flee the building. The back door near the office will exit the building to the back of a parking lot. The staff will take the children through the parking lot to the nearby business associates for safety.

In either case:

- The director and the lead administrator are responsible for calling the **lock-down** or **evacuation**, and
- A cell phone will be used to notify the staff via means of communicating within and outside of the facility. If it is not safe, a text will be sent out.
- A plan will be in place and reviewed by all staff so they are aware of where to gather (either in the front or back of the facility). A plan will be attached to each room clipboard.
- Director and staff personnel are responsible for locking doors.
- Each educator is responsible to gather their group of children to the designated lockdown area.
- Each educator will take with them the class clipboard medication bags. Head counts will be done quickly before leaving the room, and immediately when reaching the designated area.
- Office staff will take the following items: emergency bag with first aid supplies, emergency contact list information, and parent sign in/out sheet.

Missing Child

In the event that a child listed as present is missing, all groups will take individual group attendance again. Further procedures are as follows:

- Office Staff will begin a search inside the facility and check the outside area.
- Double check to see if the child was not already had been dismissed and signed out.
- Communicate with the educator to determine who last saw the child and where the child was last seen.
- If the child is not located, the parent/guardian will be called immediately and police will also be called to assist.
- Office staff will continue to assist with the search until the child is located.

In the event that a child is missing during a field trip, all groups will take individual group attendance again. If the child is still missing, all groups will be alert. Staff on the field trip will search the area the whereabouts of the child was last seen. Other staff member will alert the field trip facility to do an announcement for the child to meet at an obvious location. The team leader will alert the SSC and SSC will contact the parent/guardian to explain the situation and to see if the parent/guardian can account for the child. If we still cannot locate the child, police will be called to help with the search.

Procedures for Conducting a Fire Drill

- Inform the staff in advance. The center Director informs the staff that there will be a fire drill later in the day/week.
- Familiarize the children with the fire drill. Teachers talk to the children in their classroom about the bell/alarm, rules, and procedures for vacating the building.
- Evacuate the building. The Director will sound the alarm and the center will be evacuated.
 - All children proceed immediately with their educators to the outside-designed area.
 - A lead educator will count their children and take attendance sheets, emergency information and cell phone with them.
 - The center Director or designee checks bathrooms and “hiding places” for “lost children” and for possible sources of smoke or fire during a real alarm.
 - The center Director or designee retrieves the official daily sign-in sheet and cell phone.
- Time the drill. The Director times how long it took to vacate the building.
- Verify accurate recount of all persons. The Director or designee checks with the staff to verify an accurate recount of all persons.
- Return to the center. The Director or designee gives approval to reenter the building.
- Document the completed fire drill. The director or designee completes written documentation that contains the specifics of the drills: date, time and location of fire and length of time required to vacate building.

*Note: Fire drill will be practiced at least quarterly, at different times of the day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. Also, our escape route will be posted by all the doors.

Additional Assignments of Staff

1. Evacuation Supervisor – Director
 - a. Make sure all children are accounted for.
 - b. Determine the safest location for continued operations until children can be picked up and the safest path for all staff and children to get there.
 - c. Activate the parent/guardian pick-up point assignment.
 - d. Collect all the sign-in sheets to monitor family pick-ups.
2. First Aid/Communications – Program Specialist/Assistant Director
 - a. Administer First Aid as necessary
 - b. Take a complete First Aid Kit, flashlights, batteries, and cell phone.
 - c. Activate the communications with parents about what information to give families by calling each child’s parent/guardian and the pick-up point.
 - d. Confirm all parents/emergency back-up contacts have been actually spoken to.

- e. Report back to Evacuation Supervisor with updates, needs, and problems during his/her rounds.

Emergency Numbers

	Telephone Number
Small Steps Center of Walpole	617-XXXXXX
Director – Mr. Urupong Kharuhat	617-909-1903
Program Specialist/Teacher – Ms. Rachada Kharuhat	857-498-0707
Ambulance – Walpole, MA	911
Fire Department - Walpole, MA	911
Police – Walpole, MA	911 or 617-XXXXXX
Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Local Health Department	617-983-6200
Department of Early Education & Care	617-472-2881
Massachusetts Weather Conditions & Forecast	617-986-5511

