
Small Steps Early Learning Centre
PARENT HANDBOOK

UPDATED: MARCH 2017

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Introduction

This document outlines the operational policies, procedures and expectations of Small Steps Early Learning Centre (SSELC or the Centre) that pertain to parents, children and their interactions with our staff. It identifies the purposes of the organization, describes our vision and mission, and provides information on our hours of operation, services offered, programming philosophies and practices, nutritional commitments, and health and safety-related procedures.

This Parent Handbook (dated March 2017) supersedes all previous handbooks.

The SSELC Board of Directors is responsible for development and approval of all policies and procedures. They reserve the right to interpret, change, suspend, cancel, or dispute all or any part of our policies, procedures, etc. at any time. They will notify parents of any changes in a timely manner. Changes will be effective on the dates determined by the SSELC Board and after those dates, all superseded policies will be null.

The SSELC Director is responsible for implementation of the policies and associated procedures. Both policies and procedures will be reviewed once a year so necessary additions/deletions can be made.

Our Purpose

Our Vision

As an Early Learning Centre, our vision is to provide safe, affordable, high quality child care with opportunities for children to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically through interaction with peers early childhood educators and early childhood education.

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a home-like environment where children can develop at their own pace. The SSELC and our staff are committed to the families we serve, providing support and encouragement.

The objectives of the Centre are to:

1. Be a safe, nurturing environment where children feel safe and comfortable;
2. Provide a home-like setting where children can learn through play;
3. Empower each child to experience and learn to appropriately deal with both challenges and success;
4. Encourage each child to develop self-care skills and self-responsibility;
5. Offer permanent, reliable, quality childcare by trained early childhood educators; and
6. Enable the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of children.

Most of all, SSELC strives to provide an environment where children have fun, feel safe, and where their parents feel comfortable and welcome. Open and ongoing communication with families is highly valued by all our staff. Please feel free to ask questions; our doors are always open.

Our Daily Operations

Hours of Operation

The Centre operates Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 6:00pm (EXCEPT will close early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve at 4:00 pm).

The Centre will be closed on all weekends and on the following statutory holidays: New Years Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day, and any other additional holidays as may be declared by Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments.

Our Staff

The Provincial Department of Employment and Resources (Centre Division) licenses SSELIC on an annual basis and government legislation dictates the education levels, child-to-staff ratios and maximum number of children allowed in the facility at any one time. At the time of opening, we were a subsidized facility offering 10 toddler spaces (18 months to 30 months), 20 Pre-School spaces (30 months to first day of Grade One) and 3 school-age spaces. Children are supervised at as per the following staff-to-child ratios at all times: (please refer to Sections 50 - 52 of The Child Care Regulations, 2015 for clarification).

- Toddlers 1 staff to 5 children
- Pre-Schoolers 1 staff to 10 children
- School-aged 1 staff to 15 children

The staff to child ratio that applies with respect to a group of children containing more than one age category (mixed license) is 1:15, where the number of children is determined in accordance to:

- 1 toddler is deemed equivalent to 3 children;
- 1 Pre-School child is deemed to be equivalent to 1.5 children;
- 1 school-aged child is deemed to be equivalent to 1 child.

Our childcare providers are trained in early childhood development. They strive to provide age-appropriate activities for children that allow them to develop to their fullest potential. All full-time staff have completed Early Childhood Orientation training or equivalent (or will obtain this qualification within one year of employment with SSELIC). All staff are required to have a criminal record/vulnerable sector check and tuberculosis test and there will, at all times, be someone with First Aid and CPR training in the facility.

All staff members are required to sign an Oath of Confidentiality to ensure privacy and confidentiality amongst staff members and the children.

Our Daily Schedule

While the exact time of activities will change depending on staff, the number of children, weather, excursions planned, etc., the following is an example of a typical day in the Centre:

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7:00-8:00 | Arrival, free play time |
| 8:45- 9:00 | Clean up, bathroom routine |
| 9:00-9:30 | Morning snack |
| 9:30-10:15 | Circle time, story time |
| 10:15-11:00 | Craft time, activity time |
| 11:00-11:45 | Outside play (weather permitting) |
| 11:45-12:00 | Clean up, bathroom routine |
| 12:00-12:45 | Lunch |
| 12:45-1:00 | Wash and prepare for naps |
| 1:00-3:00 | Nap/quiet time |
| 3:00-3:30 | Afternoon snack |
| 4:00-4:30 | Outside play (weather permitting) |
| 4:30-6:00 | Free play |

Rest/Nap Policy

Toddlers and Pre-Schoolers who nap will have a quiet/nap time each day to unwind, relax and consequently function positively and constructively during the remainder of the day. Cots are provided and parents must send a pillow labeled with the child's name.

The following rest/nap times (approximately) will be incorporated in the day:

- Toddlers – after lunch routine until 2:30 (or until they wake on their own).
- Pre-Schoolers – 1:00 – 2:30
- Kindergarten – Quiet Time of 30 minutes per day. Children are encouraged to nap, read books or do puzzles.

Indoor Activity Policy

Play is incorporated into every aspect of children's routine throughout the day. It is our intention to ensure that children are safe and secure while playing indoors by following these guidelines:

Clothing/Footwear

- Indoor footwear is required during play.
- Your children will learning plan will include interesting play materials, such as sand, water, clay, blocks, pinecones and leaves, that involve all your child's senses— seeing, touching, tasting, smelling and hearing. They will explore through through: • dressing up, reading books, spending time in nature, hammering nails, drawing, talking. Because of this, your child being creative will sometimes getting messy while painting, digging, climbing and building, so please send clothes that are OK to be played in, that are comfortable and easily managed by the child.

Water Play

- Children are encouraged to wash their hands before playing in the water/sensory table.
- Water in the water table is changed daily.

- Water will be cleaned up off the floor after every spill, with the children helping when age appropriate.

Painting

- Children are encouraged to wear a protective paint shirt over their clothing.

Play dough

- Children are encouraged to wash their hands before and after play dough play.

Outdoor Activity Policy

Outdoor play is an important part of our programming, as it is necessary for the health and well-being of all children. Children go outside twice a day, as long as the following weather guidelines are met:

- **Winter:** Children will spend short periods of time outside during winter, but will not be taken outside when the temperature is below -20 degrees Celsius with or without a wind chill. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate clothing for their children including hat, warm jacket, ski pants, winter boots, scarf and mitts or gloves.
- **Summer:** At temperatures above +25 degrees Celsius and with a UV rating above 6, children will be taken outside only for short periods of time. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate clothing for their children including sunhat, walking shoes (preferably sandals or running shoes instead of backless shoes); cool clothing, and a raincoat and rubber boots when necessary.

If children do not have the appropriate clothing for weather conditions (i.e. ski pants, toque or a summer hat), the Centre will do their best to provide for that child if possible. However, limited items are available, so it is important that parents provide appropriate clothing to ensure their child's safety.

Sunscreen/ Bug Spray

In lieu of providing their own, families will be charged a small fee periodically as needed throughout the summer months to offset the costs of sunscreen and/or bug spray purchased by the Centre. If your child requires a certain kind of sunscreen or spray due to allergies, parents will be asked to provide labelled bottles and will be exempt from the charges. Children are required to apply sunscreen and bug spray (with staff assistance if needed) prior to outdoor play.

Sand/Snow

Children are encouraged to keep sand in designated areas. Sand/Snow throwing aimed at another child is not allowed.

Excursions and Neighborhood Walks

Relevant excursions and walks are deemed important for the physical growth and development of community children. Field trips and excursions are organized to further develop the child's understanding of the community and the world around them.

When on an excursion, the safety of the children is of prime concern. The SSELC may rely on parent volunteers to ensure that the staff to child or adult to child supervision ratios are always met as in accordance with Section 53 of The Child Care Regulations, 2015.

SSELC believes neighborhood walks can be incorporated into programming in order to support the fitness and healthy lifestyle of the children.

When on a neighborhood walk, the safety of the children is of prime concern and the staff to child or adult to child supervision ratios must be met as in accordance with Section 53 of The Child Care Regulations, 2015.

Our Fire Drills

Periodically, we will conduct fire drills to teach the children to act in a safe manner during emergencies. Records of fire drills are kept on file as a licensing requirement and are held regularly every month, even during winter. During these drills, children will be expected to dress and physically vacate the building, as per emergency evacuation procedure.

Your Child's Clothing and Personal Possessions

The following is a list of items that parents must supply for their child(ren); please ensure your child's name is marked on all possessions:

- Diapers, wipes and labelled bum cream,
- Formula, baby food, food for allergies and/or special diets (if necessary),
- Pillow, pillow case and security toy/blanket (if necessary),
- Non-marking rubber soled inside shoes,
- An extra change of clothes including socks, shoes, pants, shirt and underwear,
- Paint shirt,
- Proper seasonal outdoor clothing
 - Winter- boots, mittens, hat, ski pants, warm jacket
 - Spring- rubber boots, splash pants, light jacket
 - Summer- hat, outdoor shoes

Sunscreen and bug spray are provided for a fee during summer months.

Children are **not allowed to bring their own toys** with them to the Centre.

Small Steps Early Learning Center is not responsible for missing or damaged items.

Our Supervision Habits

Staff ratios are always maintained according to the Department of Employment and Resources Child Care Regulations: the school-aged (1 point) ratio is 1 adult to 15 children; the Pre-School (1.5 points) ratio is 1 adult to 10 children; and the toddler (3 points) ratio is 1 adult to 5 children. Staff levels according to these guidelines are in place to ensure children are adequately supervised at all times during indoor and outdoor activities.

Our Nutritional Commitments

SSELCC recognizes proper nutrition as being essential for children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual growth. Meals and snacks of high quality and nutritional value will be provided at appropriate intervals. Section 24 of The Child Care Regulations, 2015 will be referred to for specifics.

- One meal (lunch) and two snacks (morning and afternoon) are provided to the children

at regular times each day. No more than three hours shall elapse between the provision of another meal or snack.

- The Canada Food Guide is followed to ensure an adequate variety of foods from the four major food groups are provided in sufficient quantities. Snacks contain two or more food groups, and meals consist of all four food groups.
- A weekly menu plan will be posted on the Communications Board.
- Breakfast is not served at the Centre, and it is the expectation that the child(ren) will eat prior to their arrival. The first serving of food is available at morning snack, which is served around 9:00am.

Food Allergies

SSELCC is a nut-aware environment, but may change to nut-free to protect the safety of enrolled children as required.

Please inform the Director of any specific dietary requirements and/or food allergies your child may have. Names of children with allergies and the requirements due to the allergies will be posted in all food serving and preparation areas. Parents of children with special dietary needs are required to supply foods themselves; the Centre will not make special meals for individual children. Parents should check menus to make sure their child can eat the provided food. Should an alternative meal not be provided, the staff will give the child only the parts of the meal which are acceptable. Please inform the Director if a child's dietary restrictions change.

Risk Of Choking

To help reduce the risk of choking, certain 'caution foods' are modified for children under 4 years of age. Hard vegetables and fruits are peeled and cut into small pieces, cherry tomatoes/grapes are cut in half lengthwise, and wieners are sliced lengthwise.

Foods Not to be Served

The following is a list of foods **not to be served** at the Centre:

- Seeds, hard candy, chewing gum, jelly beans, caramel/toffee
- Snacks made with toothpicks or skewers.
- Carrot sticks and celery sticks for children under 30 months of age.

Food For Special Events

The Centre may have small parties to celebrate certain holidays such as Valentine's Day, Easter, Halloween and Christmas; birthdays may also be celebrated. Parents may be asked if they would like to provide treats for these occasions and will be asked to label any food they bring with all the ingredients. ***Please keep in mind that our day care is a nut-aware facility.*** Except for these special occasions, we discourage bringing any outside food to the Centre.

Eating Habits

We want eating to be an enjoyable experience for the children. Our staff will sit with the children and initiate conversation about the concepts of colour, quantity and temperature of the food, appropriate eating behaviours, and events of the day. Children will be offered choices between nutritious alternatives, where feasible and menus will include a variety of colours, flavours, textures, sizes, shapes and temperatures.

Children are encouraged to practice feeding themselves and are actively involved in serving food and other mealtime activities. Children over 30 months of age will serve themselves and decide how much of each food they are able to eat. All children are encouraged to try all the

foods presented to them; however, we will not force children to eat if they choose not to.

They are also provided with the opportunity to learn table manners and cleaning up after themselves. They will learn shelf help skills such as: scraping plates, putting away plates, glasses and utensils and stacking chairs.

To ensure the safety of children during meal and/or snack times:

- Child-sized utensils and serving dishes are used by children to make self-feeding easier.
- Children are closely supervised at all times.
- They will be asked to sit and eat their food.

Your Arrivals and Departures

To create a smooth transition for the children, we ask parents to please keep drop offs as brief as possible. When arriving at Centre, parents are to remove all footwear in the front entry, leave the child's boots on the shelves, and place all outside clothing in their cubbies.

At the Parent Communication Centre, parents are to:

1. Record the specific arrival and departure time on each of the children's calendar sheets in the Attendance Binder.
2. Initial the Sign-In Sheets and write any important notes the staff should be aware of that day.

When dropping off or picking up your children, parents are to do so in the presence of a staff member and must remember to initial the Sign-In Sheet.

No child will be allowed to leave on her/his own; a parent or emergency contact must come to Centre to pick up each child. If another individual will be picking up a child, parents must list their names in the alternate pick up list and inform a staff member. Please let staff know of any special appointments or changes in your schedule. Under no circumstances will the child be released from the Centre to any individual other than those designated by the parent.

Unusual Circumstances Surrounding Pick-Up

In the case of divorced or separated parents, the Centre cannot forbid a parent to pick up their child unless that parent has no custodial right. Custodial parents must supply the Centre with a copy of their legal custody order. If a non-custodial parent attempts to pick up a child, Centre staff will not release the child without consent of the parent.

If a parent or pick-up designate under the influence of alcohol or drugs attempts to pick up a child and intends to drive a vehicle, the staff may be required to contact the RCMP unless an alternate pick-up can be arranged.

How We Communicate with Parents

Regular communication between parents and staff is very important. Staff are best equipped to help your child through his/her day if they are provided with pertinent information about the child's health, injuries, concerns, etc. at the time of drop off in the morning. Periodically touching base with caregivers will also help parents learn about the challenges and successes

in your child's day as well as any notable incidents, abnormal behaviors, illnesses, etc. that have occurred.

SSELC supports an "open door" communication policy. This means parents are always welcome to drop in and spend time with your child(ren) and/or observe the activities of the Centre; however, you are asked to ensure that your presence is not disruptive to daily activities or workflow. Criminal record/vulnerable sector checks are mandatory for anyone wishing to spend time at the Centre or volunteer for Centre related activities.

To ensure the timely exchange of written materials, each child has a mailbox; a small basket located immediately above your child's cubby. These are used for distributing invoices, receipts and monthly newsletters. Parents are encouraged to check their mailbox daily.

Our Child Guidance Strategy

Children have a need and a right to have consistent behavioral expectations established for them. They need to know what the expectations are, why they exist, and the consequences for not complying with them. Good child management is consistent and supports children's development of positive self-regulation and appropriate behaviour. Staff members are encouraged to manage all situations and behavior in a calm, reasonable, and positive manner, being mindful that circumstances are constantly changing and personalities are unique.

Structure, routine and clearly communicated expectations are all used at SSELC to help children prepare for and respond to changes in their day. Techniques used to prevent disruptive or unruly behavior include:

- Providing supervision
- Providing activities to keep children engaged
- Providing multiple toys, especially favorites
- Allowing enough time for activities to keep children from being rushed
- Preparing children for transitions
- Giving children responsibility and letting them help
- Respecting children's feelings
- Expressing pride, interest and pleasure
- Providing a very close presence when children are having a rough day

There are, however, situations and behaviors that require more firm discipline. During these times, it is important to employ disciplinary tactics that are again consistent, that explain how/why the behavior is inappropriate and that seek to ultimately reestablish calm.

Notwithstanding a reasonable degree of discretion that must at all times be asserted, SSELC staff are trained to implement a specific step-by-step set of actions to help manage child behavior and maintain balance and order in the care rooms:

- 1st offence - distraction/redirection along with some explanation/discussion of why the behavior was inappropriate
- 2nd offence - get down on the child's level, advise in a firm tone that this is a final warning, again remind why inappropriate, offer appropriate alternatives, etc.

- 3rd offence - (in room) time out corner/chair (repeat as many times as Care Giver believes appropriate)

If the behavior escalates or fails to correct in reasonable period of time, the child will be removed from room and put in the care of another staff person to help calm them and discuss why behavior is inappropriate. The child will be returned to the room when ready. Repeat offenses on the same day will, depending on the severity and frequency, be dealt with as noted above.

If child becomes further agitated or in inconsolable upon removal from the room, as a last resort, parents will be contacted to come pick up the child for the day.

There are, however, some actions for which SSELc maintains zero tolerance; biting, scratching, aggressive physical contact (causing pain or injury to another child or staff), swearing, destruction of property, or any other action clearly motivated by malicious intent. Should a child engage in any of the aforementioned behaviors, they will be immediately removed from the room and, at the Director's discretion, parents may be called to remove the child for the remainder of the day.

The following methods of child management are never permitted:

- Corporal punishment
 - Includes striking a child, shaking, shoving, spanking and other forms of aggressive contact.
- Physical, emotional or verbal abuse
 - Includes intimidation and humiliation, threats of withdrawal of love or acceptance, threats of God's punishment, belittlement, undermining a child's self-respect, requiring the child to maintain an uncomfortable position for any length of time, forcing the repetition of physical movement, and forcing a child to consume unwanted food.
- Denial of necessities
 - Includes withholding food or water from a child, preventing a child from utilizing washroom facilities, denying a child access to sleeping facilities or bedding, and denying a child access to adequate clothing.
- Isolation
 - Includes confinement of a child in a room or structure within the facility from which a child is unable to exit on his or her own accord.
- Inappropriate physical or mechanical restraint
 - Includes holding a child so tightly that they bruise, grabbing or dragging a child, using excessive force, restraining or holding down a child, restraining a child in a chair.

All incidents of extreme behavior or incidents resulting in injury to a child will be documented and this record placed in the child's file. If more than 4 incidents occur where a child has to be removed from the play area, additional supports may be required, and as a last resort in extreme circumstances, the contract may be terminated. One month's notice for discontinuation of services will be given.

The Director will handle all matters concerning questionable disciplinary action. Please ask questions if you have concerns. The Board, Director, and staff members are always willing to explain or clarify any situation.

Our Health Policies

Children must be in good health to attend the Centre; please notify the staff if your child is sick and will not be attending. In the case of a health related emergency that occurs at the Centre, parents will be notified immediately.

Preventative Health Measures

No child may attend the Centre who is unwell or who is a source of infection. Staff can refuse to accept a child if they are deemed too ill to attend. Please use your discretion when bringing a child in. If you feel that your child is:

- too sick to play outside,
- unable to participate in regular programming, or
- too sick to attend Pre-School or Kindergarten,

then your child is should not be brought to the Centre until s/he is feeling better and can resume regular activity.

A child shall not attend the Centre if they have:

- A rash pending diagnosis,
- Scabies, ringworm, impetigo or pink eye,
- Diarrhea within the past 24 hours,
- Vomited within the past 24 hours,
- Are not feeling well enough to participate in the usual daily activities of the center's program, or cannot play outdoors,
- Been exposed to a serious illness such as Diphtheria, or Epidemic Encephalitis (may be re-admitted only after a note from a Doctor),
- Head Lice. If a case of lice is reported, our staff will assist parents by checking children's heads as they arrive at the facility. If a case of lice is detected at the Centre, parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child within the hour. The child will remain separated from the general population until a parent or emergency contact arrives to pick up the child,
- A fever of 38C or higher with other symptoms. Note: If medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) is required for fever control, the child **SHOULD NOT** be at the Centre.

A child may return to the Centre when:

- Fever has been absent for 24 hours,
- Vomiting/diarrhea has subsided for at least 24 hours,
- Antibiotic therapy has been taken for over 24 hours,
- Child has been under a doctor's care and the doctor has given permission for the child to return to the Centre,
- The contagious stage of the specific communicable disease has passed; our Center follows all public health regulations for communicable diseases, and children can return to the Centre after specific time periods have elapsed; please check with the Director for

details.

Your child may attend the Centre if s/he has:

- A slight fever (less than 38 C), with no other symptoms,
- A light cold,
- Diaper rash,
- A loose bowel movement caused by food or medication, or
- A slight cough.

If a child becomes ill during the course of the day, parents or emergency contact will be notified by phone and will be expected to pick up the child within the hour. If they cannot be reached and the child appears excessively ill, the child will be taken to the Emergency Department at the Outlook & District Health Centre.

If parents cannot be reached and immediate medical attention is not required, a substitute worker shall be called in and their wage will be charged to the parent. The worker must be paid for a minimum of 3 hours, and will be paid for the total number of hours they are with your child if over 3 hours.

Every effort will be taken to comfort your child until your arrival. The child will be removed from the general population of children in an effort to prevent illness in others, as well as to provide your child with a calm, relaxing environment. Medication may only be given upon parental consent (see Medication Administration policy).

If a child misses more than five scheduled days due to a medical condition, the parent may send a written request to the board asking that the child's fees be waived for scheduled days missed due to this condition. The board will require a written doctor's note and the parent can choose what pertinent information to disclose. The board will discuss the request on a case-by-case basis. The parents may be credited all or a portion of fees during the medical absence. The parent will receive a written response from the board.

Reporting and Recording of Communicable Diseases

Heartland Health Region will be notified by the Director of any communicable diseases at the Centre. The Health Nurse will be called to come out and suggest a procedure to control an outbreak of a disease. The staff will keep track of illness of children in each room's communication and attendance book.

Our Medication Administration Policy

Parents must complete the Government of Saskatchewan Medication Form if medication is to be administered to a child. In exceptional circumstances, a provider may administer non-prescription medication on the oral authorization of the child's parent. Written authorization must be obtained as soon as possible in these circumstances.

To protect both the child and Centre staff, a designated staff member with a valid First Aid Certificate will administer medication to the child **only when:**

- a) the **written consent** of the parent has been obtained on the Medication Form (or oral consent as outlined above),
- b) the medication is in an **original container or bottle and is labeled** with the child's full name, medication name and dosage, and

- c) the medication is administered according to the directions of the doctor or directions listed on the medication container.

Non-prescription medications (E.g. Tylenol) cannot be given with prescription (E.g. Amoxicillin) without a pharmacist's or doctor's note.

Storage of Medication

Medications (other than emergency medications) are stored in a locked medicine box within a designated cupboard. Emergency medications such as epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) and asthma inhalers are stored in a place that is inaccessible to the children, but readily accessible to caregivers.

Medications that require refrigeration are stored in the fridge within a locked Medicine Box.

Our Hygiene Policy

The children are guided to take care of themselves in terms of personal hygiene, and assistance is provided to children unable to do so.

Hand washing is the most important way to reduce the spread of infection. Washing of hands takes place after each use of the toilet, after diaper changes, wiping noses and before each meal or snack.

Our Potty Training Policy

Staff will support the potty training of children attending the Centre. We ask parents to notify the Centre when training is to begin. Please try not to start potty training too early. If a child cannot express when s/he needs to go to the potty and/or has tantrums when put on the potty, these are good indications that s/he may not be ready for training. Signs of readiness include being willing/able to pull up and down their own clothing, telling an adult that they have to go, being able to control bladder for at least two hours.

The training process will be on a one-month trial basis. After this time, the staff will reassess the child's progress. If no progress has been shown, for example, pulling up and down own clothing, telling a staff member s/he needs to go to the potty, then training at the Centre will be discontinued.

When your child has started potty training, please bring in four or five sets of pants, underwear and socks. Normally, the children go to the washroom four times per day (before morning snack, after lunch, after nap time and at 5:00pm). Please inform the staff if you would like them to try to take your child at specific additional times (accommodations will be made as staffing levels allow).

Our Social Environment

Visiting

We have an open door policy allowing parents to visit at any time during the day. You are not required to call ahead, and can come in and assist the staff with your own child's care at anytime. However, if you become aware of a concern with another child, please promptly inform the staff member in charge of the group. Criminal record/vulnerable sector checks are mandatory for anyone wishing to spend time at the Centre.

Volunteering

We welcome any parents or family member (over the age of 16) that would like to volunteer and help with events, craft times, etc. Criminal record/vulnerable sector checks are mandatory for anyone wishing to spend time at the Centre or volunteer for Centre related activities.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Director to make arrangements.

Alcohol, Drug & Smoke-Free Policy

No alcohol or drugs are allowed in the Centre or on its immediate yard.

The Centre is a designated smoke-free facility; no lighted tobacco products or electronic cigarette devices are allowed within the facility, on facility property, within 50 feet of the facility, or within view of the children. Smoking is also prohibited on excursions and neighborhood walks with children.

Our Abuse Policy

SSELC will not tolerate verbal or physical abuse in any form against staff. In the event of verbal and/or physical abuse occurs, the RCMP will be notified and charges will be laid.

Any suspected child abuse will be reported to the authorities as required by law. SSELC staff are not there to determine that the abuse occurred; however we must report any suspicions as required by the Saskatchewan Child Care Act and Regulations and by the child protection laws of Canada and Saskatchewan.

Our Accident/Incident Policy

In the event that your child has either a minor or serious injury or is involved in some other form of unusual occurrence, the Centre must follow procedures as required by the Saskatchewan Child Care Act and Regulations. Staff will fill out the appropriate forms, giving detail on the nature of the incident, the treatment that followed and the procedure taken to ensure there is little or no chance of reoccurrence. Parents must read the incident form, ensure it is complete, and sign it. Once the form is signed by both a parent and the Director, it will be kept in the child's confidential file.

If the child's injury requires more extensive treatment than the First Aid that can be administered by staff on-site, the child will be transported to the emergency department of the Outlook & District Health Centre. Parents and/or emergency contact person will be notified immediately about the injury, and will be transported to the emergency room in:

- Parent or emergency contact's car - if quickly available and appropriate for the level of injury.
- Ambulance (phone: 911) with staff member, parent or emergency contact accompanying child

Our Enrolment Policy

Parents interested in enrolling their child(ren) are requested to first visit the Center with their child; please call the Director to set up an appointment time. Spaces are filled on a first come first served basis, with priority given to full-time children. When a parent accepts an available

childcare space, a \$100.00 non-refundable deposit is required to secure the space. This deposit will be credited toward the first month's fees.

Parents must complete all the necessary paperwork prior to their child being enrolled. These include, but are not limited to:

- Agreement for Child Care Services
- Child's Health Resume or Alternative
- Excursion and Transportation Consent
- Child's Health and Emergency Information Card
- Pick-up Authorization
- Medical Certificate (optional)
- Social Resume (optional)

It is very important that the Centre is notified of any changes in work and home numbers and addresses for both parents and designated alternates. Please update immediately when changes occur and review annually to ensure proper information in the event of an emergency.

Information in the children's files is considered confidential and is shared only among the custodial parents and the Centre staff. No information may be released by the Centre without the consent of the custodial parents.

Waiting List

Should the Centre have no available openings, the Director will keep a waiting list of requesting parents. Openings will be filled as per availability with age appropriate spots, and preference will be given to:

- Child seeking a full time childcare arrangement (guaranteed full-time),
- Sibling(s) of a child already enrolled in the Centre,
- Child(ren) of Centre staff and Board members.

Our Fee Schedule and Payment Expectations

Fees vary based on the age and the type of care required. The category of care will be mutually agreed upon between the parent and SSELCC in the Agreement for Childcare Services and will be based on the number of care days required in a typical month. This category, and subsequently the fees, will not change without a minimum 30-day notice.

~~Casual care is typically unscheduled and the number of days of care vary from month to month. Full time care is defined as anything more than 36 hours of scheduled care. If there is availability for care, a casual may use more than 36 hours however priority will be given to families who require a full time spot.~~

Rate Grid

| Age Category | Casual (drop in, unscheduled) | Part Time (10 or more scheduled days/mo) | Full-Time (Contracted Guaranteed Position) |
|--------------|--|--|--|
| Toddler | \$41/day, \$25/4hrs | \$38.00/day | \$738/month |
| Pre-School | \$39/day, \$25/4hrs | \$36.00/day | \$697/month |
| School Age | \$10 for Before school \$10 for After school \$15 for both Before and After | \$36.00/day | \$697/month |
| Infant** | \$48/day, \$25/4hrs | \$46.00/day | \$871/month |

Age Categories

- Toddler 18 months to 30 months
- Pre-school 30 months to Grade One
- School-age Grade One to the age of 13
- Infant 16-18 months** (early entrance exemption from the Ministry of Education is required)

Families with two or more part-time or full-time toddlers and/or pre-school children attending the Centre will receive 10% off their total monthly charges. As infants are only accepted in our care under special circumstances, they do not qualify for the family discount. Late charges are not subject to discounts of any kind. There is no reduction in cost of the before/after school rate of \$15.00 for additional family members.

Full-time spots

Full-time spots provide parents with a guarantee that there will always be a spot available for their child(ren). The full time rate offers parents a yearly discount of \$625-\$650. Full-time spot holders may also take up to 3 weeks holidays each calendar year, with a discount of \$100.00 per week. Holidays must be booked a month prior, they may be taken in 5, 10, or 15 day increments. Once in a calendar year, a child may use 1 of the 3 weeks of holiday towards a week of illness if he/she requires a week to heal.

Late Pick-Up Fees

Small Steps ELC closes at 6:00pm at which time there will be an additional \$20 service charge plus \$5 for each additional 5 minutes. Payment for late fees will be billed on the next regularly scheduled invoice and payment in full is required before the next Care Schedule is due.

Changes to or Cancellations of Child Care Services

In the case of part time or full time care, scheduled days that are no longer required MUST be cancelled 14 days previous to day of change through the Director either in person or by phone. If this does not happen, a full day's fee will be charged for the cancelled day. Payment for the booked day is expected for sick days. "Trading" booked spaces with other Centre patrons or

switching one of your children for another (in a different age category) is not permitted. The Director will have a waiting list for spaces and any spaces that become available must be offered to the individuals on the waiting list.

One month's notice is required to change categories of care (from full time to part time and/or to casual) or to withdraw your child from the Centre completely. Without sufficient notice, fees will be charged in full as per the Agreement for Childcare Services for that month. If payment has not been received within 15 days of the invoice date, your account will be sent to collections immediately.

The Director and/or a member of the Board have the right to terminate services for just cause including specific things such as nonpayment of fees, verbal abuse of staff, chronic behavioral issues, etc. Fees will be charged for service rendered up to the point of discharge.

Billing

Casual child care fees will be due at the end of each day. If three or more casual days are scheduled in advance, the Director may choose to defer billing until month end. Part-time and full-time fees will be invoiced on the last day of the month.

How We Handle Payments

Payment may be made by cheque, cash or Interact e-transfer to sselc@sasktel.net. There will be a \$35 charge for any NSF cheques.

Fees are due within fifteen days of the invoice date, after which 1.5%/month interest will be charged. If your fees have not been fully paid by the 30th of that month, the outstanding fees will be sent to collections and childcare will be terminated.

All policies and fee changes are regularly reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors. Parents will receive one month's written notice of any changes to policy or fee structures.

Leaves Due to Summer Vacation

SSELC will hold your childcare space over the summer holidays (July 1- August 15) for a fee of one half (1/2) of the contracted full-time rate for full-time spaces or in the case of a part-time position, one half (1/2) of your average fees for the previous 10 months. In the event you choose to give notice and withdraw your child and should services be required in the future, you will be placed back on the waiting list and given priority as stated previously.

Leaves Due to Maternity/Parental Leave

Children leaving SSELC due to a maternity/parental leave will have their spot held for up to 18 months for a fee of \$40/month/spot. In the event you give notice and withdraw your child and should services be required in the future, you will be placed back on the waiting list and given priority as stated previously.

Subsidy Funding

SSELC staff can assist families in learning more about the government-administered Child Care Subsidy Program. The review and approval of subsidy applications falls entirely under Provincial jurisdiction.

Families are solely responsible for ensuring they have enough hours for their subsidy payment to be made. If they do not qualify for subsidy, they become responsible for the payment in full.

Once a subsidy is approved, monthly child care hours will be submitted to the government by SSELC staff and parents will be responsible for submitting monthly income information. The subsidy amount will be sent directly to the Centre which, upon receipt, will be credited to the next month's invoice. If the initial subsidy amount exceeds one month's child care charges (as payable by the subsidized parent), the difference will be returned to the parent.

Our Fundraising Intentions

SSELC is a non-profit organization. As a result, we may hold fundraisers throughout the year to help supplement costs of new supplies and materials. Parents are expected to participate in all fundraising activities or pay a buyout fee which will vary depending on the event or activity.

Our Governance

SSELC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, which is overseen by the Saskatchewan Government under the Early Years Branch of the Ministry of Education. **Anyone wishing to become a Board Member is welcome**; please contact the Director for more information. Sixty percent of Board members must be parents; community members wishing to help keep the Centre in Outlook can fill the other forty percent.

The fiscal year runs from September 1st to August 31st. Our annual general meeting, which is open to the community, is held once a year between November 1st and January 1st (date will be announced). At this time, the budget and the Director list will be discussed. If at some other time you have a concern and wish to attend a scheduled monthly board meeting, please let the Director know.

Inclement Weather and Emergency Closings

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, flood, fires, or power failures can disrupt Centre operations. The decision to close the office will be made by the Director and Board Chairperson. When the decision is made to close the facility, employees and families will receive notification in as timely and efficient manner as possible.

Our Confidentiality Policy

SSELC strives to protect everyone's right of privacy. This includes the children in our care, our parents, our staff and our board members. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to: names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, health related information of anyone associated with SSELC. All personal information regarding children attending SSELC, including files, documents, and any other records will be stored in a secure location only accessible by staff members. Confidential information (written and verbal) will not be disclosed without a parent's written permission, except as required for the health and safety of children, or as required by law. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents.

A record will be kept for each child attending the Centre as per Section 36 of The Child Care Regulations, 2015. These records will be kept for 6 years after the child ceases to attend Centre.

Our Problem Solving Recommendations

Please feel free to address any problems or concerns you may have about your child's care with the appropriate staff member. We ask that you direct your concerns as follows:

Staff – Questions about your child's programs and daily activities.

Director - Concerns regarding policies and procedures.

Board of Directors - If a problem is not addressed to your satisfaction by either staff or the Director, please inform the Board of Directors with your concerns in writing.

We ask that parents take direct and immediate steps as outlined above to resolve their concerns and refrain from airing grievances on social media (Facebook, Twitter etc). We also strongly discourage parents from posting images taken at the Centre on their Facebook pages, particularly if other children are featured.

This policy recognizes that **a childcare Centre is not always appropriate for all families**. If you feel that SSELC is not the right fit for your family, we request that you make alternate child care arrangements.

Small Steps Early Learning Centre believes in providing and maintaining a work environment in which all employees and volunteers are free from violence, threats of violence, intimidation, bullying, harassment, unkind comments and other disruptive behavior or actions which belittle, threaten, offend, embarrass, humiliate or diminish an others self esteem, whether deliberate or unintentional. Such actions are not tolerated. Failure to comply with any of the above could result in the decision to terminate a childcare space. The decision will be made in consultation with the SSELC director and the board of directors. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Termination/Dismissal of a childcare space

SSELC reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause.

Parent Code Of Conduct Policy

Small Steps Early Learning Centre (SSELC) requires the parents of enrolled children at all times, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of SSELC is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of SSELC, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the Centre. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct may not be permitted on agency property thereafter. This would result in immediate termination of their childcare space(s). The decision would be made in consultation with the SSELC director and the board of directors. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

SWEARING/CURSING: No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on agency property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

THREATENING OF EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN OTHER PARENTS OR ADULTS

ASSOCIATED WITH SSELC: Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats will be taken seriously and reported to the appropriate authorities.

DISCIPLINE OF A CHILD THAT IS NOT YOUR OWN AT SSELC: Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner, or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the care room educator and/or Centre Director. Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. It is also inappropriate for a parent to seek out an educator/director while they are not at SSELC or to seek out a board member to discuss behavior concerns (or staff concerns). All behavior concerns (or staff concerns) should be brought to the care room educator or director's attention during business hours or at a mutually agreed upon time. At that point, the educator and/or director will address the issue with the other parent. Please see OUR PROBLEM SOLVING RECOMMENDATIONS on pg.20 for the appropriate way to have your concerns addressed. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, educators and/or the Center Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, OTHER PARENTS OR

ASSOCIATES OF SSELC: While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of SSELC or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

DISPARAGING REMARKS/SLANDER ABOUT SSELC, THE EMPLOYEES OR

CHILDREN: Parents that are found to be making disparaging remarks about SSELC care providers, children in our care or their families could have their child care space terminated and will be asked to leave the premises. This not only violates the confidentiality policy, but also causes unnecessary acrimony and low moral. SSELC recognizes that our childcare Centre is not the right fit for all families. If you find that SSELC is not right for your family, we request that you find alternate childcare arrangements and refrain from making disparaging comments to others.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY: SSELC takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the agency. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with SSELC. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential, pressures employees or other parents for information that is not necessary for them to know, will be considered to be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy and could have their child care space terminated. You may observe children at our Centre who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees of SSELC are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

The board of directors reserves the right to make additions or changes to these policies at their discretion. Notice will be given informing the parents of any changes in a timely manner.