

First Steps Epidemic/Pandemic Policies Parent Handbook



Topics in this addendum supersede items in the First Steps Operational Policies and Parent Handbook when appropriate.

First Steps is committed to carrying out best practices in order to provide a safe, healthy environment for all children, families, and staff in our program. The following policies and procedures will be put in place during an epidemic or pandemic. These policies are based on recommendations and guidelines from health officials and state licensing agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic but will apply in the event of any epidemic or pandemic that may occur. We will continue to operate within the rules of the Texas Minimum Standards for Licensed Child Care Centers, just as we always have. We will follow the new guidelines recommended from both CDC and TEA to increase health and safety protocol and to protect the health and safety of all children, families, and staff while attending school.

We are taking into consideration the current trends of COVID-19 in our area. We know the number of children infected is low, and we want to keep it that way by limiting the risk of exposure to everyone within our program.

We will have every family sign a disclosure statement that they will comply with our Health and Safety Plan. This statement will be kept on file with your child's records, and you can print it or complete it at Meet the Teacher.

In order to maintain the healthiest environment in our program, it is imperative that children and staff who display *ANY* signs or symptoms of illness remain at home. A health screening will take place each day before anyone is allowed to enter the program.

Children and employees with any of the following symptoms will not be allowed to attend:

- *temperature of 100.4 or greater
- *cough
- *headache
- *sore throat
- *shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- *chills
- *loss of taste or smell
- *repeated shaking with chills
- *muscle pain
- *nausea and diarrhea
- *known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 *OR* is awaiting results

While we know that some COVID-19 symptoms are similar to those of allergies or colds, we reserve the right to deny entrance to those we feel have some of the symptoms which may create an unsafe/unsanitary environment for others in our program. This will also apply for any person(s) dropping off a child who is showing symptoms.

There will be a minimum of a 48-hour exclusion rule for those that show symptoms, and First Steps reserves the right to implement the exclusion rule up to 10 days.

First Steps will implement the 48-hour fever-free rule for children sent home with a fever. The child will need to be fever-free for 48 hours without fever-reducing medications.

First Steps will require a physician's note for those who visit their physician for any of the symptoms to assure they are negative for COVID-19, and to be aware of what illness might be causing the symptom(s).

We ask that parents partner with us to help their child know the following procedures in order to help prevent the spread of the pandemic/epidemic:

- Proper mouth covering when coughing and sneezing.
- Proper hand-washing procedures.

Parents may choose to have their child wear protective face covering. Parents must teach children proper use and removal of face covering.

If future conditions dictate, four and five year olds *may* be required to wear a protective face covering.

School Responsibilities and Precautions

NEW Drop-Off/Pick-Up Procedures:

Touchless daily sign-ins/sign-outs will take place on the Brightwheel app. Parents will receive more information and an invitation to Brightwheel. They will need to download the app on their phones.

All students will be dropped off and picked up in their classroom. Parents are highly encouraged to drop off their child quickly and to not linger in the hallways after dropping off. Our staff will greet you at the doorway of the classroom, where each student will be screened. *Parents are NOT allowed in the classroom.*

Parents will be asked to complete a daily health statement via Brightwheel. Prior to the parents' departure, our staff will perform a quick health screening, including a temperature check on children before taking them to wash their hands and escort them to their classroom.

All children should arrive by 9:00 am each morning. If you must arrive later than this, please contact your child's teacher via Brightwheel, as all entry doors will promptly lock.

We recommend that you designate the same family member to drop off and pick-up your child, if at all possible. We encourage you to ask high-risk family members to avoid dropping off/picking up except in emergency situations.

Staff Health and Safety:

Staff is encouraged to complete the following two COVID-19 courses from Texas A&M AgriLife:

- *Providing High Quality Experiences during COVID-19 for Emergency Child Care Settings
- *Special Considerations for Infection Control During COVID-19

Staff is encouraged to wear facial protectant.

Staff will undergo a health screening each day prior to reporting to work.

Staff will be sent home if they exhibit any signs of illness.

Health and Safety in the Classroom:

Children and staff will wash hands with soap and water upon arrival and frequently throughout the day.

All classes will maintain low ratios, abide by Minimum Standards square footage requirements, and will refrain from mixing with children from other classes.

All frequently touched surfaces, such as light switches, doorknobs, faucets, counters, tables, chairs, and toys will be disinfected throughout the day and after dismissal of the last student.

An enhanced, thorough cleaning will be performed each evening in all areas of the facility.

Children should bring MULTIPLE changes of clothing. New guidelines recommend more frequent clothing changes when/if clothing is soiled. We are asking you to send **two complete sets of changes of clothes** for children, in case they are needed. This includes two sets of the following: shirt, pants/shorts, underwear, and socks. Please put each set in a Ziploc style bag, labeled with your child's name. We will keep these stored in the classroom. As we need to use them, we will send home the soiled clothing. Please make sure to replace the extra clothes the following day.

We must limit what is brought into our center for sanitation purposes. No "show and tell" or other items from home will be allowed.

For naptime, napmats MUST fit inside a provided XL ziplock storage bag (completely sealed). Sleeping bags or anything too large to fit inside the closed ziplock bag are NOT permitted. Napmats will now be sent home at the end of each month to be laundered. Please see to it that your child's mat is returned the following Tuesday.

We will attempt to play outside more often, weather permitting. We are encouraged to have as much outdoor time as possible, so please remember to apply sunscreen on your child.

There will be NO before/after care available.

Special classes (chapel, music, motor movement, and library) will still be provided; however, they may look a little different.

In-person program tours will be given during center hours while children are present, but the maximum adults that can attend is two.

Children will not share food, drinks, clothing, or other personal items.

Individually packaged and professionally-sealed snacks can be provided for birthdays. Individual cookies, cupcakes, doughnuts, or anything that has to be served is NOT allowed.

First Steps Preschool will follow any additional mandatory requirements set by local or state officials during these times.

Illness During the Day:

If a child begins to exhibit symptoms of illness, we will isolate that child in a safe, secure, and caring environment until he/she is picked up. Parents should pick up a sick child as quickly as possible, but within no more than 60 minutes of being notified.

The following steps will be taken if any child or staff develops symptoms of a current epidemic/pandemic illness or other possible illness while at school or away:

- An employee will be sent home immediately.
- A child will be isolated, and parents called.
- All parents/staff of the classroom will be notified.
- All areas where the ill child or staff had contact will be disinfected.
- The classroom will be re-opened after it is disinfected.
- The staff or child must be evaluated by a medical professional and notify the school of diagnosis – person may return to school if they test negative for an epidemic/pandemic and provide a medical release clearing them to return.

All school families and staff will be notified if any person receives a positive diagnosis of a current epidemic/pandemic and the following steps will be taken:

- Area where ill person had contact will be closed off.
- Windows will be opened to increase air circulation.
- Area will have deep cleaning and disinfecting before further use.
- Local health officials and State Licensing will be notified, and the school will follow all their recommendations, which could include closing the classroom or the whole school for a period of time.
- Classroom and/or school will be reopened as directed by local health officials.

Requirements for Returning to School

In the case of a child or staff who was diagnosed with a current epidemic/pandemic, the individual may return to school when all four of the following criteria are met:

- At least 2 days (48 hours) have passed since recovery (no fever without the use of medication); and
- The individual has improvement in all signs and symptoms of illness; and
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared; and
- The child or staff can provide a medical professional release or negative test clearing them to return to school.

Exposure to Epidemic/Pandemic

Parents will be notified if children have been exposed to a positive case. Parents will use their discretion on whether or not to quarantine.

Positive cases will continue to be reported both to state licensing and to our local health department.

School Closures:

- First Steps Preschool may be closed at any time due to the following scenarios:
 - A confirmed case of the illness/disease associated with the epidemic/pandemic or possible exposure within the school.
 - Adequate staffing is not available to maintain minimum required ratios.
 - A stay-at-home order issued by local officials.
 - Amarillo ISD issued closure.
 - First Baptist Church determines it is in the best interest of our First Steps Ministry.

First Steps Parent Epidemic/Pandemic Policies Plan

Disclaimer:

Administrators at First Steps are not health and safety experts. We cannot identify every possible scenario, but we have done our best to provide an overview of the new requirements to keep all as safe as possible. Despite all school precautions taken, children, families, or staff could be exposed to any illness or disease. First Steps Preschool and Mother's Day Out and First Baptist Church of Amarillo are not responsible for possible exposure or contracting any illness or disease and are released from any liability.

ASSUMPTION OF RISK: I have read and understood the above warning concerning COVID-19. I hereby choose to accept the risk of contracting COVID-19 for myself and/or my children in order to participate in First Steps Weekday Preschool and/or Mother's Day Out and enter First Baptist Church's premises. I accept the risk for me and/or my child of being exposed to, contracting, and/or spreading COVID-19 in order to participate in Weekday Preschool and/or Mother's Day Out in person.

I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the First Steps Epidemic/Pandemic Policies Plan which includes the following:

- New Drop-Off/Pick-Up Procedures
- Health and Safety in the Classroom
- Staff Health and Safety
- Illness During the Day
- School Closures

I understand that I will be asked health screening questions verbally each day as I check my child in. I also understand that by signing this form, which will be kept with my child's file, I am agreeing and certifying that I am abiding by all the regulations listed in the First Steps Parent Epidemic/Pandemic Policies Plan. Failure to be truthful and comply with the policies will result in dismissal from our program.

I understand that these policies may be updated or modified without notice at any time in order to stay current with best practices.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____