

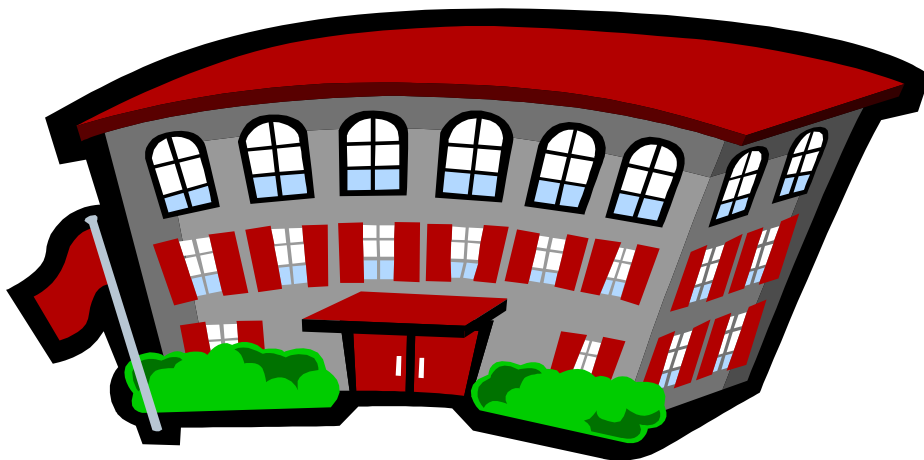
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# THREE STAGES

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## Early Childhood Education Program FAMILY HANDBOOK



Providing High-Quality Childcare in the East Orange community since 1994

### 2024- 2025 - SCHOOL YEAR

252 North Clinton Street, East Orange, NJ 07017

91 South Harrison Street, East Orange, NJ 07018

25 Evergreen Place, East Orange, NJ, 07018

671 Park Avenue, East Orange, NJ 07017

Telephone: (973) 672-0488 – (973) 672-2430

Don't forget to visit our website at

[3stageschildcarecenter.com](http://3stageschildcarecenter.com)

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# THREE STAGES

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## WELCOME

Dear Family,

Welcome to Three Stages Childcare & Learning Center! We are absolutely thrilled to have you join our community, and we want to extend our heartfelt thanks for choosing us to be a part of your child's early learning journey.

As a childcare center, we understand that this is a significant step for your family, and we are honored that you have entrusted us with the care and education of your little ones. Our team is dedicated at providing a nurturing, safe, and stimulating environment where each child can explore, learn, and grow at their own pace.

We believe that strong partnerships with families are essential for the success of our children, and we want you to know that we are here to support you every step of the way. From exciting activities to thoughtful communication, we are committed to making your experience with us positive and fulfilling.

Thank you once again for choosing **THREE STAGES**. We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynda Wright  
Executive Director  
(973) 672-2430 ext. 7002

**THREE STAGES CHILDCARE & LEARNING CENTER**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT US</b>	<b>1</b>
Philosophy	1
Mission	1
We seek to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment where children grow and develop to their fullest potential. Our focus is to provide a stimulating educational experience, which promotes each child's social, emotional, and physical development. Our goal is to support children's desire to be life-long learners and leaders.	1
Certification	1
Definition of Family	1
Hours of Operation	1
Holidays	1
Admission & Enrollment (Private Program)	1
Inclusion	2
Non-Discrimination	2
Family Activities	2
Confidentiality	2
Staff Qualifications	2
Child to Staff Ratios	3
Communication & Family Partnership	3
Communications. Notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Notes will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day.	3
Open Door Policy	4
Publicity	4
<b>CURRICULA &amp; LEARNING</b>	<b>4</b>
Learning Environment	4
Curricula & Assessment	4
Developmental Screening	4
Outings and Field Trips	5
Transitions	5
Transition from home to center	5
Transition between learning programs	5
Transition Day to Elementary School (Board of Education Classrooms only)	5
Transition for before/after school care	5
Electronic Media	6
Multiculturalism	6
Celebrations	6
Rest Time	6
Toilet Training	6
<b>GUIDANCE</b>	<b>7</b>
General Procedure	7
Challenging Behavior	7
Physical Restraint	7
Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families	8
<b>TUITION AND FEES</b>	<b>8</b>
Important Notice	8
All payment and fee processing will be completed by School Administrators. He/she will oversee collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact our school director, Dr. Lynda Wright.	8
Tuition Rates	8
Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the <i>Enrollment Agreement</i> Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether your child attends;	8

this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.....	8
Tuition Deposit .....	8
A Tuition Deposit equal to one week of care is required at the time registration is confirmed. This deposit is applied to the last week of care provided a two-week written notice is given. If a two-week written notice is not given when a child has withdrawn from the program, the family will be billed for one week of care, which may come out of their deposit. ....	8
Payment.....	9
Methods of Payment.....	9
Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by cash, check, money order, or credit card.....	9
Late Payment Charges.....	9
Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges.....	9
Late Pick-up Fees .....	9
Other Fees.....	10
Credits & No Credits.....	10
• <b>Families contract for a specific weekly schedule</b> as completed on the <i>Enrollment Agreement</i> Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather, infectious disease (except as noted below), or weather-related or environmental issues. ....	10
• <b>Weather-related or Environmental Disaster or Pandemic</b> – in the event of a crisis during which we are prohibited from operating, families are not required to pay their tuition fees until the school is able to provide a safe and secure environment for reopening. ....	10
• <b>Credit may be given for Serious Illness/Injury</b> – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child is hospitalized, absent due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit...	10
<b>ATTENDANCE &amp; WITHDRAWAL .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Absence.....	10
Vacation.....	10
Withdrawal .....	10
Transfer of Records.....	10
Closing Due to Extreme Weather.....	11
<b>DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP .....</b>	<b>11</b>
General Procedure .....	11
Cell Phone Usage .....	11
Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up .....	11
Right to Refuse Child Release.....	11
<b>PERSONAL BELONGINGS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
What to Bring .....	12
Cubbies.....	12
Lost & Found.....	12
Toys from Home.....	12
<b>NUTRITION .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Foods Brought from Home .....	12
Food Prepared for or at the Center .....	13
Food Allergies .....	13
Meal Time .....	13
Infant Feedings .....	13
Children 24 Months and Older .....	14
School Aged Participants.....	14
<b>HEALTH .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Immunizations.....	14
Physicals.....	15
Illness.....	15

---

Allergy Prevention .....	16
Medications .....	16
Communicable Diseases .....	16
<b>SAFETY .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Clothing.....	17
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play .....	17
Communal Water-Play .....	17
Injuries .....	17
Biting.....	18
Respectful Behavior .....	18
Smoking.....	18
Prohibited Substances.....	18
Dangerous Weapons.....	18
Child Custody.....	18
Suspected Child Abuse .....	19
<b>EMERGENCIES.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Lost or Missing Child .....	19
Fire Safety.....	19
Emergency Transportation .....	19
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>FAMILY ACTIVITIES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CENTER POLICIES .....</b>	<b>1</b>

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## ABOUT US

### *Philosophy*

Primary objective of Three Stages is to promote the continuous well-being of the children we serve. At the same time provide quality childcare in a developmentally appropriate environment. We are here for our children to grow and develop through exploration and experimentation with various learning materials and activities.

### *Mission*

We seek to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment where children grow and develop to their fullest potential. Our focus is to provide a stimulating educational experience, which promotes each child's social, emotional, and physical development. Our goal is to support children's desire to be life-long learners and leaders.

### *Certification*

State of New Jersey Department of Children and Families

License# \_\_\_\_\_

### *Definition of Family*

In this handbook we refer to family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

### *Hours of Operation*

Childcare services are provided from 7:00 AM to 6:00PM, Monday – Friday

School age care will also be conducted at these times.

2:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.

### *Holidays*

We are closed for certain holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Holiday, Winter Vacation, Dr. Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Fourth of July

There will be early closings: *See Academic Calendar for dates.*

### *Admission & Enrollment (Private Program)*

Orientation must be had before a student can be enrolled at **THREE STAGES**

All admission and enrollment forms must be complete and enrollment fee, and first tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

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A registration fee of \$100.00 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.

A one-week, non-refundable tuition deposit is required for each child enrolled. This deposit will be held without interest and will represent tuition payment for the last week of the child's enrollment.

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 months to 5 years of age.

Our process for introducing children to our program is:

Children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate based on special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

### ***Inclusion***

**Early Childhood Education Program** believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

If your child has an identified special need, please provide documentation and/or forms so that we can make every effort to accommodate the need(s) of your child.

### ***Non-Discrimination***

At **Early Childhood Education Program** equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

### ***Family Activities***

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet.

### ***Confidentiality***

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

### ***Staff Qualifications***

Caregivers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism. We have some teachers that have earned a Masters, Bachelors, and associate degrees; some have earned

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their Child Development Associate (CDA), and many with years of experience in Early Childhood Education.

We strongly discourage families from entering employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by **THREE STAGES CHILDCARE AND LEARNING CENTER**.

### **Child to Staff Ratios**

Children are always supervised. All caregivers can take breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

**We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Child to Staff</b>
0-18	<u>4 to 1</u>
18-2.5	<u>6 to 1</u>
2.5-3	<u>10 to 1</u>
4- year-olds	<u>12 to 1</u>
5–13-year-olds	<u>15-1</u>

Source: NJ.gov

### **Communication & Family Partnership**

**Communications.** *Notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child’s activities and experiences at the center. Notes will be placed into your child’s cubby at the end of the day.*

**Bulletin Boards.** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

**Newsletters.** Monthly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters are available at the sign-in/sign-out desk for your taking, ClassDojo or ProCare.

**Email.** We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

**Family Visits.** Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or eat a meal with your child. Signing in is required for the safety and protection of our children. Each visitor must wear a visitor’s badge while on premises and sign-out upon leaving.

**Family Night.** Family night will be scheduled during the spring of the academic school year. This night will include snacks, drinks and fun filled age-appropriate activities for families. Family Night allow families and children time to share, learn, and have fun. Families have an opportunity to be a part of their child’s learning experience and connect with other families.

**Conferences.** Family & teacher conferences occur three times a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child’s strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We



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will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

### *Open Door Policy*

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

### *Publicity*

Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center or on our website. Written permission will be obtained during our parents' intake/registration.

Unless the family indicates that they do not want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for publicity.

## **CURRICULA & LEARNING**

### *Learning Environment*

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

### *Curricula & Assessment*

**Early Childhood Education Program** uses the TOOLS OF THE MIND Curriculum (Board of Education Classrooms), Creative Curriculum (Private Classrooms), As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lessons plans posted in each classroom.

### *Developmental Screening*

**Early Childhood Education Program** uses TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD, ESI-R Early Screening Inventory – Revised, MyIGDI Assessment for Preschool – Renaissance Learning

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(Board of Education Classrooms), ASQ-3 48 month questionnaire (Private Classrooms) coincide with curriculum-based assessment(s), we monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child's parent/guardian(s).

### ***Outings and Field Trips***

Weather permitting; we conduct 40 minutes of supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood one (1) time a day for all children. Children are always accounted for. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child's family.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of childcare programs. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the childcare program as well as during field trips.

### ***Transitions***

Your child's transition in childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced. If your child is moving to his/her next classroom, caregivers will be provided with a classroom status change form to be signed by an administrator and parent/caregiver.

#### ***Transition from home to center***

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time, please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

#### ***Transition between learning programs***

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

#### ***Transition Day to Elementary School (Board of Education Classrooms only)***

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

#### ***Transition for before/after school care***

Children who are of school age may continue with before/after school care at our center. The center will provide staff to ensure that your child arrives at the bus stop for pick up (before

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school) and drop off (after school) in a timely manner. The Supplemental Enrollment Form must be completed and on file with the **THREE STAGES** to be eligible for this service.

### *Electronic Media*

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use but from time-to-time, we may use a television show without advertisements as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator (children 2 years of age and above). All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than 20 minutes per week per child.

**NEW JERSEY** rules prohibit any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos and computers.

### *Multiculturalism*

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

### *Celebrations*

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

Diverse celebrations, Inclusive Activities, Craft Projects, Story Time, Music & Movement, Special Food Days

### *Rest Time*

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly always observe infants by sight and sound and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes.

After lunch, all children less than 5 years of age, participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

Infants will be placed in their crib that meets current safety standards. Cribs will be free of soft bedding, pillows, blankets, and toys that could pose a suffocation hazard. Only a fitted sheet will be placed on the mattress, which should be firm and flat.

### *Toilet Training*

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working

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with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Parents/Caregivers must provide **THREE STAGES** with requested supplies for us to begin toilet training:

1. Pull-ups
2. Wipes

## GUIDANCE

### *General Procedure*

**THREE STAGES** is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

### *Discipline Policy*

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children. A copy of the discipline policy is included in your enrollment package for you to review and sign. **(Parent Receipt of Information)**

### *Challenging Behavior*

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness.

Each student at **THREE STAGES** has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report it to the Director of the Center.

### *Physical Restraint*

Physical restraint is **not used** or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

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## ***Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families***

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

## **TUITION AND FEES**

### ***Important Notice***

All payment and fee processing will be completed by School Administrators. He/she will oversee collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact our school director, Dr. Lynda Wright.

### ***Tuition Rates***

Full-Time Rate (1-5 days): \$220.00 per week for Infants & Toddlers  
\$200.00 per week for Preschool  
\$100.00 per week for Afterschool  
\$40.00 per week for Before care

Wraparound Program: Eligibility - Board of Education Classes (91 South Harrison Street)

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.

### ***Tuition Deposit***

A Tuition Deposit equal to one week of care is required at the time registration is confirmed. This deposit is applied to the last week of care provided a two-week written notice is given. If a two-week written notice is not given when a child has withdrawn

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from the program, the family will be billed for one week of care, which may come out of their deposit.

### ***Payment***

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control. Payment is due on every Friday before the beginning of the upcoming week. A late fee of \$20.00 will be added to your child's tuition if your payment is not received by Tuesday at 12:00 P.M. As outlined in the enrollment agreement.

A non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 is due at enrollment.

### ***Methods of Payment***

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by cash, check, money order, or credit card.

### ***Late Payment Charges***

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance equal to more than one week of tuition. **Late payments will result in the imposition of late payment fees. Failure to pay childcare payments will result in child care services being terminated.**

If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee of \$20.00, will be added to your next tuition payment.

Any payments made will be applied to the oldest charges and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

If payment is more than 14 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

### ***Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges***

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$30.00. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status.

### ***Late Pick-up Fees***

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed beginning at 6:00 PM and will be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up may result in childcare services being terminated.**

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## Other Fees

- From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities or field trips. These fees are due prior to the event, activity or trip.

## Credits & No Credits

- **Families contract for a specific weekly schedule** as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather, infectious disease (except as noted below), or weather-related or environmental issues.
- **Weather-related or Environmental Disaster or Pandemic** – in the event of a crisis during which we are prohibited from operating, families are not required to pay their tuition fees until the school is able to provide a safe and secure environment for reopening.
- **Credit may be given for Serious Illness/Injury** – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child is hospitalized, absent due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit.

## ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL

### Absence

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 9:00 AM, please call us at (973) 672-2430. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

If a school age child will not be attending before or after school care, please notify us at (973) 672-2430.

### Vacation

[A] Vacation days (**one-week per year**) only apply if your child have been enrolled at **THREE STAGES** for a year.

### Withdrawal

A written notice, **two-weeks** in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn. Failure to notify will result in forfeiture of your initial two-week deposit.

### Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.



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## *Closing Due to Extreme Weather*

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on ClassDojo, ProCare Application, Telephone Call.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

## **DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP**

### *General Procedure*

We open at 7:00A.M. (Private Program) & 8:30A.M. (Board of Education Program), Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening, unless you have before care. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in. If you are late picking up your child, there is a **\$1.00 per minute fee** after 6:00 P.M. This fee **must** be paid before your child can return to school.

We close at 6:00P.M. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

### *Cell Phone Usage*

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we must communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

### *Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up*

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. In an emergency a parent/caregiver can call for release authorization. However, the person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy. Also, if a person is picking up a child for the first time and is on the Emergency Release Contact, they will also be required to show picture ID as verification.

To safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after one hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

### *Right to Refuse Child Release*

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally



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impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

### *What to Bring*

- **Infants:** enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least 8 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Toddlers:** enough clean bottles for a day's use (if applicable), eight diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Older Toddlers:** A change of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program (pull-ups).
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **Kindergarteners:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **After School Care Children:** books for homework

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

### *Cubbies*

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby daily for items that need to be taken home.

### *Lost & Found*

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located at the floor hallway closet or a designated area of the school. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

### *Toys from Home*

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. Show-in-tell activities will be placed on the school calendar.

## NUTRITION

### *Foods Brought from Home*

**[A]** We request that you do not bring food from home into our center if your child is participating in our food program.

**[B]** Food brought from home is permitted under the following conditions:

- Perishable food to be shared with other children must be store-bought and in its original package.
- Foods should be labeled with the child's name, date, and type of food.

- Children will not be allowed to share food provided by the child’s family unless the food is intended for sharing with all the children.
- Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially wrapped package that was never opened.

<b>Good Lunch Box Suggestions for a Balanced, Nutritional Lunch.</b>	
Bean & cheese dip Tortilla chips (crackers) Tropical fruit salad Broccoli Milk	Chicken strips Whole Wheat Roll Orange wedges Broccoli Milk
Cheese quiche Fresh fruit cup Broccoli Milk	Whole Wheat Macaroni & Tuna Salad Green Beans Carrots Milk

### ***Food Prepared for or at the Center***

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

### ***Food Allergies***

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

### ***Meal Time***

At mealtime the tables and desk are set with disposable plates and flatware, and the food is placed in small bowls from which the children can help themselves. Everyone sits at the same table. Children are encouraged to serve themselves from food passed around each table. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Monthly menus are posted at **THREE STAGES** and on **ClassDojo**, and **ProCare App**. for viewing by parents/caregivers.

A caregiver who is trained in first aid for choking is present at all meals.

### ***Infant Feedings***

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.

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- Infants are fed “on cue” to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent caregiver/teacher.
  - Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child’s home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child’s name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to 5 days.
  - Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child’s name.
  - Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
  - Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child’s family.
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### *Children 24 Months and Older*

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy. **(THREE STAGES IS A NUT-FREE, PEANUT-FREE ENVIROMENT)**

### *School Aged Participants*

- Before and after school childcare participants will be offered a light snack at each session. These snacks are not a meal. If your child will be arriving before 7:30 AM, arrangements can be made to serve your child breakfast. Otherwise, please make sure your child has had breakfast before arriving at childcare and is supplied with an adequate lunch if you choose to opt out of the food program offered at **THREE STAGES**.

## **HEALTH**

### *Immunizations*

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). Every year (September), we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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## Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before but must be received no later than 14 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

## Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They can participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

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- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

### **Allergy Prevention**

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

### **Medications**

- (A) Our center does not administer over the counter medication to children unless prescribed by a physician.
- (B) All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.
  - **Prescription medications** require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication. All medication must be logged into the Medication Book and signed by the parent.
  - **Non-prescription medications** require written permission and instructions signed by the child's primary care physician. The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.
- (C) **Non-prescription topical ointments** (e.g., diaper cream or teething gel), sunscreen and insect repellent require a note signed by a physician, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid which cannot exceed 12 months.

### **Communicable Diseases**

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophiles Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)

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- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
  - Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
  - Rabies (human only)
  - Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
  - Tetanus (including suspect)
  - H1N1 Virus
  - Any cluster/outbreak of illness
  - Tuberculosis

## **SAFETY**

### ***Clothing***

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

### ***Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play***

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than

100°F or less than 32°F degrees. Additionally, outdoor play will be cancelled if the air quality rating is low.

### ***Communal Water-Play***

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precaution such as making sure clean water is changed after each use of communal play are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease.

### ***Injuries***

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

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## ***Biting***

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

An **incident reports/accident report** will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

## ***Respectful Behavior***

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

## ***Smoking***

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are always non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

## ***Prohibited Substances***

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

## ***Dangerous Weapons***

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

## ***Child Custody***

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.



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## ***Suspected Child Abuse***

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

## **EMERGENCIES**

### ***Lost or Missing Child***

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within **5 minutes**, the family and the police will be notified.

### ***Fire Safety***

Our center is fully equipped with an Alarm System (*Ultimate Security*) that is connected to a central station along with sounding alarms, lights, and rolling cribs.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a **MONTHLY** basis.

### ***Emergency Transportation***

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort (**Three Stages' Administrator**) will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.



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# THREE STAGES

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the **THREE STAGES' Family Handbook**, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the **THREE STAGES'** staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the **THREE STAGES' Family Handbook** that I do not understand.

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Recipient Signature

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Date

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Center Staff Signature

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Date

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## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

### Advisors:

- Discussion of Program Goals – annual meeting for families to provide input into our plan for the program.
- Parent Advisory Committee (**Head Start Program**)– meets 4 times a year to review progress toward annual goals.
- Classroom Representative – serves as a liaison between classroom parents and teachers
- Home and School Committee – meets monthly to plan family events and fundraisers

**Family Events:** We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Open House (Orientation)
- Back to School Night
- Family Game Night
- Holiday Gathering
- Harvest Day Parade
- Moving Up Ceremony

**Classroom Activities:** Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Share a meal with your child
- Chaperone field trips
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Serve as a parent representative
- Welcome new families
- Contribute to class Potluck Meal
- Family Teacher conferences

**Family/Parent Workshops:** Our menu of family workshops changes annually. Below is a list of workshops we typically offer. We try to offer these in the early mornings or early evenings. See the monthly calendar for scheduled topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Positive Guidance and Loving Discipline
- Toilet Training
- Safety in the Home
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Brain Development
- Nutrition and Exercise for Small Bodies
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- Food Allergies
- How to Prepare for a Conference
- Warning Signs for Developmental Delays
- Value of Reading to Your Child
- Everyday Math

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# THREE STAGES

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## CENTER POLICIES

Our center policies not included in this handbook are reviewed annually (September) and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.

### **Policy Title: Goodness of Fit with Probationary Period**

The purpose of the “Goodness of Fit Policy” is to ensure that each child enrolled in our childcare center is placed in an environment that aligns with their individual temperament, development needs, and family values. This policy outlines the procedures for assessing the fit between children and **THREE STAGES**, including a probationary period to evaluate this alignment effectively (probationary period is 30 days).

#### **Policy Statement**

**THREE STAGES is committed to providing an inclusive, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment for all children. Recognizing that every child is unique, we will implement a probationary period during which we assess the compatibility between the child and THREE STAGES. This allows us to ensure that our approach meets the individual needs of children, enhancing their overall well-being and development.**

### **Policy Title: Early Intervention Notification and Support Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children receiving early intervention services are adequately supported within **THREE STAGES**. Early intervention plays a crucial role in promoting the development and well-being of children with identified needs. By establishing clear communication regarding early intervention services, we aim to collaborate with families and professionals to provide the best possible support for each child.

#### **Policy Statement**

**THREE STAGES is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where children, including those receiving early intervention, can thrive. It is essential for parents/guardians to notify the center about any early intervention services their child is receiving. This ensures that we can tailor our approaches and provide the necessary support to meet each child’s unique needs.**