



PARENT

HANDBOOK

Our Vision

To make a positive impact in the life of a Child, as well as reassure Parents their Child is in a safe and learning environment.

Rev. 1215A

*ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS &
ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES*

Enrollment initial Steps:

1. Tour A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL.
2. Return **ALL** enrollment paper work. If some forms seem repetitive, that's because they are essential. Every line on the **ENROLLMENT** sheets must be **completed, including all signatures**. If a line does not apply, mark N/A. If a line or space is left blank, that constitutes **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** as being in non-compliance with DHS. Thank you for your patience in filling out all paper work **completely!** The **Child's History** form is a helpful tool for us, in getting to know your child and family.
3. **All immunizations must be current. We need a copy of your child's immunization record.**

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL must be kept up to date with current information, including immunizations and phone numbers.
4. Acknowledgment of the Parent's Policies and Procedures and of the tuition amount and due dates.
5. Make advance arrangements with the Director for your child's entrance, including the admittance date, registration and tuition payments..
6. In the event that one parent is the sole legal guardian of the child, we **MUST** have a copy of the legal document granting this authority.

CENTER SERVICES & SCHEDULE

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL does not discriminate against ethnic background, nationalities, creeds or sex. All children will be evaluated on an individual basis, to see how we may best meet the needs of the child and their family.

For your convenience, **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** is open from **6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday**. The age of children that we can accommodate is from 6 weeks to pre-kindergarten.

We accept children on a full time and part time basis. Please see the fee schedule for the schedule that best suits your families' needs.

If your child is going to be absent for the day please inform **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** by **8 a.m.** We require a **two-week written notification of vacation plans and one month for any withdrawals.**

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS & ABSENCE

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL requires that the full weekly amount of tuition be paid for the weeks that holidays fall on. Our holidays are listed below.

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL is closed for the following:

Good Friday	Memorial Day	Independence Day	Labor Day	Thanksgiving
	Day / Friday after Thanksgiving	From Christmas Eve - New Years Day		

Back to work January 2nd

HOLIDAYS, VACATIONS & ABSENCE continued

If a holiday falls on a weekend, it will be observed on the preceding Friday or the Monday following. **Please note that days can vary due to yearly calendar.**

Full-time children (those children attending A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL 52 weeks a year, Monday through Friday and paying the full-time rate) will be allowed a maximum of two weeks per year for vacation, to pay one-half of the established fee after 6 months of enrollment. ALL CHILDREN ATTENDING A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL MUST PAY FOR THE NUMBER OF DAYS ESTABLISHED EACH WEEK REGARDLESS OF NON-ATTENDANCE. We require a two-week written notification of vacation plans. All vacations must be taken in five consecutive days.

Part-time children (those children attending A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL for A.M. Preschool and 4 day Programs, before and/or after school basis, holidays and summer) are required to pay the full amount that has been established regardless of non-attendance.

REGISTRATION FEES, ENROLLMENT PAYMENT & REFUND POLICY

The registration fee is \$100.00 or \$150.00 per family. This registration fee is due **upon enrollment** .

All registration fees are non-refundable.

Yearly material fee of \$100.00 is due upon enrollment (excluding infants), then billed annually every August 1st. All material fees are Non-refundable.

A deposit equal to one week's tuition will be held in escrow and refunded only if a month notice is provided and is at the discretion of the Director of our school.

TUITION FEES

All fees are due and MUST BE PAID IN ADVANCE of service by Monday. Payments are considered past due at close on Tuesday and a late charge of \$25.00 will be assessed at that time. Services are subject for termination when payment is two weeks delinquent.

There is a \$25.00 service charge for returned check.

All children must be enrolled in the automated payment delivery method. For more information please view the attached form.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURES

Parents are required to sign their children in and out upon arrival and departure. You need to **sign your full name; it MUST be your first and last name, no initials**. This is a DHS requirement.

Please take your child to his/her classroom upon arrival. You will personally pick him/her up from the class room in the afternoon. **Please do not allow your child to leave the building ahead of you. Your cooperation will help ensure the safety of your child.**

If you wish for someone, other than those persons listed on your emergency information card, to pick up your child, please notify the Director, **IN WRITING**. You can fax this to us if necessary. **Everyone picking up your child should be prepared to show picture identification.** Without proper authorization or identification, we will **NOT** release the child. This, of course, is for the protection of your child.

The center closes at 5:30 p.m. A late charge of \$2.00 per minute will be assessed at that time. Please notify the school in advance if or when an emergency arises and late pick-up cannot be avoided.

TRANSPORTATION AND FIELD TRIPS

Parents are responsible to transport their child to and from school.

Parents will be notified in advance of any planned field trips, along with destination and address, departure and arrival times. Parents will be required to give written and signed permission for their child to participate in each field trip. A Step Ahead Preschool reserves the right to withhold a child from attending a field trip if we feel it is necessary to insure the safety of the child or other children attending. Parents are always welcome to join in the adventure!

HEALTH & SAFETY

For your child's protection, we must be able to obtain medical treatment if needed in an emergency. Upon enrollment, your signature on the emergency card gives us the authority. In case of an emergency, we will contact you immediately, and call 911 if we deem necessary.

In the case of an extreme emergency, if an evacuation is necessary, children will be walked or transported to a safe and secure place. Every effort will be made to contact all parents of the center's plan of action.

A child, who appears ill upon arrival, shall not be admitted. This will be determined by **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** to insure the well being of all children. **Children must be kept at home if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms: fever, undiagnosed rash or sore, pink or red eyes, discharge from the eyes or ears, a persistent cough, vomiting or diarrhea, and/or any symptom of a communicable illness.**

Please notify **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** should your child have a communicable illness. If exposed to a communicable illness, it will be posted in the office.

If a child should run a temperature or become ill while at the center, the parent shall be contacted and an arrangement must be made, **immediately**, for the child to be taken home. We do not keep a child with a temperature. A child must be free of fever for 24 hours to be re-admitted into class.

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL reserves the right to require a physician's statement prior to re-admitting any child.

Prescribed medication will be **administered only** with the **proper medical authorization completed and signed**. All medication **MUST** be given to the office, where it is kept in a locked container. No medication is to be in a child's suitcase, backpack, and/or diaper bag. **ALL medication MUST be labeled with the child's first and last name and be in the original container.**

If you are bringing any over the counter medication, it **MUST** be accompanied by a Doctor's note, which must be dated (must be a time frame stated on Dr's note – cannot say as needed) and state why child is on this medication.

Our staff is trained in First Aid and Infant/Toddler CPR.

MEALS, SNACKS, & FOOD SERVICE

Breakfast: We serve breakfast daily to any child from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

Snacks: We serve morning and mid-afternoon snacks between the hours of 9:00 to 9:30 a.m. and between 2:30-3:00 p.m.
Lunch: We serve well-balanced, nutritious lunch from 11:00-12:00

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL provides all food, with the exception of special dietary needs. If your child has a special dietary need please provide a supplement.

There will be party times, when we give parent an option to bring food items to share. **Food must be store-bought and wrapped; nothing “home made” may come into the center for the child to eat. This is a DHS regulation.**

We love birthdays! We would be happy to help you celebrate your child’s birthday. You could supply a healthy snack to share with your child’s class. If your schedule permits, you are welcome to join us.

NAPTIME

All children are required to have at least one hour of “rest” period. We have nap rolls available for purchase for \$25.00. This will be your child’s own and is used daily. Every Friday, we require the parent to take the nap roll home to be laundered and returned on Monday morning.

CLOTHING & PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Please dress your child in clean, comfortable, washable play clothes to insure that he/she is free to experience a variety of activities. In other words, no good clothes, because we paint and do lots of messy fun stuff!

It is suggested that little girls, **three and up wear shorts under their dresses.**

A complete set of **LABELED** clothing needs to be provided for children four years and younger. Children will have his/her own cubby to hold their possessions. If your child should soil his/her clothing, the clothes will be placed in a sealed plastic bag for you to take home and launder. Then, please be sure to replace them the next day. Spilling and bathroom accidents happen; it’s just part of being a kid. It can be embarrassing for the child if he/she doesn’t have his/her own change of clothes available.

All jackets, sweaters, and personal belongings MUST BELABELED.

For safety reasons: NO COWBOY BOOTS. no rubber thongs or slip-on shoes. The best school shoes are rubber-soled tennis type shoes that tie or fasten with Velcro.

No toys, purses, sunglasses, gum, candy, make up, or jewelry will be allowed into the center.

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL and its employees do not accept responsibility for the loss and/or damage of any personal belongings.

INFANT POLICIES & PROCEDURES

We at **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL**, realize how difficult it is to leave your little one! We will do all that we can to make you feel secure and safe with the care we provide your infant.

Our infant environment has been carefully planned to offer developmentally appropriate activities and equipment to provide a safe and nurturing atmosphere.

Parents must provide adequate disposable diapers and baby wipes. Parents are also required to supply all baby food, cereals, formula and any other dietary needs your infant may require.

Ointments, as well as teething gel, and any other personal item must be labeled with your child's first and last name. Please give these directly to the infant’s room teacher.

Parents will need to provide at least three sets of clothing. If your baby should soil his/her clothing, the clothes will be placed in a sealed plastic bag for you to take home. Please be sure to replace those items as well.

All of our infants are special and unique, their needs and care are very individualized. Each child is allowed to keep his./her own eating and sleeping schedules. To facilitate this process, you will be asked to fill out a **Daily Care Plan** each morning. Please allow extra time to do so. On this form, your infant's care provider will record your baby's daily activities, including feeding routines, sleeping times, and any area of concern. At the end of the day, you will be given a completed copy of this sheet.

TODDLER POLICIES & PROCEDURES

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL recognizes the need for one and two year-old children to explore, to understand limits, to become independent, and also to realize that there are other children in their space! You will hear the staff use the words "this is your space" and "this is Johnny's space," often!

Our environment allows each child to enhance their physical, social/emotional and cognitive development by making many developmentally appropriate choices.

For the health and safety of all children, toddlers are not allowed to walk around carrying a bottle. Most one year olds drink well from a cup. If your child needs a bottle for security reasons, we will allow one bottle at naptime, until he/she has adjusted to our program and is drinking well from a cup. **Bottles must be labeled with the child's first AND last name.**

Your toddler is served table food in bite sizes. We encourage independence in the child feeding himself. However, the teacher is always there to assist.

Parents will need to provide at least one set of clothing. If your child should soil his/her clothing, the clothes will be placed in a sealed plastic bag for you to take home and launder. Please be sure to replace those items.

Children, who are still in diapers, must have at least 5 disposable diapers a day. Parents must provide adequate disposable diapers/Pull-Ups and baby wipes. There is a charge of fifty cents (.50) a diaper/Pull-Ups for failure to do so.

When you are ready to start toilet training your toddler at home, we will support your effort. After training "scores" of toddlers over the years, we can offer some tips to help all of us! *Consistency is the key!* While in training it will be necessary to provide at least three sets of clothing and you will need to provide MANY pull-up's!

TERMINATION OF SERVICES

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL reserves the right to dismiss a child under the following conditions:

1. Delinquent tuition payments.
2. Due to adverse behavior of a child that has a negative effect upon the other children and/or the teacher's ability to administer the program
3. Destruction of property.
4. When the behavior of the child and/or the parent, affects the mental and physical safety of the other children and/or the team members.
5. Abusive and/or foul language from child and/or parent.
6. Incompatibility with children and/or staff.
7. Lack of parent cooperation with **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOLS'** policies.
8. When it is determined by the Director and/or management, that **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** is not equipped or staffed to deliver meaningful and/or safe services to a specific child and family.

If a refund is due, it will be issued within 15 days.

GOVERNING AGENCIES

As you read through this lengthy handbook of PARENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, please be mindful of the fact that we are licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS) and monitored for compliance by eighteen other agencies. Everything we plan and implement is for the health and safety of “our” children and developmentally appropriate for your child’s age group, based upon the latest research. It may very well be a requirement of one the governing agencies.

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL and Montessori sincerely strives to be consistent and in compliance with all governing agencies. We meet or exceed all of the Department of Health Services' insurance requirements. All childcare records are available to the public at 150 N. 18th Ave, Suite 400, Phoenix, Arizona 85007. (602)364-2539.

School’s Liability Insurance Policy

A Step Ahead Preschool carries a complete liability insurance with the Farmers Insurance Group. This comprehensive policy is exclusively designed for the “child care services”.

School’s Pest Control Services

A Step Ahead Preschool has been under contract with the Orkin Pest Control Company to utilize their monthly seasonal services. The Orkin’s technicians would always service our school on Saturday mornings, when we are closed. The Orkin company would submit to us a particular date for their service, which is posted on the parents’ information board 48 hours prior to the actual day of service (It means sometime on Thursday). The book of Orkin is available to our parents upon request.

School’s Licensed Kitchen

A Step Ahead Preschool has obtained a certification from the Department of Environmental Services for its kitchen. Therefore, our kitchen and cleaning facility are regularly inspected for the purpose of compliance. We are proud to state that our facility has received “A” grade multiple times since our license has been in force.

BASIC VALUES & CHARACTER STRENGTHS

It is time for those of us who are responsible for rearing today's children, to instill into each child a passion for **RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, AND REVERENCE!** If all people, everywhere, had only one code to live by, **RESPECT**, no doubt our world would be a much different place! It is our philosophy and desire to teach and live respect.

By having *age-appropriate expectations* and by *being consistent* with, and *encouraging* children, they learn to be **RESPONSIBLE**. We believe that children need to be a part of a team, as well as becoming self-motivated as individuals, eventually reaching one's own potential!

We believe in having **REVERENCE** for the principles that our world was built upon. We also believe in the freedom of choice. If you do not want your child to join in this or any other activity, we will honor your wishes.

OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Providing an effective learning environment requires that children have the opportunity to learn the appropriate materials at the appropriate stages of their development!

Pushing a child too far ahead of their current development level is unlikely to foster learning and may produce frustration and anxiety. Likewise, providing opportunities too far below a child's level will not offer the experiences they need to advance.

Each classroom at **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** uses a hands-on environment. While most young children are "hands-on learners," it is extremely important that many different opportunities are presented at all ages and skill levels for tactical development. The child develops the knowledge and skill through experiencing the concept.

At **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL**, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills are being developed and strengthened while children "play" in our indoor and outdoor learning centers. Nature, gardening, science, library, listening, writing, creative art, music, table activities, reading, and math readiness, blocks, drama, sand and water-play, are among some of our learning centers.

For this reason, much of the learning that transpires cannot be measured on a piece of paper to take home. When you ask your child what they did at school today, most likely they will reply, **PLAYED!**

"So" you are thinking, "What is it that my child is learning?" In the block center, for example, the child is actually learning language and communication skills, phonics, counting by rote, visual discrimination of number/numeral ratios, colors, shapes, sizes, sorting, grouping, sequencing, measuring a unit...and the big problem to solve in the block area...cause and effect!

Problem solving is the highest form of intelligence!

As a part of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOLS'** culture instruction we believe that it is important for children to develop a respect for other people and their likeness as well as their differences. Just because someone is different, doesn't make him or her wrong. We celebrate all families and their traditions!

This brings us to ...how we celebrate holidays!

VALENTINES DAY: Our children celebrate with the exchange of cards and we will do some theme related crafts!

SPRING: Celebrated with an Easter egg hunt. There will be toys and stickers in the eggs, no religious overtones.

JULY 4TH: This week we celebrate America with theme related crafts!

HALLOWEEN: There will be a Halloween party on the weekend before the Halloween with games, crafts, cake walk and non-threatening fun!

THANKSGIVING: The children cook a Thanksgiving feast and invite their parents to come have lunch with them.

CHRISTMAS: We celebrate Christmas around the world.

DISCIPLINE

We find that teaching and role-modeling **RESPECT**, as one of the main goals of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL'S** philosophy, sets the tone and attitude of well being. You will find the atmosphere at **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** to be happy, peaceful, and comfortable.

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL believes in two behavioral concepts: **1) eliminating the problems BEFORE they happen and 2) CONSISTENT guidance, with love.** For this reason, we have designed our environment to provide children with the opportunity to make choices to explore and experience many age appropriate activities within consistent limits.

At times, the child is at school more "waking-hours" than he/she is at home. It is most important that you, as the parents, and we, as the caregivers, work together to achieve this consistency.

There is probably nothing that upsets parents more than their little one being bitten and we understand! With toddlers, this is the most natural reaction they have when frustrated. We will do all that is possible to redirect the child and encourage him/her to use their "words". However, if the child becomes a chronic biter, he/she may need to be removed from the program until the problem is under control.

You will find the staff at **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** always available to discuss any concern you might have with you. The staff and management have, not only the educational expertise, but also many years of "hands on" experience in the field of Early Childhood Development. Most of our staff also has children of their own, so they can relate to you, not only as a professional, but also as a parent.

If a discipline problem should occur, it is the policy of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** to redirect the child to another activity. We believe in using the "**VALUESOLUTION**". By talking with the child on how to solve his/her problem through a value. If a child makes a "poor choice" he/she will select a "time out" mat to sit upon. The child will work through his/her problem finding a solution with a VALUE, either alone, with the teacher or another child e.g.: "was my poor choice the result of the lack of responsibility or respect?" "*We have no bad children, only lovely children who occasionally make poor choices.*" (Like some adults!). If the problem persists, the teacher will speak with the Director. The Director will then talk "with" the child not "down" to him/her. If the Director considers it necessary, he/she will contact the parent. The child always benefits with a team effort made between home and school, to resolve any conflicts or problems. However, if the behavior does not improve, **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** may find it necessary to terminate services.

COMMUNICATION

We encourage you to ask as many questions, as you want. After your child is enrolled, **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** has an open door policy. We encourage you to talk to your child's teachers. Parents are welcome to join in their child's classroom activities and share in the fun at any time! Please discuss any concern with the Director.

IN CLOSING...

A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL management has many years of combined experience and knowledge in the field of Early Childhood Education and School Management. This group of people has remained dedicated to this profession, because they truly care about children and their families!

It is the desire of the management and staff of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** to complement your home and family, not to add conflict! Please feel free to discuss any problem and/or joy with us!

After reviewing this manual we request that you sign and date the last page stating that you have read and understand our policies and procedures. We ask this for the health and safety of our program. The acceptance page will accompany the other forms during the enrollment process.

ACCEPTANCE

I have read and understand my responsibilities as summarized in this policies and procedures manual. I hereby state I am in agreement with these policies, procedures and practices of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** and will abide by the same. I agree also to comply with those requirements mandated by the Department of Health services, as enforced by **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL**.

The management of **A STEP AHEAD PRESCHOOL** reserves the right to change the policies, procedures and practices in this package as well as any forms that could be related to the enrollment and management practices at any time. Written notification of significant policy changes will be given to the parent / guardian who has signed below.

What is written in this parent policies and procedures supersedes any prior or other agreements, understanding, representations as well as past and or future practices, whether written or oral.

Name of Child / Children

Director

Parent / Guardian Signature

Date

Thank you

We are very excited to be part of your family. By combining quality childcare with strong family values together we can make a difference in our future.

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