

COVID Health & Safety Protocols

Steps Academy has always taken great pride in keeping with Alberta Health Services (AHS) Daycare and Out of School safety regulations, and now is no different!

Not only is it of the utmost importance for us to keep you, your family and our staff safe, it is essential to keep our doors open in this time of great need for normalcy and support for all.

Both of our locations were inspected and approved to re-open at the time centres were invited to offer care for Essential care workers.

In the interest of clear communication, we are transparent about our policies and procedures. Should you ever require clarification or have feedback for us, we are here for you.

General Steps Academy Safety Measures

Steps Academy locations are fully stocked with supplies to keep both our staff and children safe! We have sanitizer, gloves and masks, oh my!! We have disinfecting wipes, checklists, thermometers and more!! We follow procedures “by the book” and work very closely with our Health Inspector to ensure best practices are followed daily.

Medical professionals have highlighted the importance of good air quality and proper circulation in buildings, especially with higher numbers of people. Steps Academy has had Hydroxyl Generators in its buildings since opening and, since the pandemic, has placed additional machines in both locations.

Daily Routines/Procedures

Steps Academy is minimizing ALL non-essential visitors into its centres until further notice; currently, this also includes parents. If special circumstances require a parent to be in the centre, we will accommodate on an “ONLY AS NEEDED” basis.

All shared spaces are closed for the time being, with exception of front and back play spaces. These are constantly cleaned with our “Ghostbuster” style commercial-grade backpack filled with AHS approved sanitizer.

FSA families are to pick up directly at their child’s exterior classroom door. Parents or authorized pick-up people *remain outside* while staff gather student belongings. Please feel free to touch base with your child’s teacher about their day, while keeping in mind they need to continue to supervise the remaining children in the classroom. *It is appreciated that if you plan to engage with teachers at the doorway that you wear a protective mask for those short conversations.*

If you would like to schedule time for a more in-depth chat, please let the teacher know. Teachers will then coordinate with the office to arrange a follow-up meeting in which you will receive their undivided attention.

BSA families are to pick up at their child’s designated door as well. This information will be provided to you prior to your child’s start with Steps Academy.

Please ensure all daily health checklists are completed *prior* to bringing your child to the door. Children will only be accepted into the centre *after* the staff has received the health form for that day.

Classroom Safety & Modifications

While classroom set-up varies from room to room, many modifications have been made to mitigate risks in all classrooms.

All classrooms have a minimum of two child sinks for frequent handwashing. Paper towel and Kleenex are kept out of reach to avoid contamination. We also have two washrooms per class so children are never sharing bathrooms with other cohorts.

Buckets or cubbies are provided with each child's name to keep the minimal daily personal belongings they do require separate from their classmates. Food and water bottles must be very clearly labelled and also kept in each individual child's storage space.

Currently, we request that children leave all personal toys, games and stuffies at home. Transferring unnecessary personal belongings back and forth only makes managing the "clean factor" in our rooms much harder.

Tables and desks have been spread out to give children more space to play. Various markings are visible to guide children for sitting in a way that gives them appropriate space from each other.

While there are no shortage of toys, games and activities in rooms, we have removed all items deemed to be of higher concern: craft materials that could be re-used by multiple children, any games and/or activities made from cardboard/paper, dress-up clothes and/or dolls and/or toys with porous surfaces.

Staff & Student Interaction

This is a time of heavy change for all; children are being asked to follow rules very much outside of their usual play and routine. I highly doubt anyone in this field expected to get into this role and have to tell children "not to share toys with their friends" or "don't sit so close to your friends".

Instead of focusing on "Don't" and "No", our goal is to give children as much positive reinforcement and redirection as possible while they are learning to navigate the new general environment rules. We're committed to ensuring children come out of this stronger and more resilient than when they went in.

Meals

Our goal has been to mitigate the risk factors of operating during this time. To date, we have been very successful in implementing strong and consistent protocol that has enabled us to keep everyone safe.

All food preparation, delivery to rooms, mealtime routines and clean-up have been created to minimize risk of contamination in every way possible.

Please remind your kiddos that at this time, there is no sharing of food between friends and that we all need to do our best to give our friends space while eating and drinking.

Classroom Activities & Routines

While modified to ensure safety, all classrooms will still follow daily routines, including morning and afternoon outdoor times.

Staff are providing children with "one-time" style craft opportunities which can be completed by only that child and then taken home the same day.

Favorite activities of each child can also be kept in their personal bin/cubby for the day to come back to, but at the end of the day are sanitized to go back with the rest of the toys and activities.

Staff are working hard to offer several safe alternatives every day. We want to ensure children are having tons of fun while learning, yet still being encouraged to give each other as much space as can be reasonably asked of little ones.

Outdoor Play

As a rule, Steps Academy encourages as much outdoor play as the weather permits, and now is not any different!

We have removed toys that are not suitable for these conditions and have added more new items to offer different activities outside, and continue to keep the children active & engaged.

Play spaces are never used by more than one cohort at a time and are sanitized after each use, before the next group enters. At BSA, where we have over 3,500 sq feet of outdoor play space, groups are free to use the spaces that are clearly separated from each other, though equipment is still not shared between cohorts without first being fully sanitized.

Links for Alberta Health Services for Child Care

Please find below several links to the governing documents required for childcare facilities to follow in order to reopen.

Steps Academy is continuing to work hard to ensure your family and our staff stay safe and healthy in this time. We greatly appreciate your support in working with us to continue to navigate these uncharted waters.

Please know that while staff are taking many precautions to minimize contact and the spread of germs, our goal is to ensure the mental well-being of children and that staff are not sacrificed along the way.

If you should still have a question, concern or feedback on any new policy or procedure, please reach out via email or phone right away. This is a strong learning curve for everyone, and we are truly doing our best to meet every family's needs.

Links:

<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-daycare-out-of-school-care.pdf>

<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-day-camps.pdf>

<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-guidance-for-wearing-non-medical-masks.pdf>

With much gratitude,

The Steps Academy Team