



Tiny Steps Child Care

“Guiding little feet with love and care”

“Guiando pequeños pasos con amor y cuidado”

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Handbook

Welcome to Tiny Steps Child Care!

We're so happy to have you as part of our family. Our program is built on a foundation of love, dedication, and respect, creating a warm and nurturing space where children feel safe, valued, and excited to learn every day.

As a licensed family childcare home in the state of Maryland, we follow the highest standards of safety, education, and cleanliness to ensure that your child's well-being always comes first.

This handbook has been created to help you get to know our program — our philosophy, policies, and the values that guide everything we do. We encourage open and ongoing communication and welcome you to reach out at any time with questions or feedback.

We are excited to get to know your family and look forward to many happy moments together. At Tiny Steps Child Care, *we believe that* every little step leads to big growth.

Sincerely,

Maria Poveda, provider

Tiny Steps Child Care

About us

Tiny Steps Child Care is a licensed family childcare home by the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care. We provide a bilingual (English Spanish), nurturing, and safe environment for children 6 weeks to 5 years old.

Our mission is to support each child's growth through love, learning, and play — hand in hand with families. The provider and Co-provider are certified in CPR, First Aid, and AED, ensuring every child's safety and well-being. At Tiny Steps, every small step leads to big growth.

Our Philosophy

At Tiny Steps Child Care, we believe that every child deserves to be surrounded by love, encouragement, and opportunities to grow at their own pace. Our philosophy is rooted in care with purpose — nurturing not only the mind but also the heart.

We create a bilingual and inclusive environment where children feel safe, respected, and valued for who they are. Through play, exploration, and meaningful relationships, we help each child develop confidence, curiosity, and kindness toward others.

Our program supports the whole child — socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively — with activities that inspire creativity and independence every day. From art and music to outdoor play and hands-on learning, we make each day a balance of joy and discovery.

We believe families are a child's first teachers. By working hand in hand with parents, we build a strong and trusting partnership that supports consistency, communication, and shared growth — one tiny step at a time.

Pre-Enrollment requirements

To ensure a smooth start and compliance with Maryland state regulations, all required forms and records must be submitted before your child's first day of care.

1. Pre-Enrollment Packet

Parents must complete and submit the Tiny Steps Child Care Enrollment Packet, which includes emergency contacts, permissions, and program policies.

2. Physical Examination

A current health form completed and signed by a licensed medical professional is required for each child. This form must be updated as recommended by your child's physician.

3. Immunization Records

- An up-to-date immunization record must be on file, as required by state licensing regulations.
- If you have chosen **not to immunize** your child, please discuss this with us prior to enrollment to determine eligibility.
- Families opting out of immunizations must provide a **state-approved waiver** in place of the record to ensure compliance with Maryland childcare regulations.
- A lead blood test is required for all children at **12 months** and again at **24 months** of age. Documentation of these test results must be provided and kept on file.

Enrollment Requirements

Before your child can begin at Tiny Steps Child Care, all enrollment paperwork must be fully completed and submitted.

This ensures your child's safety and compliance with Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) licensing regulations.

The following items are required:

1. Signed Provider/Parent Agreement & Handbook Acknowledgment
 - Confirms that parents have read, understood, and agreed to all policies and procedures in the Tiny Steps Child Care Handbook and Contract.
2. State-Mandated Forms
 - Includes your child's Health Inventory (medical form), Emergency Contact Form, Lead blood test, and Immunization Record.
 - These forms are required by law and must be current before the first day of care.
3. Permission to Administer Medication Form (*if applicable*)
 - Required if your child will need any medication (prescription and over the counter) during care.
 - Must be signed by the parent or guardian and the child's physician.
4. Deposit
 - A deposit equal to one week's tuition is required to secure your child's space in the program.
 - This deposit will be applied to your final week of care, provided proper notice of withdrawal is given.
5. Additional Forms (if needed)
 - May include allergy or dietary plans, special care instructions, or other documents specific to your child's needs.

Ongoing Requirements

- **Annual Renewal:** All forms, including the Emergency Contact Form, must be updated every year — no exceptions
- **Immunization Updates:** Families must submit a new immunization record each time their child receives a vaccination or booster.
- **Policy Updates:** Tiny Steps Child Care reserves the right to modify policies, forms, or procedures as needed. Any changes will be shared in writing with all parents.

Family Child Care Registration

Tiny Steps Child Care is a **registered Family Child Care Home** regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care (OCC) in Montgomery County, MD. A copy of our current registration is displayed on the bulletin board for all families to review.

As a registered provider, I am required to maintain each child's records and follow all **state-wide regulations (COMAR)** to ensure safety, health, and quality care. Additionally, all families must receive a copy of the "Parent's Guide to Regulated/Licensed Child Care." [Parent's Guide to Regulated/Licensed Child Care](#)

Daily schedule

MONDAY - THURSDAY

Time	Activity
7:30 - 8:00AM	Arrival/ free play/ learning areas
8:00 - 9:00 AM	Handwashing/ breakfast/ diapering and toileting Children wash hands, eat breakfast, and use the bathroom or have diapers changed.
9:00 - 10:15AM	Circle Time and Story Time (Whole Group)
10:15 – 10:30AM	Snack time Children enjoy a nutritious snack while socializing with peers.
10:30 – 11:00AM	Activities in Learning Areas Small-group and individual learning in creative arts, cooking, science/discovery, block play, dramatic play, literacy, sensory play, and fine/gross motor skill activities.
11:00 – 11:45 AM	Outdoor Activities Outdoor play for physical development: running, climbing, ball play, riding toys, and teacher-led coordination games.
11:45 – 12:00PM	Handwashing- Children wash hands before lunch.

12:00- 12:30PM	Lunch time/ conversation time Shared lunch time with opportunities for conversation, social interaction, and manners practice.
12:30- 12:45PM	Handwashing / Toileting and Diapering Post-lunch hygiene routines.
12:45 – 2:45 PM	Nap / Rest Time Quiet rest or nap time with soft music and dimmed lights. Children who wake early may engage in quiet table activities.
2:45 – 3:00 PM	Wake-Up / Diapering and Toileting / Handwashing Children wake up and prepare for the afternoon.
3:00- 3:15PM	Afternoon snack Healthy snack before afternoon play
3:15- 4:15PM	Outdoor play / Gross Motor time Outdoor exploration or physical play (weather permitting) Indoor movement activities provided on rain days
4:15- 5:00PM	Small group or center play Choice time in learning centers: puzzles, dramatic play, art, reading, or sensory activities
5:00 – 5:30PM	Cleanup / Departure Preparation / Story or Music Time Children help tidy up, read stories, sing songs, and prepare for pick-up.

FRIDAY SCHEDULE

Time	Activity
7:30- 8:00AM	Arrival/ free play/ learning areas
8:00- 9:00AM	Handwashing/ breakfast/ diapering and toileting Children wash hands, eat breakfast, and use the bathroom or have diapers changed.
9:00- 10:15AM	Circle Time and Story Time (Whole Group)
10:15- 10:30AM	Snack time-- Children enjoy a nutritious snack while socializing with peers.

10:30- 11:00 AM	Activities in Learning Areas Small-group and individual learning in creative arts, cooking, science/discovery, block play, dramatic play, literacy, sensory play, and fine/gross motor skill activities.
11:00AM- 11:45AM	Outdoor Activities Outdoor play for physical development: running, climbing, ball play, riding toys, and teacher-led coordination games.
11:45- 12:00PM	Handwashing Children wash hands before lunch.
12:00- 12:45PM	Lunch time/ conversation time Shared lunch time with opportunities for conversation, social interaction, and manners practice.
12:45-1:00PM	Handwashing / Toileting and Diapering Post-lunch hygiene routines.
1:00- 3:00PM	Nap / Rest Time Quiet rest or nap time with soft music and dimmed lights. Children who wake early may engage in quiet table activities
3:00- 3:15PM	Afternoon snack Healthy snack before afternoon play
3:15- 4:15PM	Outdoor play / Gross Motor time Outdoor exploration or physical play (weather permitting) Indoor movement activities provided on rain days
4:15- 4:45PM	Small group or center play Choice time in learning centers: puzzles, dramatic play, art, reading, or sensory activities
4:45- 5:00PM	Cleanup / Departure Preparation / Story or Music Time

Curriculum

At *Tiny Steps Family Child Care*, I prepare **weekly lesson plans** that outline the activities and learning experiences offered to the children. My curriculum planning is guided by two main resources:

- **Healthy Beginnings** for children from birth to 36 months:
Healthy Beginnings | Division of Early Childhood (marylandpublicschools.org)
- **Maryland Early Learning Standards** for children ages 3 to 8 years old:
Maryland Early Learning Standards | Division of Early Childhood
(marylandpublicschools.org)

These resources ensure that all activities are developmentally appropriate, engaging, and designed to support growth across key learning domains such as language, social-emotional development, physical skills, and creativity.

Child Observations and Developmental Assessment

At *Tiny Steps Family Child Care*, I regularly observe and document the development of each child in my care. These ongoing observations help guide lesson planning and allow me to identify any areas where your child may benefit from additional support.

- **Initial Assessment:** Within the first 60 days of your child's enrollment, I will complete a developmental checklist based on the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Milestone Checklist:**
[CDC's Developmental Milestones](http://CDC's%20Developmental%20Milestones) | CDC

- **Ongoing Observation:** I will continue observing your child every three months using these developmental checklists. Each child will have a personal folder containing samples of their work, anecdotal records, and observation notes that reflect their growth and progress over time.

- **Family Conferences:** I will share this information with you during family conferences. Together, we can create a plan to support your child's continued development, celebrate achievements, and discuss strategies that encourage learning both at home and in the program.

Parent Conferences

At *Tiny Steps Child Care*, we value open communication and collaboration with families. To ensure parents stay informed and involved in their child's development, **parent conferences are held twice a year—once in the Fall and once in the Spring.**

During these meetings, we will discuss your child's progress, milestones, and areas of growth, as well as share insights about their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Conferences also provide an opportunity for families to share feedback, ask questions, and discuss any goals or concerns they may have.

Parents will receive a **notification letter** with the proposed conference dates and available time slots. You may confirm your preferred time via text or direct communication. If a different time is needed, please let us know during drop-off or pick-up, and we will do our best to accommodate your schedule.

We believe that maintaining **consistent and open dialogue** between families and caregivers helps ensure that every child receives the care, support, and attention they need to thrive.

Photographs and Video Recordings

The parent/guardian grants permission for **Tiny Steps Child Care** to take photographs and video recordings of their child for **educational, promotional, and documentation purposes** (such as classroom projects, newsletters, or social media updates).

This consent will remain in effect unless a **written notice** is provided to the administration requesting otherwise.

Parent/Guardian Initials: _____

Inclement Weather Policy

At *Tiny Steps Family Child Care*, we follow the **Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)** schedule for weather-related closures and delays.

If MCPS is **closed or delayed** due to inclement weather, *Tiny Steps Family Child Care* will **open no later than 8:00 a.m.** Families are welcome to arrive earlier **at their own discretion and risk**; however, this time allows me to:

- Safely clear sidewalks, stairs, and entryways of snow and/or ice.
- Ensure the environment is prepared for safe arrival.
- Allow time for neighborhood roads to be plowed and cleared.

If weather conditions are **severe or unsafe**, **Tiny Steps Family Child Care may remain closed** for the day. Families will be notified as soon as possible by text or phone.

Health Policy & Illness Guidelines

At *Tiny Steps Family Child Care*, the **health and safety** of all children is our top priority. To maintain a healthy environment and prevent the spread of illness, we ask that families **keep children at home** when they are sick or showing signs of contagious conditions.

When to Keep Your Child at Home

Children must stay home if they exhibit **any of the following symptoms**:

- Fever of **100°F (37.8°C)** or higher
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomachache or diarrhea
- Pale or flushed face
- Persistent headache
- Continuous or severe cough
- Earache
- Yellow, brown, or green nasal discharge
- Painful or swollen sore throat
- Skin rash or infection
- Red, pink, or draining eyes
- Noticeable fatigue or loss of appetite

Exclusion from Care

A child may be excluded from care if:

- They are too ill to participate comfortably in normal activities.
- They require more attention than the provider can reasonably offer without compromising the care of other children.
- They show symptoms requiring a **medical evaluation**.
- They experience a sudden change in behavior such as **lethargy, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or a rapidly spreading rash**.

Specific Exclusions Include:

- **Fever:** 100°F orally, 101°F rectally/temporally, or 99.5°F axillary.
- **Diarrhea:** Increased frequency, loose stools not related to diet or not contained by a diaper.
- **Vomiting:** Two or more episodes in 24 hours.
- **Mouth sores with drooling,** unless cleared as non-infectious by a healthcare provider.
- **Rash** accompanied by fever or behavioral changes, pending medical clearance.
- **Impetigo or Scabies:** Until treatment has begun.
- **Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease:** If accompanied by fever, ulcers, or inability to contain secretions.

These guidelines follow the **Maryland State Department of Education's Child Care Guidance for Illness, Infections, Exclusions, and Reportable Conditions**.

A **doctor's note** may be required for your child to return to care.

Medication Administration Policy

At **Tiny Steps Family Child Care**, I am a certified provider trained in **Medication Administration** and follow all **Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)** regulations regarding the safe handling and administration of medication.

Before Any Medication Can Be Administered

- A **Medication Authorization Form** must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian and a **licensed health care provider**.
- Parents must give the **first dose at home** to ensure there are no allergic or adverse reactions before it is administered in care.

Prescription Medication Requirements

All prescription medications must be provided in their **original, labeled container** and include the following information:

- Child's full name
- Prescription date
- Name of the medication
- Dosage and administration schedule
- Route and any special instructions (e.g., "take with food")
- Duration of the prescription
- Expiration date

Parents must also provide and sign a **consent form** authorizing the use of topical products such as **diaper cream, sunscreen, or insect repellent**.

Physical Fitness & Outdoor Play

At *Tiny Steps Family Child Care*, we believe that outdoor play and physical activity are essential for children's overall development and well-being.

We go outdoors **twice daily**—in the **morning and afternoon**, weather permitting. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and in **comfortable play clothes**, as children may get messy during outdoor exploration and activities.

Closed-toe shoes are required. Flip-flops and sandals are **not permitted** for safety reasons.

Outdoor play may include:

- Balls, hula hoops, and jump ropes
- Ride-on toys
- Group games and free play

All outdoor activities are **always supervised**, but please note that minor scrapes or bumps may occasionally occur during normal, active play.

By signing this handbook, parents **acknowledge and accept** that the provider is **not liable for injuries** resulting from ordinary play activities.

Parent Initials: _____

Injuries & Other Emergencies

Minor injuries such as small cuts, scrapes, or bruises will be treated with **basic first aid** (soap, water, and bandages as needed). I am **certified in CPR and First Aid** and follow all required emergency procedures.

An **accident report** will be completed for any injury and shared with parents for their records.

A **daily health check** is performed each morning at drop-off. Any existing injuries or visible marks will be noted in the child's record for transparency and safety documentation.

In the Case of a Serious Emergency:

- I will first attempt to **contact the parent or guardian**, unless doing so would delay necessary medical care.
- If the parent cannot be reached, I will contact the **emergency contacts** listed on your child's enrollment form.
- If needed, I will contact **emergency services (911, poison control, or transport to the nearest hospital)** immediately to ensure the child's safety.

All emergency procedures are following the **Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care (OCC)** guidelines.

Safety Policy

At **Tiny Steps Family Child Care**, the safety and well-being of all children is our top priority. The **providers are trained and certified in CPR, First Aid, and Emergency and Disaster Preparedness**.

Our program maintains an **Emergency Preparedness Plan** with steps to follow during fires, severe weather, or other emergencies.

The Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services conducts a fire inspection every two years. We conduct monthly fire drills **and** evacuation drills twice a year, and all drills are documented.

Emergency escape plans are posted in the child Care areas. In case of an evacuation, our meeting place is at **3202 Weller Road, silver spring, Maryland 20906**

Substitute Information

At Tiny Steps Family Child Care, I have an authorized substitute approved by the Office of Child Care (OCC).

If I am ever absent or temporarily unable to supervise the children, only my approved substitute will be in charge and in contact with the children.

If, for any reason, my substitute is unavailable, I will notify families immediately so they can plan to pick up their child as soon as possible.

Release of Child Policy

At **Tiny Steps Child Care**, the safety of every child is our highest priority. A **Release of Child Form** must be completed during registration. This form clearly identifies the individuals authorized to pick up your child in your absence. Parents/guardians with custody agreements are required to provide a notarized copy that outlines who has legal pick-up rights and under what circumstances.

We expect that a parent/guardian will normally pick up their child. If someone else will be responsible for pick-up, you must notify us either in the morning at drop-off or by calling ahead before pick-up time. **For safety reasons, minor siblings are not permitted to pick up children.**

Children will only be released to the individuals listed on the Release of Child Form. Requests by phone for someone not listed will not be accepted. Parents/guardians may update the form at any time, but changes must be made in person.

Supply List

All supplies must be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. Please ensure that your child's items are kept clean and replenished as needed.

For All Children

- Two complete changes of clothing (at least three if your child is toilet training), including shirts, pants, underwear, socks, and comfortable shoes (such as sneakers).
 - Please also include a sweater or jacket for cooler days.
 - Soiled clothing will be sent home daily and must be replaced the following day.
 - Appropriate outerwear for outdoor play (such as hats, mittens, coats, rain boots, etc.).
- **Sleepwear:** All nap linens are provided and washed regularly by Tiny Steps Family Child Care.

For Children Not Yet Potty-Trained

- One full package of **disposable diapers or pull-ups** (you will be notified when supplies are running low).
- One box of **baby wipes** (minimum 80–100 count).
- Two complete changes of clothing.
- **Diaper cream, powder, or medicated ointment** (if desired, labeled with your child's name and accompanied by a signed consent form).
- **Sleepwear:** a **sleep sack** for nap time (no blankets or crib sheets needed).
- **Two bottles** (if applicable, labeled with your child's name).
- **Baby food** (as needed).
- **Infant formula or breast milk** (if applicable).
- **One sippy cup** (for toddlers, labeled with your child's name).

Nutrition & Food Services

At **Tiny Steps Family Child Care**, we promote healthy eating habits and provide balanced, nutritious meals and snacks each day.

I provide **breakfast, lunch, and two snacks** (morning and afternoon). Meals include a variety of **milk, fresh fruits and vegetables, protein, and whole grains**. All foods are **low in sugar**, **prepared with reduced salt and fat**, and served in age-appropriate portions.

A **weekly menu** is posted on the bulletin board for parents to review.

If your child has **allergies or dietary restrictions**, please notify me in writing so I can make the necessary accommodations.

Sleep & Rest

A daily rest period is scheduled for a **minimum of one hour** following lunch. Children rest on **individual cots** provided by the program. Clean linens are supplied and laundered regularly by Tiny Steps Family Child Care to ensure hygiene and comfort.

Sleep Arrangements for Infants

Infants under 12 months follow their **individual nap schedules** and sleep **in cribs only**. Safe sleep practices are strictly followed in accordance with **Maryland State licensing regulations** and **AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) guidelines**:

- Infants are checked at least **every 15 minutes**, and a **baby monitor** is used during nap times.
- **No soft bedding items** (pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed animals, or crib bumpers) are allowed in cribs.
- All infants are placed **on their backs to sleep**.

- Any infant who falls asleep in a space other than a crib (such as a swing, bouncer, or highchair) will be **moved immediately to a crib**.
- **Linens are provided** by the program; please do not send blankets from home.

Our goal is to ensure that every child rests in a **safe, comfortable, and calm environment**, promoting **healthy sleep routines** and **overall well-being**.

Positive Discipline and Emotional Awareness

At **Tiny Steps Child Care**, our approach to discipline is grounded in **respect, empathy, and emotional awareness**. We believe that discipline is about **teaching, not punishing**—helping children understand their feelings, actions, and how they affect others. Our goal is to guide children toward positive behaviors while fostering emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and confidence.

We encourage our educators and caregivers to:

- **Speak calmly, gently, and clearly**, always validating children’s emotions and showing empathy.
- **Listen actively** and help children identify and name what they feel. For example, saying, *“I see you’re feeling frustrated. Would you like to take a deep breath together?”*
- **Teach that all emotions are valid**, while guiding children to express them in healthy and respectful ways.
- **Use age-appropriate tools**, such as emotion charts, breathing exercises, and mindfulness activities, to help children manage strong feelings.
- **Ask open-ended questions** to promote curiosity, reasoning, and problem-solving skills.
- **Encourage peaceful communication** and help children resolve conflicts through words instead of shouting or physical actions, while promoting reflection about their behavior.
- **Offer choices and independence**, allowing children to make small decisions that build confidence and responsibility, such as selecting activities, materials, or play areas.
- **Recognize and celebrate effort and growth**, reinforcing self-esteem and motivation.
- **Respect each child’s pace and creativity**, allowing them to complete activities in their own way and time.
- **Model positive behavior** and guide children in understanding the impact of their actions on others, promoting kindness, accountability, and empathy.

Non-Discrimination and Inclusion Policy

Tiny Steps Family Child Care welcomes all children and families regardless of race, color, gender, age, national origin, religion, language, disability, or special health care needs.

We are committed to providing an inclusive environment where every child can participate in all activities. Adjustments and accommodations will be made to meet each child’s individual needs.

With parental consent, early intervention specialists are welcome to visit and provide services according to the child's **IFSP** or **IEP**. Providing a copy of your child's IFSP/IEP is voluntary and not required for enrollment.

Does the child have an IFSP/IEP? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are you voluntarily willing to provide a copy? Yes ☐ No ☐

Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program

The **Montgomery County Infants and Toddlers Program (MCITP)** provide **free early intervention services** for children from **birth to 34½ months** who may have developmental delays or special needs.

Families can refer their child if they have concerns about development. Services begin with a developmental assessment and discussion of the family's priorities. If needed, an **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)** is created to provide support such as:

- Physical or occupational therapy
- Speech and language services
- Specialized playgroups or therapy sessions
- Assistance with hearing, nutrition, behavior, and parenting skills
- Support from teachers and service coordinators
- Transportation to services (if needed)

All services use a **family-centered approach**, helping parents and caregivers learn strategies to support their child's growth at home and in daily routines.

For more information or to make a referral, visit <https://referral.mditp.org> or call **240-777-3997**.

Screen Time Policy

At **Tiny Steps Family Child Care**, screen use is **minimal and purposeful**. Children may engage with screens for **up to 30 minutes per week** only as part of **structured, educational activities** such as music and movement, yoga, or story time with visual aids.

All screen use is **intentional, supervised, and connected to learning**, never for passive entertainment.

1. **Children under 2 years old** do not have any screen time.
2. **Children 2 years and older** may have up to **30 minutes per week** of passive screen time.
3. All materials used have **educational purposes** and align with our **lesson or daily activity plan**.
4. Screen time supports **active learning** — I engage with children before, during, and after use by asking questions, participating in movement, and helping them complete related tasks.
5. **Alternative activities** are always available for children who do not wish to participate in screen time.
6. A **timer system** is used to ensure that screen time limits are consistently followed.
7. **Devices are never used during meals.**
8. **Personal devices from home are not allowed** in the program.

Agreement

The provider will give **four weeks' written notice** prior to termination of care or any significant change to this contract.

This agreement will be **reviewed annually** and may be updated as needed. Parents/guardians should keep a **copy of this contract** in an accessible place for reference.

By signing below, I/we acknowledge that we have **read and received** a copy of this contract, the discipline policy, and the *Tiny Steps Family Child Care* handbook.

I/we understand, agree with, and will comply with all policies stated in this Family Child Care Agreement.

Parent/Guardian (1)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian (2)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Provider

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____