



HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

2026 – 2027

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1. Introduction

At Small Steps Learning Difficulties Center, the health, safety, and overall well-being of our students is of paramount importance. This policy reaffirms our commitment to maintaining a safe, healthy, and inclusive environment for all students, staff, and visitors. It outlines structured procedures for managing student health records, responding to medical emergencies, conducting routine risk assessments, and upholding the highest standards of safety throughout the center.

Our approach aligns with the UAE's national framework for health and safety, which is governed by the Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) under Ministerial Resolution No. (32) of 2016 and regulated locally by Dubai Municipality and Dubai Health Authority (DHA). These guidelines emphasize risk prevention, emergency preparedness, safe facility management, and proactive health practices within educational and care settings. By adopting these principles, we aim to foster a culture of safety, accountability, and well-being that supports the developmental and educational needs of all learners under our care.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines and procedures that safeguard the health and safety of all students, with particular attention to those with specialized needs. It aims to ensure the accurate maintenance of health records, the effective management of medical emergencies, and the creation of a safe, supportive environment that promotes learning and development. This policy also provides a framework for implementing best practices in health and safety, while fostering a culture of responsibility and care within the Small Steps community and its partner schools.

3. Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are to:

- Ensure the safety, well-being, and protection of all students at Small Steps Center.
- Define clear procedures for managing health records and administering medications.
- Establish effective protocols for responding to medical emergencies in a timely manner.
- Conduct regular risk assessments to identify, evaluate and mitigate potential hazards.
- Promote a safe and healthy environment through hygiene practices, emergency drills, and first aid training.
- Facilitate clear and timely communication between the center, parents, and healthcare providers to address health and safety concerns.
- Ensure all staff are adequately trained and prepared to handle health and safety issues.

4. Responsibility

The responsibility for implementing and maintaining the health and safety standards outlined in this policy lies with the entire Small Steps community—including parents, administrative staff, the clinical team (Supervisors, therapists, paraprofessionals), and host school personnel. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

Small Steps Management and Staff:

- Ensure all health and safety protocols are clearly communicated, implemented, and monitored.
- Conduct regular training on emergency preparedness, hygiene, and first aid procedures.

- Supervise students require additional support and maintain vigilance in identifying and reporting safety concerns.
- Ensure that staff are trained in emergency protocols and certified in basic first aid.
- Maintain up-to-date, accurate, and confidential student health records accessible only to authorized personnel.
- Collaborate with the host school to enforce safety procedures, including allergy protocols and emergency responses.

Parents:

- Provide accurate and current health records, including updates regarding medical conditions, allergies, or diagnoses.
- Respond promptly to communication from the school regarding health or safety concerns.
- Support the implementation of health and safety protocols at both Small Steps and the host school.

School Clinic and Host School Team:

- Provide timely first aid and medical support, including administering medication with appropriate documentation and consent.
- Enforce school-wide allergy and food safety protocols in coordination with classroom staff.
- Ensure coordination with Small Steps to maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Safeguarding and Risk Oversight:

- Valmiro Fernandes, Head of Operations, serves as the designated Health and Safety Officer. He holds Level 2 International Award in Health and Safety and Risk Assessment and is responsible for ensuring compliance with risk management protocols and safeguarding standards across the center.

5. Policy Components and Implementation

1:1 Policy for Student Handover

- Small Steps adheres to a strict 1:1 policy where each child is picked up and handed over to an adult. No child will be left unaccompanied unless specified in their program or if they are capable of transitioning to the classroom independently.
- Children will only be picked up and handed over to identified personnel or family members. If someone else is picking up the child, the parent should send written notification to the Supervisor/Operations and the guardian coming to pick the child must provide photo identity proof.

Health Screening and Check at Pick-Up Time

- Upon arrival at school, all therapists will conduct a thorough scan and check each student for injuries or visible marks.
- Any injuries or visible marks discovered will be promptly documented on the body map form by the therapist.
- The case supervisor or operations team will communicate with the parents to gather information about the injury or mark.

- At the end of the day, the information will be shared with parents during dispersal time. They will be asked to acknowledge and sign off on the form to confirm their awareness of the injury.
- If injuries, marks, or bruises occur repeatedly, the case supervisor will initiate a thorough investigation to ascertain the cause. This process may include:
 - Conducting a detailed review of the student's daily activities and interactions.
 - Scheduling a meeting with the parents to discuss concerns and gather additional context.
 - Collaborating with the school SEN team, school clinic, and possibly involving external professionals if necessary to ensure the child's safety and well-being.
 - Implementing additional safety measures or interventions as needed to prevent future injuries.

Health Records and Medications

- All health records, including medical histories and current medications, must be provided by parents at the time of enrollment. This includes any reports, diagnoses, and relevant medical information as per school protocols.
- Any new diagnosis or medical condition must be reported with full disclosure to the Small Steps case supervisor and the school clinic to ensure that appropriate medical help can be provided when needed.

Medical Emergencies

- If a child becomes seriously ill or sustains an injury requiring immediate treatment, supervising staff will directly call the school clinic and seek assistance from the school doctor. Efforts will be made to establish contact with parents by the school clinic before any procedures or emergency treatments are administered.
- For minor injuries and illnesses, Small Steps staff will take the student to the clinic. If the student is unable to visit the clinic due to transition issues, the Small Steps operations team or supervising class teacher will contact the clinic to send a nurse to assess the child and advise on treatment options. The clinic will call the parents to seek necessary permission before administering any medication or treatment, considering any allergies.

Field Trip

- All field trips are planned with student safety as the top priority. A detailed risk assessment is conducted in advance, and adequate staff-to-student ratios are maintained at all times. Staff are trained in emergency procedures and first aid, and students are supervised closely throughout the outing. Parental consent, medical information, and emergency contact details must be collected prior to participation.

Sunlight And Sunstrokes

- To minimise the risk of sunburn and heat-related illnesses such as sunstroke, outdoor activities will be scheduled during cooler parts of the day wherever possible. Students are required to wear protective clothing, hats, and sunscreen. Staff will ensure shaded areas are used for outdoor play and monitor students for any signs of overheating or distress. During periods of high temperatures, the school clinic will issue advisories restricting outdoor activities. These directives must be strictly followed to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff.

Dehydration

Adequate hydration is essential for maintaining student health and well-being, especially during warm weather or physical activities. Students will be encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day. Staff will monitor water intake during outdoor activities and ensure all children always have access to clean drinking water.

Risk Assessments

- Risk assessment forms are filled out for each child to ensure adequate safety procedures and environmental changes are made to make the environment suitable to their needs.
- Regular risk assessments will be conducted to identify and mitigate potential hazards within the Small Steps classroom, inclusion classrooms and during activities involving students.

Emergency Closures

- On rare occasions, Small Steps and GEMS Schools may need to close due to uncontrollable emergency circumstances, such as floods or storms. If the facility cannot open due to such an emergency, parents may be asked to pick up their children or keep them at home.
- If an early closure is necessary due to an emergency, Small Steps will make every effort to contact parents promptly. Parents will be requested to pick up their child early or arrange for individuals listed on the emergency form to do so. As these closures are beyond our control, we regret that we cannot offer refunds for missed days.

Food Allergies

- Food allergies must be listed, and the school is a nut-free area. All protocols will be exercised to minimize the risk of contamination.

Contagious Diseases

- Avoid sending children to school in case of contagious diseases or conditions to prevent contamination.
- If the use of masks is necessary, all attempts will be made to train our students to practice safe control measures.

Safety Responsibilities

- Safety is everyone's responsibility. All staff, students, and parents must adhere to the health and safety protocols outlined in this policy.
- Field trips will be accompanied by known therapists and risk assessments will be performed ahead of the trips to ensure student safety.

Additional Health and Safety Measures

- **Environmental Safety:** Regular inspections will be conducted by SEN Team, School Operations and Small Steps Clinical team to ensure that all facilities, including classrooms, playgrounds, and therapy rooms, are safe and free from hazards.
- **Hygiene Practices:** Staff and students will be trained in proper hygiene practices, including regular handwashing and sanitizing, to prevent the spread of illnesses.
- **Emergency Drills:** Small Steps staff and students will participate in regular emergency drills, including fire and lockdown drills, to ensure that students and staff are prepared to respond effectively in case of an emergency.
- **First Aid Training:** All Small Steps staff members will undergo certified first aid training to ensure they are fully prepared to respond promptly and appropriately to minor injuries or medical situations. This foundational training enables staff to provide immediate care and stabilise the situation until medical professionals or school clinic personnel are available. Prioritising first aid readiness reinforces our commitment to maintaining a safe and responsive environment for every student.
- **Medication Administration:** Clear protocols will be established for the administration of medication to students, including secure storage, accurate record-keeping, and parental consent.
- **Communication:** Effective communication channels will be maintained between the school, parents, and healthcare providers to ensure that all health and safety concerns are promptly addressed through emails, body map forms, phone calls, and incident reports.
- **Visitor Management:** All visitors to the Small Steps classrooms will be required to book prior appointments, sign in, and wear identification badges to ensure the safety of students and staff. Outsiders' visits to Small Steps classrooms must be approved by the case supervisor or center manager and will be limited to selected times or activities.
- **Classroom Audits:** Regular classroom audits will be conducted to ensure that all learning environments meet established health and safety standards. These audits will assess factors such as cleanliness, organization, accessibility of emergency exits, safe storage of materials, and overall risk mitigation. Any identified hazards or non-compliance will be reported and addressed promptly. Audit findings will be documented, and follow-up checks will be carried out to confirm corrective actions have been implemented effectively.

Toileting And Toileting Records:

To ensure the dignity, hygiene, and well-being of all students, especially those requiring additional support, designated staff are responsible for assisting with toileting needs in a safe and respectful manner. All toileting routines are carried out in line with safeguarding guidelines and infection control procedures.

A Toilet Record Log is maintained for students who require regular assistance. This log includes the time of toileting, any concerns observed (e.g., discomfort, irregularities), and the name of the staff member assisting. Records are kept confidential and are regularly reviewed to monitor patterns and identify any health-related concerns.

Staff receive appropriate training to handle toileting sensitively and hygienically, and protective equipment (e.g., gloves, sanitizers) is used at all times. Toileting areas are cleaned and sanitized frequently to maintain a safe and hygienic environment.

By adhering to this Health and Safety Policy, Small Steps aims to create a secure and supportive environment where students can thrive and achieve their full potential.

Monitoring and Review

The Head of Operations and the Program Director will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing this policy annually, ensuring it remains aligned with the goals of Small Steps and GEMS Education Schools. This process includes evaluating the effectiveness of health and safety protocols, reviewing incident reports and responses, and identifying areas for improvement. Regular meetings will be conducted to discuss any updates or changes in health regulations and to ensure that all staff members are informed and compliant with the latest standards. Feedback from parents, staff, and external health professionals will also be sought to continuously refine and enhance the health and safety practices at Small Steps.

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