

# 2025-2026

## Parent Handbook



924 Waycross Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45240  
[www.hcesheadstart.org](http://www.hcesheadstart.org)

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## Purpose of Handbook & Declaration of Understanding

This Handbook explains the policies and procedures of the HCESC Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. Please reference this book for questions you may have about our programs. This handbook is available at [www.hcesheadstart.org](http://www.hcesheadstart.org).

### Information to become familiar with includes:

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The Ohio Department of Education Licensing Division requires that we verify our parents have received a copy of our Parent Handbook. You will be asked to sign a form stating that you have received a copy of the Parent Handbook.

As a parent in Head Start, you are committing to these requirements so that your child will have every opportunity to fully participate in the educational program provided by Head Start. Embracing this philosophy of partnership ensures your child's continued participation in the program. As the child's guardian you will attend an orientation meeting before your child can attend class. During this meeting, you will be asked to sign a "Declaration of Understanding" stating that you will commit to the following Head Start requirements:

- Attending two Parent Conferences this school year.
- Having two Home Visits with the teacher this school year.
- Having your child at school every day.
- Having the child arrive on time and remain until dismissed.
- Having a minimum of three Home Visits with a Family Service Worker.
- Completing and reviewing the Family Assessment with the Family Service Worker throughout the school year.
- Maintaining regular communication, collaborating with Family Service Workers to establish family goals, and teacher(s) to support your child's education outcomes.
- Attendance is required daily unless the child is ill.

By signing the "Declaration of Understanding" and the "Parent Handbook Receipt Form," you commit to the requirements and procedures, so your child has every opportunity to participate fully in the Head Start educational programs.

## Welcome from the Director

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Welcome to the Hamilton County Educational Service Center (HCESC) Early Learning Program! The Early Learning Program offers Head Start and Early Head Start. We also serve children who are experiencing special health care needs, disabilities, and developmental delays. Our programs are offered through a unique consortium of school districts throughout Hamilton County and in collaboration with Ohio Early Intervention (Birth to Age 3).

The Early Learning Program offerings are designed to meet the essential goal of supporting each child's early learning and development, health, and family well-being to ensure they are prepared for school as they enter kindergarten. To reach this goal, we provide a comprehensive and integrated pre-K program focusing on the development of the whole child. This includes a curriculum addressing children's cognitive, developmental, and social-emotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; parent engagement; and referrals and follow-up to social service providers, mental health services and local school districts.

An essential part of the program is the active participation and engagement of parents and guardians in education, program planning, and day-to-day activities. In Early Head Start, you will work directly with your Early Head Start (EHS) Home Educator to improve the development of your birth to three-year-old child. As your child enters the Head Start Preschool, you can head to work, training, or school, knowing that your child is receiving high-quality services and learning life-long skills in a safe and healthy environment. You will also have opportunities to learn about parenting, nutrition, and literacy, and to grow as an advocate for your child by engaging in family activities and workshops.

This handbook is designed to provide you with the necessary information and guidance that will further enhance our mutual support of your child's education and preparation for kindergarten. We are so glad you decided to join the Early Learning Program family, and we look forward to a year of partnership and growth!

My best to you and your family,

*Stacie McMahon*

Director, Early Learning Program



## Administrative Directory

### Governing Board

William Ferguson	Board President	513-674-4200
Kristine Heeg	Board Vice President	513-674-4200
Sandy Harrod	Board Member	513-674-4200
Fred Hunt	Board Member	513-674-4200
Melody Staudt- Dargis	Board Member	513-674-4200

### Early Learning Program Head Start/Early Head Start

Stacie McMahon	Director, Early Learning Program	513-674-4285
Jennifer Boggs	Family Service & Recruitment Coordinator	513-674-4318
Frances Edwards	Compliance & Health Coordinator	513-674-4330
Christine Fields	Education Coordinator	513-674-4424
Amy Holland	Mental Health & Special Services Coordinator	513-674-4292
Ashley Holmes	Curriculum Coordinator	513-674-4588
Jacinda Phiffer	Facilities Coordinator	513-674-4331
Barb Scharff	Technology Coordinator	513-674-4293
Diane Teel	Enrollment & Transportation Coordinator	513-674-4326
Brad Walker	Fiscal Coordinator	513-674-4356
Cedric Williams	Program Operations	513-674-4305
Pat Bancroft	Transportation Specialist	513-674-4295
Andrea Blackwell	Early Head Start Manager	513-674-4398
Melissa Duran	Bilingual Specialist (Spanish)	513-674-4348
Rebecca Holekamp	Health Manager	513-674-4594
Crystal Rack	Family Engagement Manager	513-674-4399
Marybeth Standbridge	Data & Community Partnership Manager	513-674-4327

### Head Start Office

Enrollment Office	513-674-4329
Main Office	513-674-4299
Attendance Line	513-674-4328
Nurse Fax	513-589-3077

## Vision

**To provide a comprehensive child development program that focuses on helping children enter kindergarten ready to succeed by partnering with parents, school districts and community agencies.**

## Mission

**Leading the transformation of education so children can learn more...do more...be more...**

## Program Objectives

The objectives are the steps the HCESC Early Learning Programs take to reach their vision while continuing to support the mission of the organization.

The objectives for the HCESC Center for Early Learning Programs are:

1. Evaluate and strengthen organizational development allowing for the delivery of coordinated and integrated quality services while utilizing our internal resources.
2. Effectively use data to make program decisions and manage information using technology.
3. Maximize our funding resources while maintaining quality programming.
4. Analyze program services and implement new ways to enhance curriculum and child development, family services, and parent involvement.
5. Establish and strengthen relations with the community, schools, and agencies to develop valuable partnerships and collaboration.

## **The Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards**

The standards are a clear and comprehensive set of expectations to guide early learning programs. Their purpose is to support the development and well-being of young children and to foster their learning. They are very much in alignment with our TS GOLD objectives, Creative Curriculum, and our beliefs about how children learn and develop.

They describe essential areas of learning organized into 9 domains:

### **Approaches to Learning**

Approaches to Learning covers behaviors and attitudes that impact how children engage in everyday experiences and complete tasks and activities.

### **Cognitive Development**

The Cognitive Development domain focuses on the ability to remember, organize, and use information in increasingly complex ways.

### **Creative Development**

The Creative Development domain includes skills related to expression of thoughts, ideas, and feelings through visual arts, dance, music, and dramatic play.

### **Language and Literacy**

The Language and Literacy domain addresses language development, communication, and emergent literacy skills. It includes Communication, Phonological Awareness, Print Awareness, and Emergent Writing, Listening, Speaking, and Vocabulary.

### **Mathematics**

The Mathematics domain includes Number Sense, Number Relationships and Operations, Geometry, and Measurement.

### **Physical Development and Wellness**

The Physical Development and Wellness domain addresses fine and gross motor skills and health practices that are essential for children's overall development.

### **Science**

The science domain includes inquiry and foundational skills of exploration, investigation, and reasoning in this domain invite unlimited opportunities for science instruction and experiences to be connected to children's interests and abilities.

### **Social and Emotional Development**

The Social and Emotional Development domain involves skills that reflect children's emotional growth and their growing ability to successfully navigate their social worlds through interactions with adults and peers.

### **Social Studies**

The Social Studies domain is interconnected with social and emotional development in early childhood beginning with an understanding of self and expanding to understanding of others in their home, school, and community.

## Program Policies

### **Eligibility**

Children are registered by providing required information including, but not limited to: enrollment paperwork, age verification of the child, documented verification of family's income, proof of residency, and child's shot records. Registered children are placed on a waiting list. Children are enrolled into the program from the waiting list based on the agency's *Priority Scoring Selection Process*. For a child to be placed on the waiting list the entire enrollment process must be completed.

To be eligible for the Head Start or Early Head Start program:

1. Families must reside in designated school districts in Hamilton County.
2. Children must be three years old for Head Start Preschool and birth to age 3 for Early Head Start.
3. Family's income must not exceed program guidelines.
4. Families must meet program eligibility criteria.

### **Confidentiality**

State and federal law requires that student education records be maintained as confidential. HCESC ensures that the appropriate steps are taken to maintain certain information and records as confidential. Individuals having access to confidential information while employed by HCESC are reminded that their legal obligation to maintain such confidences extends beyond their employment and they are prohibited from releasing, disclosing, or otherwise disseminating confidential information or records after leaving HCESC Early Learning Program.

Parents will be informed of the purpose of all program information collected. Information collected will be restricted to the purpose of assisting the children's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. Children's names and health status will not be available for public access, usage, or display. During program review/assessment, members of the review/assessment team may review records to ensure program compliance.

## Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Early Learning Program recognizes that parents are their child's primary teacher and advocate. We also understand the importance of providing information and support to families so that, in turn, parents will be better prepared to take an active role in their child's education and development. Under federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) governs information in your child's education record. FERPA was enacted in 1974 and guarantees that parents have access to their child's education record and restricts who can access and use this student information. Under Head Start Program Performance Standard (1303.21) any educational agency or institution that receives funds under a program administered by the Department of Education is subject to the confidentiality provisions under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

**FERPA** gives parents **specific rights** to their child's education records, including the right to:

- Inspect their child's educational record.
- Request corrections (or deletions) for anything that is inaccurate.
- Consent to or deny disclosure of some of their child's information in certain situations.

**FERPA** also **permits** schools to share information with:

- Another school system regarding a student's enrollment or transfer.
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes.
- Appropriate parties about financial aid to a student.
- Organizations conducting certain studies for, or on behalf of the school, and accrediting organizations.

Schools may also **disclose** information to comply with:

- A judicial order or subpoena.
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies.
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific law (This disclosure of information does not apply to Head Start students.)

## Child Abuse Reporting

Professionals in the early childhood field are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect (Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421). If a staff member has reason (physical evidence, verbal report, behavioral evidence, etc.) to suspect that a child is being abused/neglected or exposed to domestic violence, a report will be made directly to the proper authorities (241-KIDS). A report will be kept in a confidential file at the Office. HCESC Early Learning Programs staff will cooperate with child protective service agencies and will always maintain confidentiality. Our goal is to support every family as they work through stressful situations, and at the same time, assure the health and safety of the child.

## **Family Services**

The role of the Family Service Worker (FSW) is to provide support services to Head Start families throughout the program year. The type of support offered includes providing resources, assisting with creating and working towards family goals as well as supporting parents in preparation for kindergarten and school readiness skills for their child. Families can expect ongoing communication from the FSW, and they will schedule Home Visits throughout the year at convenient times that best fit the needs of the family. FSW's are committed to maintaining privacy and working closely with classroom teachers. They are available to offer support as needed.

### **Who is coming to my home?**

Family Service Workers conduct Home Visits. FSW's complete Home Visits throughout the year to support families towards meeting their goals and provide resources as needed.

### **Are the FSW's going to look around my house?**

No. They are not there to inspect the home. They are strictly there to provide support to families. They review the goal(s) established on the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA).

### **What is the Family Assessment?**

The Family Assessment is completed at the First Home Visit. The form is used to gauge the needs of the family and provide appropriate resources. The Family Assessment will be reviewed at each Home Visit.

### **Why do I have to have Home Visits?**

The program's policy requires that FSW's complete Home Visits throughout the school year. The FSW can be flexible with scheduling Home Visits which could occur in the fall, winter, and spring.

### **How long is a typical Home Visit?**

A typical Home Visit lasts between 30 and 45 minutes.

### **What are we going to talk about?**

We will review your FPA goals and discuss the progress your family is making. The FSW will share appropriate resources based on the Family Assessment.

### **Does my child have to be present during a FSW Home Visit?**

The child does not have to be present during a FSW Home Visit.

### **Do I have to sign something at every Home Visit?**

It is likely that you will sign a form at every Home Visit. The FSW will be reviewing the FPA and the Family Assessment. There may be additional forms/documents that require a signature.

## Preschool Attendance

**Arriving to school at start-time and staying until the end-time is especially important for all children. Children who arrive late or leave early miss opportunities for many critical learning experiences, a healthy and nutritious meal/snack and time spent developing social skills and friendships. Please check with your child's teacher to verify the drop-off and pick-up times.**

To ensure that your child has every opportunity to receive instruction that will support his/her development of school readiness skills, Head Start has implemented the following policy for attendance:

**Parents are required to call the Head Start Attendance Line to report their child's absence within one hour of their child's class start time.**

### **Head Start Attendance Line 513-674-4328**

When parents leave a message on the attendance line they must include:

- **Child's Name & Date of Birth**
- **Reason for the absence(s)**
- **Classroom**
- **Name of person reporting the absence(s)**

If a parent does not report their child's absence(s) to the Attendance Line, they will receive an automated message from Head Start. The automated message will inform the parent that their child was reported absent. If no response is received or contact can be made with the parent/guardian within a ten (10) day period, the child may be withdrawn from the program and a withdrawal letter will be sent by mail to the parent/guardian's mailing address on file. Vacations need to be discussed with your child's teacher to ensure Head Start understands the length of time your child would be absent. Your child may be able to participate in take home activities and online resources.

After the second consecutive unexplained absence, the FSW will conduct a Home Visit or other form of direct contact.

## Late Arrival

Arriving to school at start time is very important for all children. Children who arrive late miss opportunities for many critical learning experiences, a healthy and nutritious meal/snack and time spent developing social skills and friendships. Please check with your center staff to verify specific drop-off times.

Violation of this policy will result in these actions:

- Center staff will communicate the policy to the parents/guardians.
- Center staff will provide a written copy of the policy.
- Education Field Supervisor will be notified and will schedule a conference with the family to reach a solution to improve.
- Chronic tardiness may result in your child missing that day or withdrawal from the program.

## **Early Pick-up and Late Pick-up**

We are sensitive to the fact that unforeseen situations occur, but to provide a quality program, we ask that medical appointments and transportation be scheduled around your child's school day. Please verify any early pickups in advance with your child's teacher. In the event of late pick-up contact your child's classroom as soon as possible.

Consistent late pick-up is considered neglect. The Early Learning Program is mandated by law according to Ohio Revised Code, Section 2151.421 to report child abuse and neglect. Staff will call 241-KIDS or the local police station.

Violation of this policy will result in these actions:

- Center staff will communicate the policy to the parents/ guardians.
- Center staff will provide a written copy of the policy.
- Education Field Supervisor will be notified and will schedule a conference with the family to reach a solution to improve.
- Chronic tardiness may result in your child missing that day or withdrawal from the program.

## **Arrival and Departure for Children not Bussed**

### **Arrival:**

- Parent/Escort must sign-in the child with the teacher upon arrival.  
(To be considered an escort for a child, a person must be at least twelve years of age **AND** listed on the Emergency Transportation Authorization (ETA).)
- Children may arrive no earlier than five minutes before the scheduled arrival time. In some cases, doors are locked until the scheduled arrival time.

### **Departure:**

- Parent/Escort must pick-up the child at the scheduled departure time.
- Only persons listed on the ETA will be allowed to pick the child up. If there is a change in who will pick-up the child, the parent must call the classroom and give permission for their child to be released to that person. That person must have a photo ID to show the teacher.

***Emergency Transportation Authorizations must be kept up to date  
for the safety of the child. Please notify the center immediately of any  
changes. Adding or removing a person from the ETA must be  
done in writing, signed and dated by the parent.***

## Bussing

(Applies only to Petermann Busing Service. School District busing policies may be different. Please check with the school district for this information.)

School bus transportation for the Head Start classrooms is a PRIVILEGE. The bus company nor the program is required to provide this service.

- The bus company must enforce laws for the safety of the children. Please reinforce with your child the importance of staying buckled in their seat.
- Seatbelts must be worn at all times. The Bus Monitor is responsible to see that each child's seat belt or harness is properly secured.
- No eating or chewing gum on the bus.
- If bus policies are violated, the parent and the Head Start Transportation Specialist will receive a written referral from the Bus Driver.
- Continuous violations may result in the termination of bus privileges.
- Parents must complete bus safety training before their child can ride the bus.

- **Bus Arrival:**

Children must be waiting with an adult outside five minutes before the scheduled pick-up time.

- **Bus Departure:**

**Parent/escort must be at the bus stop to receive the child and assist the child off the bus. Parent/escort must sign the child off the bus.**

(To be considered an escort for a child, a person must be at least twelve years of age **AND** listed on the Emergency Transportation Authorization (ETA).)

- If anyone other than a parent is receiving the child, he/she must be listed as an escort on the Bus Service Transportation Request and on the Release Authorization Form.
- If the parent/escort is not at the bus stop, the child will be returned to school and the parent will need to pick him/her up.

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Why must parents/escorts be outside with the child five minutes before the pick-up time?**

A child must be with an adult outside five minutes before his/her scheduled bus pick-up time for his/her safety.

**Why won't the driver blow the horn?**

According to the school bus drivers' manual, the horn is to be used for emergencies only.

**Why is my child's bus late?**

Weather, traffic, maintenance difficulties, and other unforeseen incidents may cause a delay in the arrival of school buses.

**What happens if a parent/escort is not outside when the child arrives home?**

The child will be returned to school for the parent to pick-up.

**Why can't the bus pick-up at my address one day and the babysitter's the next day?**

Bus routes must remain consistent for pick-up and drop-off of children for the children's safety.

## Inclement Weather/School Closings

### Preschool:

**The School District in which your child's Head Start classroom is located determines any delay, early release, or closing.**

Announcements about school delays or closings are made on these radio stations:

- WCKY 1530
- WKRC 550
- WLW 700

Announcements about school delays or closings are made/shown on these television stations:

- WLWT/Channel 5
- WCPO/Channel 9
- WKRC/Channel 12
- WXIX/Channel 19

School Closings will be communicated via text, email and/or phone call.

### Early Head Start:

Inclement weather may cause the Home Educator to reschedule the Home Visit. If that is the case, the Home Educator will contact you to reschedule. A Home Educator may keep the appointment with you, even if the district has announced a closing/delay. Safety will determine if the Home Visit takes place or is rescheduled.

## Participation in Early Head Start (EHS) Home-based Program (Birth-Age 3)

Early Head Start supports and guides families in the intellectual, social/emotional, nutritional, language, and physical development of their infant or toddler to promote later success in school and in life. Early Head Start views the parent as their child's first and most important teacher. As such, we ask that you are committed to taking an active role in developing and practicing age-appropriate activities for you and your child.

- The program year is July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 31<sup>st</sup>. 46 Home Visits are required each program year.  
**Weekly Home Visits** are a requirement for continued enrollment in Early Head Start. Please schedule other appointments so that they do not disrupt your Home Visit schedule whenever possible.
- Home Visits will be weekly, 90-minute sessions with a family member and the child(ren) enrolled in the program.
- Home Educators will maintain a weekly schedule with your family's schedule in mind. If you must cancel a visit, please let the Home Educator know with as much advanced notice as possible. Your Home Educator will notify you if the visit needs to be rescheduled.
- Agendas are based on parent needs/concerns, Home Educator observations, and child abilities.
- The EHS Manager may make occasional staff observations during your Home Visit time.
- Mental Health Staff, Speech & Language Pathologist (SLP) staff or FSW may join your Home Educator on request of the parent or the Home Educator.
- Socializations are a type of structured play group. They provide opportunities for the child to engage in prosocial behaviors prior to entering preschool. In addition, parents have a chance to interact with other families and their children in an enriching and stimulating environment.
- Participation in socialization(s) is strongly encouraged.
- Curriculum goals and experiences:
  - are in line with your family's culture.
  - are built on your child's interests and abilities.
  - promote curiosity and positive views of self and learning.
  - use responsive interactions as the primary vehicle for learning.
  - are developmentally appropriate and engaging.

## EHS Professional Relationships and Boundaries

Your Home Educator will be in your home every week. As your relationship and trust grow, it may begin to feel more like a friendship than a professional "working" relationship. It is our policy that all Early Learning Program staff maintain professional relationships and boundaries with the families they serve. To protect the delicate balance between professional and personal relationships, the following practices are not permitted: attending family social, religious, and life-cycle events such as birthday parties; accepting gifts from families; performing favors for families; bartering with families for goods and services; managing relationships between families; and disclosing non-relevant or intimate details of personal information to families.

## **Cell Phone Usage**

Appropriate social communication and adult/child interactions are key components in preparing your child for success. Whether you are dropping-off or picking-up your child, when you arrive at Head Start, please turn OFF or MUTE your cell phone.

The Head Start teacher's focus is on your child. Likewise, we need your focus to be on signing in or out your child, greeting or saying goodbye to your child and ensuring your child's safety to and from Head Start.

To ensure a safe and supportive transition for your child to and from our program, it is required that you refrain from cell phone use during drop-off and pick-up.

## **Code of Conduct**

The Early Learning Program expects parents to conduct themselves properly. Aggressive, abusive, or threatening behavior is unacceptable and may threaten your child's continued enrollment in the program.

## **Smoke-Free Environment**

All Early Learning Program facilities are considered smoke-free environments. Smoking is NOT permitted, except in designated outdoor areas.

## **Fundraising**

It is the policy of the Early Learning Program that there will be NO solicitation in the name of the program.

## **Nondiscrimination Policy**

In accordance with Federal law, this institute is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice and TDD).

## Health

### Requirements for Enrollment

- Immunizations - All children entering Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start must have a shot record before starting school. Please contact Hamilton County Public Health 513-946-7882 for questions and locations of immunization clinics in your area. ([www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org](http://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org))
- Head Start Preschool Annual Medical Exam - Each child entering preschool is required by Ohio state law to have an annual medical examination. Head Start will provide the form for this examination. The form is to be completed, signed, and dated by the child's physician and returned to the Health office at the Early Learning Program. HCESC requires all children to have a current medical exam before entering class.
- Head Start Annual Dental Exam - Each child in Head Start is required to have an annual dental exam.
- EHS Well Baby Check - Each child entering Early Head Start is required by Ohio state law to have periodic Well Baby Checks. The Early Learning Program will provide the form for these examinations that outline the required frequency. The form is to be completed, signed, and dated by the child's physician. Infant/Toddler Oral Screenings and Vision Screenings are completed at each Well Baby Check Up.

### Health Related Absences

Your child should stay home if sick, so they do not expose other children and staff, and so they can get needed rest.

Parents are required to call the Attendance Line if their child will be absent 513-674-4328. You will receive a phone call if we do not know why your child is absent.

Your child will not be able to attend school if any of the following symptoms are present:

- A temperature over 100.4 degrees. If your child feels warm, looks flushed, or is complaining about not feeling well (no appetite, headache, abnormally tired or cranky), take their temperature. If your child is found to have a fever, your child must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication like Tylenol or Ibuprofen to return to school.
- A rash or other suspected contagious disease. Any rash or illness should be diagnosed by a healthcare provider. If a child is sent home with a rash or suspected contagious disease, a note from a healthcare provider will be required before the child can return to school.
- A sore throat. A sore throat lasting more than 24 hours should be examined by a healthcare professional.
- A persistent cough that won't stop or other problems with breathing.
- A draining red/pink eye.
- Vomited or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
- Evidence of head lice.

If a child enrolled in Head Start comes to school with any of the above symptoms, the parent will be contacted immediately to pick-up the child.

Children enrolled in Early Head Start should not attend socializations if demonstrating any of these symptoms. If you have any questions regarding whether your child should stay home for health-related reasons, please call the Head Start Health Office 513-674-4594.

## Communicable Disease

Teachers perform health checks on the children each day. If signs of a communicable disease or other illness are observed, the parent will be contacted to pick-up the child immediately. Signs observed may include: fever, rash, diarrhea, vomiting, head lice, scabies, pink eye, impetigo, or ringworm. Head lice, scabies, pink eye, impetigo, or ringworm must be treated. A child must be free of these symptoms twenty-four hours before returning to school. Evidence of treatment must be submitted to the teacher. In cases of communicable disease, see your doctor and follow your doctor's advice. Please do not send your child to school when they are ill.

## Procedure for Sick Children

**Whenever a child becomes ill at school and needs to go home, a Sick Child Observation Form must be completed.**

### **Procedure:**

1. When the teaching staff observes symptoms of a communicable illness, such as fever over 100.4 degrees, vomiting, diarrhea, or other symptoms making it difficult for your child to participate in school activities, the primary caregiver will be called to pick up the child from school. If the primary caregiver cannot be reached, then a secondary or emergency contact will be called.
2. The caregiver will sign the child out of school and the Head Start staff will document the time and reason for sending your child home into the Head Start data system.
3. If your child is being sent home for a rash, head lice, scabies, pink eye, impetigo, ringworm, or other concern where medical intervention is recommended, parents may be contacted by the nurse and asked to have the child checked by a healthcare professional, or to verify proper treatment of illness before your child can return to school.

\*If a child or teacher is diagnosed with a communicable disease, an exposure letter will be sent home to all classmates/students the next school day.

## Medication Administration

The parent and physician must complete and sign a Request for Administration of Medication form whenever a parent wishes to have Early Learning Program staff administer medication to their child.

**NOTE:** Only physician authorized medication (over the counter or prescription) will be administered in the classroom.

After the parent has brought in the medication and the Request for Administration of Medication form, the nurse will meet with the parent and teaching staff to instruct them in administering the medication. No medication will be administered until the nurse has met with the teaching staff and parent. Many medications have side effects; therefore, it is helpful for staff to be aware of any medications your child may be taking at home.



# HEALTHCHEK

Healthchek services keep babies, children, and young adults healthy by finding and treating health problems early.

➤ **Prevention services like these are very important:**

- » Physicals
- » Hearing, vision, and dental check
- » Nutritional screenings
- » Mental health screenings
- » Developmental screenings
- » Vaccinations (if needed)

➤ **Looking for more information? Go Online:**

<http://medicaid.ohio.gov/Healthchek>

➤ **When to schedule a Healthchek exam:**

**Babies:** should have at least 8 Healthchek exams by their first birthday.

**Children:** should have Healthchek exams at 15, 18, 24, and 30 months.

**After 30 months old until age 21:** one exam per year is recommended.

➤ **Where to get Healthchek services:**

Any doctor that accepts Medicaid can provide Healthchek services.

Ask your doctor at your next appointment for Healthchek services.

Sometimes, a provider may refer a patient to another doctor for specialized care.

Some services require prior approval.

➤ **Covered by a Managed Care Plan?**

Contact your plan for more information about Healthchek services.

➤ **Learn more:**

Get in touch with your county's Healthchek Coordinator - call the Ohio

Medicaid Consumer Hotline and ask for the Coordinator's contact

information.

Get Better . Stay Well.

# Building For the Future

This day care facility participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a Federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children receiving day care.

Each day more than 2.6 million children participate in CACFP at child care homes and centers across the country. Providers are reimbursed for serving nutritious meals which meet USDA requirements. The program plays a vital role in improving the quality of day care and making it more affordable for low-income families.

**Meals** CACFP homes and centers follow meal requirements established by USDA.

Breakfast	Lunch or Supper	Snacks (Two of the four groups:)
Milk	Milk	Milk
Fruit or Vegetable	Meat/meat alternate	Meat/meat alternate
Grain	Grain	Grain
Meat/meat alternate (may be substituted for the grain up to 3 times per week)	Vegetable (two different vegetables can be substituted for a fruit)	Vegetable
	Fruit	Fruit

**Participating Facilities** Many different homes and centers operate CACFP and share the common goal of bringing nutritious meals and snacks to participants. Participating facilities include:

- **Child Care Centers:** Licensed or approved public or private nonprofit child care centers, Head Start programs, and some for-profit centers.
- **Family Child Care Homes:** Licensed or approved private homes.
- **After School Care Programs:** Centers in low-income areas provide free snacks to School-age children and youth.
- **Emergency Shelters:** Programs providing meals to homeless children.

**Eligibility** State agencies reimburse facilities that offer non-residential day care to the following children:

- Children age 12 and under,
- Migrant children age 15 and younger, and
- Youths through 18 in emergency shelters and after school care programs in needy areas.

**Contact Information**-If you have questions about CACFP, please contact one of the following:

Sponsoring Organization/Center

Ohio Department of Education

HCESC ELP Head Start  
924 Waycross Rd.  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45240  
Phone: 513-674-4357

CACFP Consultant  
25 S. Front Street, MS 303  
Columbus, OH 43215-4183  
614-466-2945  
Toll Free: 1-800-808-6235

**Nondiscrimination**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits.

Individuals who are deaf,

hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## Nutrition

### Meals and Snacks

The Early Learning Program participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children in preschool/daycare programs. This food program is a vital part of your child's educational process. Studies show a strong link between good nutrition and education. The CACFP's meal requirements are established by the USDA. The meal requirements are:

**Breakfast:** Low fat milk  
Fresh fruit/fruit cup/100% juice  
Grain/bread product

**Lunch:** Low fat milk  
Meat or meat alternative  
Grain or bread product

2 different servings of fruit/vegetable

**Snack:** Any 2 of the following:  
milk, meat/meat alternative, grain/bread, fruit/vegetable

### Family Style Meals

Mealtimes are a social affair at Head Start. It is an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversation with small groups. The children learn table manners and skills used at mealtime, such as passing food, serving themselves, and using a napkin and utensils properly. They are learning to estimate their hunger level by serving themselves.

### Food Experiences

Young children are sometimes reluctant to try new foods. Studies show it takes 7-10 times for a child to acquire a taste for something new and different. While no child is ever forced to eat or to clean their plate, they are encouraged to try a bite of the different foods on their plate. Parents are often surprised that their child will eat foods at school that he/she refuses to eat at home. Often it can be seeing other children try and enjoy new foods. Our goal is to offer young children an opportunity to try a large variety of new and different foods in a relaxed and enjoyable setting. We are committed to providing your child with safe and healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime.

### Treats

Some parents have expressed a desire to bring treats to school on their child's birthday or holiday. While this is certainly not necessary, if you do choose to bring treats for the class or socialization, we ask that they be non-edible treats (no food). We suggest things such as stickers, pencils, erasers, bubbles, etc.

There are a growing number of young children with serious food allergies. We cannot protect the children from allergic reactions unless we know exactly what is in every food item served. Some children are so allergic that just being in the same room with an allergen can cause them to stop breathing.

**We want to make sure that the children have an enjoyable and safe preschool experience.**

## Classroom Policies

### **Fire and Emergency Drills**

**Head Start:** Fire and emergency drills are held on a regular basis. Fire and emergency directions are posted in each classroom. A first aid kit is available in each classroom and at least one classroom staff person is certified in first aid. Specific safety rules are followed by children and staff to maintain a safe classroom environment. Inspection reports are posted in each classroom.

**Early Head Start:** During Socializations, safety procedures must be followed. Fire and emergency drills are held on a regular basis. Fire and emergency directions are posted in each room. A first aid kit is available in each socialization room and EHS Staff are certified in first aid. Specific safety rules are followed by children and staff to maintain a safe environment. Socialization Room and Playground Inspection reports are posted in each room.

### **Emergency Response Plan**

An Emergency Response Plan is posted in each classroom and socialization room. This plan provides guidelines for response in a variety of situations, such as environmental hazards or spills, bomb threats, severe weather, etc. If you would like to review this plan, please ask the Head Start staff for a copy.

### **Preschool Emergencies**

If a child becomes ill or if an emergency arises, the child's parent/guardian will be notified. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contacts identified on the Emergency Transportation Authorization Form will be notified. If phone numbers or emergency contacts change during the year, please inform the staff immediately.

### **Visiting the Classroom**

Parents are welcome to visit their child in the classroom. If you would like to visit the classroom, please call the teacher to set up a day and time in advance. Please do not bring other children to the classroom visit.

### **Why Home Visits?**

- Home Visits are visits made to a child's home by the classroom teacher/assistant teacher for the purpose of assisting parents in fostering the growth and development of their child.
- Home Visits can create or strengthen bridges to and from home and Head Start.
- Home Visits are a tradition in Head Start and offer families the opportunity to build one-on-one relationships with their child's teachers. They also provide an opportunity for teachers to obtain a better understanding of family goals and assist families in achieving those goals.
- Home Visits are not all the same – they are personalized for each family.
- Home Visits are held to exchange information between the program and families.
- Home Visits allow staff and parents to address any family questions/concerns.

## Discipline of Children

It is the responsibility of our staff to maintain a safe and orderly environment for each child. In maintaining discipline, no physical punishment, profane language, threats, derogatory remarks, or shaming/put-downs is allowed.

The reinforcement of positive behavior, clear classroom limits, redirection of attention/behavior and one-on-one interaction by staff are the primary means of classroom management. Serious or repeated behavior problems are always discussed with the child's parent. These guidelines will also be followed during EHS Home Visits.

**The Ohio Department of Education Preschool Licensing Rules have specific guidelines around discipline in the classrooms. We will adhere to the following licensing rules:**

- There shall be no cruel, harsh, corporal punishment or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to: punching, pinching, shaking, spanking, or biting.
- No discipline shall be delegated to any other child.
- No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as in protective hug to soothe a child until he/she regains control.
- No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, a box, or a similar cubicle.
- No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, derogatory remarks or other verbal abuse.
- Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat, failure to sleep, or for toileting accidents.
- Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame, or frighten a child.
- Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest, or toilet use.
- Separation, when used as a discipline, shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability. The child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted, and well-ventilated space.

## Who is in my Child's Classroom?

**Daily:** Head Teachers, Teachers Assistants, and Health Nutrition Aides

**Bi-Monthly:** Program Supervisor, Family Service Worker, Mental Health Manager, Speech and Language Therapist, Nurse

**Occasionally:** Coordinators, Compliance Managers, Health Manager, and district personnel

## Transition Services

The Early Learning Program supports children and families during the transfer time into and out of our Early Learning Programs.

**Early Head Start:** Staff will support children and families as they adjust to participating in the Early Head Start Program. When your child is about 2½ years old, the staff will begin preparing the child and family for preschool. Preschool begins at 3 years old. The EHS Home Educator will be with you and support you through the transition.

**Head Start Preschool:** A Mandatory Parent Orientation Meeting takes place before the child's first day of class. During this orientation, you will receive information regarding the curriculum, learning centers, daily routines, gross motor activity, transportation, the role of the Family Service Worker, menus and more. Staff will discuss how the parent may become involved in various aspects of the program.

As young children enter preschool, it is common for them to demonstrate some separation and adjustment behaviors. Most of these behaviors disappear after a short time with the family and staff working together to support the child. If these behaviors do not resolve themselves, we may:

- Discuss strategies to help ease the transition for your child.
- Call you immediately if behavior poses a safety threat to him/herself or others in the classroom.
- Schedule a conference to discuss options.

**Kindergarten:** As children approach kindergarten age, a variety of activities take place to help the children and families prepare for the transition to kindergarten. District information including enrollment dates are shared with the parents. Families will also receive tips and strategies to help their child prepare for the next phase of learning.

## Special Services

Speech & Language Pathologists (SLP), Occupational Therapist (OT), Mental Health Staff, Special Education Teachers, and the Special Services Coordinator work together with the classroom team and parents to ensure all children can access the preschool curriculum and succeed.

We provide support to teachers and parents through the following services:

- Review of screenings completed/Team Record Review with program team.
- Preschool Classroom observations.
- Additional screenings requested by parents or staff.
- Speech/language and mental health resources.
- Crisis intervention and behavior tracking.
- Classroom and home activities/interventions as needed.
- Link families and children with community mental health services.
- Link families and children with local school district, Special Education personnel or Ohio Early Intervention for Early Head Start (Birth-Age 3), if there is a suspected disability.

## Mental Health & Wellness

Head Start mental health staff are some of the many professionals supporting your child's education and growth at Head Start. Mental health staff review many of the application and enrollment documents and may contact the parent or caregiver for additional information. Mental health staff regularly visit classrooms, Early Head Start socializations, and/or attend home visits throughout the program year to support the social-emotional needs of children, families, and staff. As part of the classroom team, they may offer suggestions or strategies to teachers regarding any child in the Early Learning Program. If an individualized child-specific intervention is recommended requiring direct follow-up, a parent conference will be scheduled to discuss concerns and suggest strategies. At that time, an intervention plan will be developed with input from the parent and classroom team members.

The health and mental wellness of all household members is important to the social-emotional development and wellness of young children. The mental health staff are available to meet with parents and caregivers to discuss any social-emotional, behavioral, or mental wellness concerns and can assist in connecting any family member to appropriate mental health resources in the community.

Head Start partners with families to gather information from parents/caregivers, various developmental and behavioral screenings, health screenings, and observations, and uses the Positive Behavioral Supports model to build strong relationships and help all children develop the social-emotional skills necessary to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. Some children may exhibit behaviors which require more specialized services to meet this goal. In addition to the traditional classroom setting, Head Start offers support from teachers, Family Support Workers, Mental Health staff, and Speech and Language Pathologists to connect with various community agencies and school districts, as well as educational options such as Home-Based Services.

Contact information for the assigned mental health staff as well as the Mental Health Coordinator is posted in each classroom or can be made available during a home visit.

You may reach the Mental Health Coordinator at 513-674-4292.

## Family Engagement

### Communication

Communication is an integral part of building relationships between parents and staff. By working together, we can prepare children to be successful and ready for school. The Early Learning Program offers parents many options to communicate with administrative staff, teachers, EHS Home Educators and FSWs.

Here are some ways parents and staff can communicate with one another:

- Conferences
- Family Events
- Home Visits
- Parent Committee Meetings/Policy Council
- Emails/Phone Calls/Texts
- Flyers & Newsletters
- Head Start/Early Head Start Website
- Social Media-Facebook Page

### Head Start/Early Head Start Website

To view a copy of this handbook and to find out more about the classrooms, Policy Council, Resources/Links, Upcoming Events and Agency News please visit our Head Start Parent Website. Visit [www.hcesheadstart.org](http://www.hcesheadstart.org)

### Instant Messaging System

The Early Learning Program utilizes ParentSquare (interactive communication systems that allow us to send out automated emails, phone calls or texts to notify families of upcoming events, parent conferences school closings and crisis situations). For the systems to work, it is vital that we have an accurate working phone number on file. If your number or email should change, please notify staff immediately.

### Partnership Opportunities

Partnering with parents is the cornerstone of the Early Learning Program. The Early Learning Program is committed to developing partnerships with families. Head Start teachers, EHS Home Educators and FSWs form this partnership by visiting each family's home during the year. Parents can also become more involved by:

- Visiting the classroom as an observer or volunteer. Participating in Early Head Start Socializations.
- Participating in Family Engagement Events, Male Engagement Events, Parent Workshops or Community Projects.
- Working with their child at home-on-Home Curriculum Activities or activities provided by their EHS Home Educator.
- Participating in two Home Visits and two Parent Conferences with your Head Start teacher. Participating in three Home Visits with your Family Service Worker. Participating in weekly home visits with your Home Educator.
- Participating in Parent Committee Meetings that take place in the classroom in the fall, winter, and spring.
- Serving as a Representative or Alternate on the Policy Council.

## Policy Council

The Policy Council receives and uses monthly, annual, and periodic reports to approve and submit to the Governing Board various components for the direction of the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. Policy Council is the parents' voice in planning and decision making. It is comprised of parents of currently enrolled children and community representatives and serves as the link between Parent Committees and the Governing Board. The Policy Council does not independently make decisions or have any responsibilities for the operation of the program.

Parents wishing to access Policy Council documents from previous meetings can request copies by emailing Crystal Rack at [Crystal.Rack@hcesc.org](mailto:Crystal.Rack@hcesc.org)

**Head Start Performance Standards require that each Head Start Program have an active Policy Council to receive funds.**

Each Head Start classroom and Early Head Start Educator Group elects a Policy Council Representative and an Alternate. The Policy Council meetings are held monthly on the second Wednesday at 5:30 PM at the Main Office (924 Waycross Road, Cincinnati, OH 45240).

## Volunteer Opportunities

### In the Classroom:

- Help prepare curriculum materials.
- Help with classroom set-up and/or clean-up.
- Interact with small groups doing an activity.
- Read to children.
- Share cultural heritage.
- Share a skill/talent.

### Outside the Classroom:

- Assist with event planning, set-up and/or clean-up.
- Complete Home Curriculum Activities with your child.
- Help gather or make classroom materials.
- Office assistance – copying, sorting, etc.
- Participate in a Recruitment Event.
- Participate in Policy Council.

Ohio law requires all school employees to undergo a BCI/FBI background check and for safety reasons, the Early Learning Program also **requires volunteers to have the same BCI/FBI background check completed annually. Please let your classrooms teacher know if you would like to become a volunteer.**

## Parent Complaint Procedure

This procedure provides a system for hearing and resolving parent and community complaints/concerns about the program. If a parent wishes to file a complaint against the Head Start or Early Head Start program, the following process should be followed:

1. Complaints/concerns should be discussed with the Head Start Teacher or Early Head Start Home Educator first.
2. Complaints/concerns should then be discussed with the Head Start Education Field Manager assigned to that classroom or with the Early Head Start Coordinator.
3. Complaints/concerns are directed to the Program Operations Office and may be addressed in writing or by phone call.
4. The Program Operations Office is located at the Head Start Main Office, 924 Waycross Road, Cincinnati, OH 45240. The office can also be reached by phone at 513-674-4305. The Program Operations Office will review the concern and investigate the issue with the appropriate staff member.
5. Community complaints/concerns will be directed to the appropriate staff member.

A follow-up letter will be sent, or a follow-up phone call made to the parent or community member reiterating the concern and how the issue has been addressed or resolved.

Parents may obtain copies of licensing inspection reports from the Ohio Department of Education, Early Learning and School Readiness Division (614-446-0244).

## **Parent's Pledge of Cooperation**

### **Head Start**

1. I will do my best to help my child get the most from the Head Start Program.
2. I will make sure that my child attends school every day on time and is picked up on time at the end of class. I will make sure my child gets sufficient rest to be able to participate in all the activities.
3. I will try to provide my child with books, paper, pencils, crayons, and suitable play materials at home.
4. I will speak to my child directly and listen when my child speaks to me. I will put my cell phone away and keep the TV off as much as possible.
5. I will value the items my child makes in school and display them for a reasonable amount of time.
6. I will provide as many trips and experiences outside the neighborhood as my time and resources permit.
7. I will attend Parent Committee Meetings and communicate regularly with the teachers.
8. I will show my child that I'm interested in their activities at school by asking questions, listening when my child speaks, visiting the classroom and getting to know the teachers.
9. I will see that my child leaves for school clean, healthy, and properly dressed.
10. I will read all notes sent home from school and return them with my signature when required.
11. I will read to my child daily.
12. I will see that my child has regular dental and medical checkups and receives all his/her immunizations.

### **Early Head Start**

1. I will do my best to help my child get the most from the Early Head Start Program.
2. I will make sure that my child and I are prepared to be fully engaged with our EHS Home Educator during our weekly, 90-minute Home Visit.
3. I will try to attend every socialization and program activity with my child.
4. I will speak to my child directly and listen when my child speaks to me. I will put my cell phone away and keep the TV off as much as possible.
5. I will work on suggested activities between our weekly Home Visits and complete my Weekly Home Activity Log.
6. I will provide as many trips and experiences outside the neighborhood as my time and resources permit.
7. I will show my child I'm interested by being responsive to his/her needs.
8. I will read to my child daily.
9. I will see that my child has regular well-baby checkups and receives all his/her immunizations.

**Let's work together to provide a  
wonderful and productive year  
for you and your child!**

## Resource Directory

Ohio Department of Education	25 South Front Street Columbus, Ohio 43215	1-877-OHIOEDU (1-877-644-6338)
United Way of Greater Cincinnati	2400 Reading Road 45202	Information & Referral Line Phone 211/513-762-7100
FreeStore Food Bank	112 East Liberty St. 45202 1250 Tennessee Ave. 45229	513-241-1064 513-482-4506
Hamilton County Job & Family Services	Child Support Department Public Assistance 222 E. Central Parkway 45202	513-946-1000
Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati	215 East 9th St. 45202	513-241-9400
Children's Hospital Medical Center	3333 Burnet Ave. 45229 3050 Mack Rd., Fairfield OH 45014	513-636-4200 513-636-6400
Best Point Education & Behavioral Health	5050 Madison Road 45227	513-272-2800
Young Child Institute	512 Maxwell Ave 45219	513-751-3133
(WIC) Mt. Healthy/7 Hills	10950 Hamilton Ave. 45231	513-522-4300
(WIC) Roselawn	7162 Reading Rd. Suite 800 45237	513-821-6813
(WIC) Western Hills	4966 Glenway Ave. #301 45238	513-251-4700
<b>The HealthCare Connection</b> Lincoln Heights Health/Dental Center	1401 Steffen Ave. 45215	513-588-3623
Forest Park Health Center at Kemper	924 Waycross Rd. 45240	513-588-3623
Mt. Healthy Family Practice	1411 Compton Rd 45231	513-588-3623
Crossroads Health Center, West	2170 Anderson Ferry 45238	513-922-4271
Health Care Access Now	2602 Victory Parkway 45206	513-707-5697
<b>Health Insurance Assistance:</b>		
Healthy Start/Healthy Families (a Legal Aid Partner)		513-362-2787
HealthCare Connection Representative		513-483-3071

Scan the QR codes for resource information.

