Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Inc.

Head Start/Early Head Start

**PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

**2021-2022**



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[www.cspwal.com](http://www.cspwal.com/)

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Dear Parents,

We are pleased to welcome you to Head Start/Early Head Start. This handbook is designed to begin our partnership with you, by providing information that will allow you and your child to have a positive experience. Our program will offer your child a quality, comprehensive, preschool experience in a safe environment. This program promotes the highest level teaching theory for developmentally appropriate practice in an early childhood setting.

We believe that early learning is the root of a child’s success. Since learning begins at birth, we strive to provide education, experiences and opportunities to assist parents in providing an educational “jumpstart” for your child. We believe that you are your child’s most important teacher and to assist you in becoming more effective, we work with you to build and strengthen your skills.

We are committed to providing quality comprehensive services for your child and family. Our activities are geared toward nurturing the growth and development of our children. This includes involving you in the program and providing opportunities to enhance your understanding and knowledge. We look forward to collaborating with you and your family because together we achieve more!

Sincerely,

# Alexis Wilson

Head Start/Early Head Start Director

## MISSION

## Head Start/Early Head Start provides early childhood development services to children, ages birth to five, and their families. These services build a foundation for developmental learning, lead to school readiness, and improve family functioning.

## VISION

Head Start/Early Head Start children and their families will experience a measurable difference in their educational opportunities leading to a secure future.

##

## PHILOSOPHY

## The Head Start/Early Head Start program is based on the philosophy that:

* A child can benefit from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program that fosters development and remedy problems as expressed in a broad range of services.
* The child’s entire family and the community must be involved in the child’s education.
* The family maximizes the strength and unique experience of each child. The family is perceived as the principle influence on the child’s development and must be a direct participant in the program.

## LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) separately licenses each Head Start/Early Head Start location. These licenses are subject to renewal every two years and are subject to periodic inspection without prior notification.

The CSP Head Start/Early Head Start centers participate in the DHR sponsored program of the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), required by Head Start Performance Standards. Star ratings range from 1 to 5 Stars.

## GENERAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Each location under Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start has the professional leadership of a Center Manager, who is credentialed in Early Childhood Education and experienced in childcare.

Head Start utilizes the TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) approach. The Center Manager has supervisory responsibility for each person at a center location and is the first point of contact for all questions, problems, or communications regarding the Head Start/Early Head Start center. Some centers will have an Assistant Center Manager, who may be consulted in the absence of the Center Manager. In the absence of Center Managers, direct communication with Head Start/Early Head Start Senior Management is always welcome.

## ELIGIBILITY, SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT

## Head Start/ Early Head Start is a program designed to support low-income families. Eligibility is determined based on the child’s age and the family income. Selection is completed based on a point system that targets families with the greatest need for services. Enrollment is based on the number of funded and available slot.

##

## FEES

## All services are offered at no cost to families.

## WEAPONS, TOBACCO, AND PROFANITY/THREATS

* The safety of children and families is a priority. No weapons are ALLOWED on a center premise at any time.
* Each Head Start center is a smoke-free zone. Smoking of any kind is not allowed on the premises.
* The use of profanity and/or threats to staff and/or other families are not allowed.
* If an emergency alert is issued that includes a threat to a Head Start center, staff, children, or to a location in proximity to a Head Start center, lockdown procedures will be implemented. This may include the denial of entry or exit from the facility. Permission to enter or exit under these conditions may only be granted when an **All Clear Command** has been issued by the authorized administrator or law enforcement representative. See the emergency response and risk management plan for additional details.

## SCHOOL SAFETY

## The Center Manager is to be notified of any known sex offenders. Offenders are allowed to pick up and/or drop off their children at school or student activities as long as he/she does not exceed the time necessary to complete the intended task. If the offender was convicted of an offense upon a child under the age of 12, he/she cannot loiter on or within 500 feet of a school, child care facility, playground, park, athletic field, or any other business having a principal purpose of caring for, educating, or entertaining minors.

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Head Start centers operate from **7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m**., Monday through Friday. This time allows for breakfast, lunch, and snack under the USDA Child Nutrition Program. Procedures for receiving children at centers will be strictly followed, including sign-in procedures. Children should be at the center and in class by 8:30 a.m. in order to receive the minimum of six (6) contact hours with teachers. **Children arriving after 8:30 a.m. will NOT be accepted unless prior acceptable arrangements have been discussed with the Center Manager or designated staff**. **Head Start/Early Head Start staff reserves the right to contact the Department of Human Resources if children remain at the center beyond 2:30 p.m.** Excessive tardiness may result in a review of continued enrollment.

## CHILD ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is required for enrolled children. If a child is unable to attend Head Start/Early Head Start classes, the parent should contact the Family Services Advocate, Center Manager, or Assistant Center Manager only, providing the reason for absence(s). Any child who has not arrived at the center within one hour of regular drop-off or the parent has not contacted the center with a reason for absence, will be notified by the Family Services Advocate. The program tracks student attendance, absences, as well as late arrivals and departures. If a pattern of irregular attendance, excessive tardiness, late departures, or if a child is absent for three consecutive days, a Family Services Advocate will contact the parent to assist in re-establishing the child’s continued attendance.

Excused absences from Head Start/Early Head Start classes may include: illness, death in the family, weather conditions, medical appointments, family crises, on-going medical health appointments, or therapy from a health care provider. Reasons for excessive absences will be reviewed on an individual basis; however, irregular attendance may result in the loss of enrollment status. Under this circumstance, the parent will have to initiate a new application for eligibility.

##

## ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Entry and exit areas for parents bringing children to the Head Start/Early Head Start center will be clearly marked. These entryways provide the safest access to classrooms and administrative offices. **Blocking of entryways, even for a short period of time, is not allowed.**

Individuals bringing children to Head Start/Early Head Start centers should be careful in the movement of vehicles on the campus due to children, staff, and visitors entering and exiting the premises. The Center Manager or other members of the Head Start/Early Head Start staff will provide directions for pick-up and drop-off. For safety reasons, parking in spaces designated for Head Start transportation vehicles is prohibited.

##

## RELEASE OF CHILDREN

All children are required to be signed in and out of the center each day by a parent or authorized adult with a signature. Signature must be legible and must include both first and last name.

To ensure safety, a child may only be released from the center or the transporting bus to the child’s parent/guardian or designated person listed on the appropriate release form. Verbal requests for a child’s release, including telephone authorizations, are not acceptable.

A record of all authorized adults age 19 and older picking up a child must be on file at the center, which will include verification of a current driver’s license or a photo ID. If it is known in advance that a designated person will be receiving a child other than the parent/guardian or another person listed on the release form, the center must be notified. Staff cannot allow a child to be dismissed without the proper authorization as described above. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the release form current.

It is our goal to keep all children safe. If an individual appears to be impaired and could possibly jeopardize a child's safety, another person on the authorized list will be contacted for pick-up.

Children transported in vehicles must be securely buckled into car safety seats/seatbelts that meet state requirements. Parents are to take the necessary steps to maintain and use safety seats. If this requirement is not met, another person on the authorized list will be contacted for pick-up.

**COURT ORDERS OF CUSTODY**

Court orders that address the designation of guardianship or parent status must be made known to the center at the time of enrollment, or at a subsequent time as received by a parent or guardian from a court with jurisdiction. Other court documentation may be required.

Both parents are presumed by CSP Head Start to have access to their children unless there are legal documents that specify restrictions. A copy of a referenced court order shall be placed in the child’s file and updated as required.

##

## FAMILY INFORMATION

Please notify the center immediately if the telephone number (cell, home, or work), address or email address of a parent or emergency contact changes.

##

## DRESS CODE

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothing when attending class. Children learn through play and various indoor and outdoor activities. These activities can include but are not limited to sand and water play, painting, planting, and general physical activity on the playground. A change of clothes that will remain at the center is requested in case clothes worn become soiled. All personal items should be labeled with the child’s first and last name.

Persons entering the center are expected to be covered and dressed appropriately. This includes, but is not limited to the wearing of revealing clothing and exposed underwear. Persons dressed inappropriately will be asked to leave the center.

##

## WEATHER ALERTS

The program receives weather advisory through the Emergency Management Agency in each county, weather station, law enforcement, etc. Head Start uses an independent notification system (ChildPlus) for alerting parents and staff to school openings and closings due to inclement weather, including disaster and emergency alerts. A request will be made for each parent to provide a phone number and email address in order to receive notification in case of an emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the notification information current.

The ChildPlus system is set to notify parents in the event of an emergency. The system may or may not send the same message that is sent by area school districts or other media outlets, i.e. radio, television, newspapers, etc.

Should an emergency occur while children or parents are in a Head Start/Early Head Start center, directions for safety will be provided by the Center Manager, using the emergency response and risk management plan.

##

## TRANSPORTATION

Head Start currently provides limited transportation for children only residing in the program service county areas of Hale and Lamar. Transportation pick-up locations are scheduled and pre-determined by designated staff at each center.

Program transportation will be provided for field trips taken by all centers; this includes children and staff only. Parents are not allowed to travel on the agency bus. All field trips are provided at no expense to the child. Parents are welcome to attend field trips, but not required. The length of a field trip should not exceed the regular program hours of operation.

##

## TEACHING STAFF

Each Head Start/Early Head Start teacher is properly credentialed in the care of children and has sufficient academic background in Early Childhood Education to facilitate each component of child development. Each teacher must complete a physical examination, a determination of suitability, etc., to meet the *Minimum Standards for Day Care Licensing* in Alabama. A license is posted at each Head Start/Early Head Start center location.

##

## SCHOOL READINESS

Head Start/Early Head Start programs are required to establish goals for enhancing School Readiness of children. References to School Readiness appear at numerous locations in the Head Start/Early Head Start centers, reinforcing its importance. These goals are aligned with the *Head Start Development/Early Learning Outcomes Framework* and *State Early Learning Standards* as appropriate (Head Start Act, 2007 Revised).

According to the Office of Head Start, “School Readiness” is reached when children attain “the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for success in school and learning throughout life.” The Head Start approach to School Readiness considers the development of a comprehensive set of skills needed to support a child’s learning from birth to five years of age. Children need to know more than colors and shapes, how to count to 10, and/or how to recognize alphabet letters.

In School Readiness, children should know when, where, and how to pursue these skills and use what they already know to learn more and enjoy learning. Each Head Start/Early Head Start program is committed to assisting every child in reaching that level of learning. The approach to School Readiness is demonstrated in five major areas:

1. Approaches to Learning
2. Cognition and General Knowledge
3. Language and Literacy Development
4. Physical Health and Motor Development; and
5. Social and Emotional Development.

##

## HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START CURRICULUM

In Head Start/Early Head Start, the goals of enhancing social competency and School Readiness are reached using sound early childhood development principles and research-based approaches.

*The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool* is used in the Head Start/Early Head Start program at each center. It features research-based content and resource materials that are fully aligned with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Outcomes Framework* and *Alabama State Early Learning Standards*. Using exploration and discovery learning strategies, *The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool* enables children to develop self-confidence, creativity, and lifelong critical thinking skills.

The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool:

* Is based on 38 objectives for development and learning, which are fully aligned with the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Outcomes Framework* as well as early learning standards for the state;
* Presents knowledge-building and daily practice resources in tandem, facilitating the “what,” “why” and “how” of Early Childhood Education;
* Offers daily opportunities for Head Start teachers to individualize instruction, meeting the needs of each learner;
* Addresses all the important areas of learning, from social-emotional and math to technology and the arts, and incorporates the learning activities throughout the day;
* Offers daily, built-in opportunities for observation, helping teachers and administrators clearly see the strong relationship between curriculum and assessment; and
* Contains guidance for working with the spectrum of learners, including advanced learners and children with disabilities.

##

## EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Extended Learning Activities will be sent home weekly with the goal of providing parental engagement in promoting the child’s physical, social-emotional and cognitive growth. These activities reinforce the in-class learning experiences of the child and are developmentally age-appropriate (DAP) for the child. They include specific directions to the parent for providing this assistance, with the classroom teacher providing all materials. Completed activity sheets are returned to the classroom teacher weekly. Extended learning activities are a crucial component of Head Start.

##

## THE HEAD START CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms, children have opportunities to:

* Develop a positive self-image;
* Work toward the goal of self-discipline;
* Develop the ability to work and play cooperatively with other children;
* Develop independence and self-help skills;
* Develop sensory perceptions;
* Develop listening skills; and
* Expand vocabulary and language skills.

Head Start/Early Head Start takes pride in creating a unique classroom environment where a child is:

* Free to explore;
* Self-paced in learning;
* Encouraged to make interrelated discoveries about his physical, cultural, and social environment; and
* Encouraged to make acceptable judgments in group settings.

The use of cell phones by staff, parents and volunteers is prohibited while in the classroom.

##

## VIRTUAL SERVICE DELIVERY

## In the event of center closure due to emergencies, if feasible, the virtual service delivery option will be implemented.

## SCREENINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

In collaboration with families, each enrolled child in Head Start/Early Head Start will receive a comprehensive developmental screening to identify concerns regarding a child’s developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills. The screenings are conducted by staff or other health professionals. This information is gathered during the first 45 days of enrollment with follow-up, as needed, and used in assuring minimal hindrances to development and that appropriate incremental learning occurs.

If developmental delays are discovered through screenings, parents will be notified of recommended follow-up actions, which may include additional evaluations by outside specialists or providers.

##

## HOME VISITS

Home visits are conducted twice yearly by the child’s teacher to assist in any educational or family concerns pertaining to each child’s development. Family Services Advocates will make home visits, as appropriate, to assist in reaching family goals and to ensure the safety of families when individuals are unable to be reached through other methods of communication.

##

## PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held for each Head Start/Early Head Start child following the assessment checkpoint period, three times annually for Head Start and four times annually for Early Head Start. At these conferences, the child’s assessments and developmental progress will be discussed. Teachers will also demonstrate other ways to provide complementing learning activities, which promote School Readiness.

##

## CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The use of corporal punishment and/or total isolation of a child is strictly prohibited in Head Start. Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force as a form of discipline. This includes spanking, slapping, pinching, jerking, pulling hair, etc. Isolation refers to separating the child from normal association with classroom activities. Isolation in which the child is left totally unattended is unacceptable. Using the deprivation of meals is also forbidden. The use of verbal abuse is not allowed in Head Start. This includes yelling, embarrassing or talking down to a child in any way. This is a form of emotional abuse and will not be tolerated.

##

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

At no time will a parent or any other person ever hit, slap, jerk, shake or yell at a child on Head Start property. All adults must follow the corporal punishment rules and the child abuse law. If any Head Start personnel observes any abuse, he or she will report it to the child abuse investigator immediately.

It is the responsibility, by law, of the Head Start personnel to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Human Resources, in accordance with State Law and Head Start Program Performance Standards. Head Start will maintain the confidentiality of records concerning child abuse and neglect.

##

## NUTRITION

Providing nutritional meals to children is a fundamental Head Start/Early Head Start service. Working with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) ensures all enrolled children receive one-half to two-thirds of their daily nutritional needs at no cost to families. Head Start/Early Head Start children are served meals in a “family style” setting, which means that staff will eat with the children, engaging them in mindful eating that promotes healthy choices and broadens their food preferences. Meals are prepared through contractors. All meals provided meet dietary standards and portions.

The program fosters child and family development by providing nutrition education and activities in the classroom monthly. The objective is to promote positive eating habits and a healthy lifestyle in the lives of children and families. Menus are available to all parents and posted in each center. The program makes accommodations for special dietary needs and/or food allergies with documentation provided by a physician.

**Outside food of any kind is prohibited.** Birthday celebrations will be held on the last day of each month.

## CHILD AND FAMILY HEALTH

Head Start/Early Head Start programs assist families in accessing adequate health services and other community resources. All family members are encouraged to have a medical and dental home. Parents are provided with information related to immunizations and vaccines, including but not limited to influenza.

The program provides a comprehensive health services support program, which includes prompt and proper health and dental screenings and treatments.

Health coverage should be obtained by the parents for each Head Start/Early Head Start student. Medicaid and ALL/KIDS applications are available to families at each Head Start/ Early Head Start center location or upon request. A Family Services Advocate may assist in the completion of these forms. Requirements are based on the Early, Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPDST) schedule.

* A complete physical is required for each Head Start/Early Head Start child. The forms for completion are available at each Head Start/Early Head Start center. Should a parent be unable to obtain the physicals, the Family Services Advocate may provide assistance in accessing a provider.
* Follow-up treatments recommended by health and dental professionals are required for each Head Start/Early Head Start child. Parents are encouraged to keep all appointments.
* Classroom teachers perform health checks daily. Parents will be notified immediately of any concerns. The purpose of the daily health check is tomonitor for evidence of illness or communicable diseases. Parents may be notified for pick-up, if the child appears to be ill, and a *Sick Notice* will be issued to parents, detailing when the child can return to the center.
* Children with head lice or nits will not be admitted to the classroom**.** They will be immediately removed from the classroom if either of these conditions is discovered; the parent will be notified for pick-up and should not return to the center until the condition is resolved.
* The *Authorization to Administer Medication form* must be signed by a medical provider and given to a Family Services Advocate to allow the medication to be administered in a center. Medication may be retained at the center in its original container, clearly showing the child’s name. This information is to be updated each program term. Over-the-counter medicines may not be administered to children by center staff.

##

## PLAYGROUND SAFETY

The program requires that children be within the visual and physical supervision of staff while on center premises, including the playground. The playground areas and equipment will vary according to age-appropriateness for use by the children. Each playground is inspected by a teacher or other designated staff person each day and before each play session. Outside play may be teacher-directed or free play by the children. Any injury to a child while in play will be reported to the parent immediately.

## DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

The developmental services component is designed to identify, educate and assist families facing challenges. As a mandate of the federal grant, ten (10) percent of Head Start/Early Head Start enrollment is comprised of children with special needs. Special needs can include developmental delays and impairments which limit their ability to see, hear, speak or move. The term “special needs” should not be frowned upon. In many cases, early detection of developmental challenges leads to correction and/or improvement prior to entry into kindergarten.

## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental wellness is an important part of early childhood education. The mental health services offered through the program aim to promote mental wellness and help parents understand mental health issues. Head Start/Early Head Start is required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning.

* If a child is disruptive in a classroom, the teacher will attempt to manage or modify the child’s behavior.
* If normal classroom behavior management techniques (redirection, verbal warnings, praise for appropriate choices, etc.) are ineffective with a disruptive child, a conference between parents, teaching staff, Center Manager, and the Mental Health Coordinator, will be arranged to educate, understand, and determine a suitable solution that will benefit the child and family. The Mental Health Coordinator in conjunction with the classroom teachers will create an Individual Service Plan, outlining strategies to address concerns.
* If undesired behaviors continue after conferencing and implementation of the Individual Service Plan, center staff may make a written referral, which might include securing the services of a mental health professional or other third-party observer in the classroom setting, who may offer recommendations. Parents are invited and encouraged to meet the consulting professional and to provide input toward solutions.
* Parent participation is expected and required in each step of the intervention process. The goal is always to obtain the best outcome for the child. The child’s continued participation in the program may be at risk without parental cooperation.

##

## GOVERNING BOARD, POLICY COUNCIL, AND PARENT COMMITTEES

Each Head Start/Early Head Start location has a parent committee that meets regularly to consider program matters and to enhance parent engagement in child development and reaching family goals. Officers of each parent committee are elected annually by the parents and coordinated by the Parent, Family and Community Engagement Coordinator. Two (2) members of the parent committee will also serve on the Head Start Policy Council, composed of parents of enrolled children and community representatives from a center location. The Policy Council meets bi-monthly, considers the plan of program operations, the selection of Head Start personnel for employment, and the approval of various Head Start acquisitions and documents. The members of the Policy Council do not have jurisdiction over the daily operations of a Head Start center. The actions of the Policy Council are submitted as recommendations to the Community Service Programs of West Alabama, Inc. Board of Directors, the Program Grantee, which meets bi-monthly.

##

## PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parent, family and community engagement is about building relationships with families that support family well-being; supporting strong relationships between parents and their children; and nurturing ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a roadmap for progress in achieving the types of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. Family Services Advocates focus on building collaborative partnerships with the parents and the community in establishing mutual trust and identification of goals, strengths, and services to children and families. The partnership is initiated by completing the following:

* + *Family Assessment*
	+ *Family Development Plan/Partnership Agreement*

Family Services Advocates are available to provide current and comprehensive information about community resources including health, dental, and vision care.

Parents and other family members are encouraged and expected to take an active role in the child’s learning. Families are engaged as equal partners in their children’s learning and development. Staff and families work together to build strong relationships that support information-sharing about children’s learning and developmental progress.

Parents are encouraged and expected to volunteer as often as possible, including a combination of classroom, center, and other activities. Head Start parents are expected to engage in activities with their children to enhance the child’s learning. The engagement of fathers and other male figures are strongly encouraged to participate.

Community members are needed and encouraged at Head Start/Early Head Start. Any volunteers under the age of 19 must be accompanied by an authorized supervisory figure. In order to keep our children safe, all volunteers must follow the guidelines and procedures outlined by the program. All volunteers are required to sign-in.

All regular volunteers must complete the following:

1. Complete a volunteer application.
2. Complete required clearances
	* TB Skin Test
	* Child Abuse and Neglect
	* Sex Offender
	* Background Check
3. Complete orientation

All volunteers must adhere to the following:

1. Follow all program guidelines
2. Enter through the designated main entrance
3. Sign-in
4. Document volunteer time
5. Younger children are NOT allowed in the center while volunteering

##

## IN-KIND/DONATIONS

Head Start/Early Head Start is a federally funded program. In accordance with section 640(b) of the Head Start Act, federal financial assistance to a grantee (CSP) will not exceed 80 percent of the approved total [program costs.](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/_link) A grantee must contribute twenty (20) percent as non-federal match (in-kind) each [budget period](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/_link).

In-Kind is another word for donations. For every dollar that is granted to the program, we must contribute twenty percent. For every $1.00 that is spent we must have $0.25 to match. Parents play a vital role in the program being able to meet this requirement. Listed below are ways you can assist.

* Donate supplies to the center
* Volunteer at the center
* Complete weekly Extended Learning Activities
* Become a member of the Parent Committee or Policy Council
* Participation in male engagement activities

##

## SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Special activities are designed for both children and families:

* End-of-the-year celebrations will be planned with fun and developmentally appropriate activities.
* Field trips are planned by center staff and complement the objectives of the Head Start curriculum. Participating children must submit a signed permission slip and parents are encouraged to attend field trips. Field trips are not provided for Early Head Start Children.
* Graduation ceremonies are NOT permitted. These practices have been determined to be inappropriate for this age group.
* Student photographs by a professional are permitted, however, this activity must be the sole responsibility of parent groups and be conducted outside of program instruction time. Head Start/Early Head Start staff cannot initiate financial transactions, including receipts or retention of money from parents or other sources for such activities or events.
* Personal photographs or videos of children, not taken by professional photographers or by Head Start/Early Head Start staff are not permitted and **under no circumstances may such photos or videos be posted on any social media platform.**
* Neither fund-raising nor other charges for participation in activities may be mandatory for children or families.

##

## GRIEVANCE

A grievance is defined as and is not limited to a parent or community person’s feeling of dissatisfaction with respect to screening and selection of students, hiring procedures, discrimination, parent and staff relationships, child abuse and neglect. It is the responsibility of the Center Manager (unless the grievance is against him or her, then it goes to the Head Start Director) to hear promptly and courteously all grievances by a parent or a community person, to clarify misunderstandings and address complaints.

Procedure for filing a grievance:

* Step 1: The Center Manager, along with any appropriate staff will meet with the complainant within ten (10) days of the occurrence in order to resolve that matter in a timely manner.
* Step 2: If the matter cannot be resolved, the grievant has five (5) days to make a complaint in writing to the Head Start Director (unless the grievance is against him or her, then it goes to the Executive Director). The Head Start Director has seven (7) days to submit an answer to the grievance in writing. If the answer is not satisfactory, a formal grievance may be submitted to the Chairperson of the Policy Council within five (5) days.
* Step 3: The Policy Council Chairperson has fifteen (15) days to review and forward the grievance to the Grievance Committee of the Policy Council. The Committee will investigate and hear the grievance and respond within fifteen (15) days. The grievant has seven (7) days to prepare for a hearing. The Policy Council will approve or disapprove the decision of the Committee. The grievant will be notified within two (2) weeks of the Policy Council’s decision.

If the parent or community person feels that the decision of the Grievance Committee is unsatisfactory or feels he or she received unjust treatment, the individual has the right to appeal the decision. The appeal request must be made within ten (10) days to the Executive Director, stating that the proper procedures were not followed, that there was some violation of federal requirements or that the grievance received unfair consideration.

Each written response to the grievance that has been made should include the name and address of the next person to contact if the grievant finds the response to be unsatisfactory.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Requested child and family information is used for purposes of determining child or family participant eligibility, enrollment/placement, verifying guardian status, and communication with designated family representatives. This information is for official and internal use only. Child and family information is never permitted to be distributed or made available to any person who does not meet the description above, except by an order of a court with jurisdiction over the child or family.

All child and family information is retained in secure files or through a secure program information system. Contents of such files will not be altered without the concurrence of guardians or parents of an enrolled child.

Each application for participation must contain the original or electronic signature of the enrolling parent, attesting to the validity of the information submitted for the child’s determination of eligibility and placement.

Each parent is asked to complete and sign a photo release form for each enrolled child. Periodically, news releases and photographs may be released of children or family members for the purpose of broadly disseminating program information as required under the Head Start Act. Pictures or other forms of media may also be used to highlight the engagement of community groups and other stakeholders.