

---

## Tri-County Child and Family Development

# Parent Handbook

2022—2023

---



**Our Mission:** To inspire every child and support every family.

**Our Vision:** Changing the world one mind at a time.

**Our Core Values:**

- **Compassion:** Building meaningful relationships through service, understanding, and empowerment.
- **Growth -Mindset:** Pursuing a forward-thinking approach to foster the development of lifelong learners.
- **Teamwork:** Striving together is the beginning...achieving together is success.
- **Excellence:** Delivering what we promise and exceeding expectations.

**Approved by Policy Council:**

## Table of Contents

Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc.	3
My Child's School	4
Arrivals and Departures	5
Change of Address and/or Phone Number	5
Attendance Policy	6
Illness Policy	6
Medication	8
Education Services	9
Early Access Service Coordinator (EASC)	9
Education Specialist	9
Screens and Assessments	10
Field Trips	10
Incidental Trips	11
Bus Evacuation Drills	11
Pedestrian/Bus Transportation Safety	11
Physical Activity	14
Family Partnership Agreement (FPA)	14
Nutrition Services	15
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	15
USDA Civil Rights Regulations and Policies	16
Wellness Policy	17
Healthy Ways to Celebrate Special Days	18
Health Services	18
Prenatal Services	19
Incident Reports	19
Mental Health Services	20
Transition Services	20
Staff Qualifications	21
Confidentiality	21
Personal Belongings	21
Child's Schedule	22
Inclement Weather/Emergency Closings and Cancellations	22
Gifts	22
Child's File Information	23
Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse	23
Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	23
Biting Policy	24
Parent Involvement	25
Home Visits	25
Family Fun Events	26
Policy Council	26
Volunteer Policy/Access and Visitation	26
Safe Sleep Policy	28
Problem-Solving Procedures	30
Separation Challenges	33
Making a Difference	35
Partners	36
Verification of Parent Handbook Receipt and Confidentiality Statement	37

Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc.

**Central Office**

Executive Director: Dr. Robert Welch

Deputy Director:

Chief Financial Officer: Lyz Schmitz

Educational Services Director: Dr. Latisha Smith

Human Resource Director: Jamie Moore

Family Services Manager: Trista Hill

Health Services Coordinator: Pauline Jones

Early Access Service Coordinator: Melissa Edwards

Education Specialist: Angela Syhlman

Enrollment Manager: Precious Clark

All agency employees may be emailed by using their first initial and last name @teamtricounty.org

My Child's School

My child's school is located at \_\_\_\_\_.

The phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

My child should be at school from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_.

My child's teachers are \_\_\_\_\_.

My Family Service Worker is \_\_\_\_\_.

And their cell phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

My Program Manager is \_\_\_\_\_.

Our school follows the \_\_\_\_\_ district for

weather-related closings.

My child's emergency evacuation site is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Note to families and visitors: Use of tobacco products is not permitted on any school property, this includes parking lots. Alcohol, illegal drugs, and weapons are also prohibited at all sites.**

## Arrivals and Departures

Parents/Caregivers who bring their child directly to the school are asked to deliver their child in person to a classroom teacher upon arrival. This is for your child's safety and helps transition from home to school. As an illness precaution, please make sure both you and your child wash your hands upon arrival.

Anyone picking up a child from school must be prepared to show a picture identification and either be on the child's "release to" list or (in special circumstances) have other written permission from the parent.

Please update all information as needed. A non-custodial parent may have access to their child unless a court order in our files prohibits such contact.

Parents/Caregivers must sign their child(ren) in when dropping off and sign them out when picking up each day.

**Tri-County Child and Family does not provide transportation to and from school. If you need assistance with transportation call 211 or talk to your Family Service Worker for alternatives.**

## Change of Address and/or Phone Number

For your child's safety, **it is very important that you notify the school immediately if your address, phone number, or emergency numbers change.** We must have a current number where you or the emergency contact person may be reached. Please notify the classroom of any phone numbers or address changes.

## Attendance Policy

In order for your child to get the most out of the child development program, it is **federally mandated that they come to school when scheduled and maintain an 85% attendance rate.**

Due to the need for Head Start services, and frequent absences interrupt the learning process, **we cannot hold a spot for a child who has frequent absences** unless there are certain emergency situations, such as illness or significant family problems.

**If your child is not at school and we don't hear from you, we will call you 1 hour past the scheduled arrival time to make sure everything is okay.**

**Please contact your child's teacher or Family Service Worker at your child's school whenever your child will be absent or late.**

## Illness Policy



We want to protect children against the spread of illness. Hand washing with soap and water is the best source of protection against illness.

In order to keep all of our children as healthy as possible, we cannot allow children who are sick to stay at school. Children should be able to participate in daily activities. Please remember that if your child is too sick to go outside, they are too sick to be at the center. If we are not sure what illness your child has or how contagious they are, we may ask for a note from your child's

doctor before they can return to school.

**Do not send your child to school if:**

- She/He has a fever above 100 ° F orally (by mouth) or 99°F axillary (under the arm) within 24 hours.
- A child needs to be fever-free without medication for 24 hours.
- She/he complains of not feeling well and being unable to participate in daily activities.
- She/he has diarrhea or is vomiting
- She/he shows signs of a contagious disease such as but not limited to:

Strep throat	Pink eye	Impetigo
Staph infections	Chicken Pox	Pertussis
Pinworms	Rotavirus	RSV
Scarlet Fever	Scabies	Fifth Disease
E. Coli	Ringworm	Croup
Diphtheria	Measles	Mumps
Enterovirus	Influenza	Covid-19

A medical provider will determine the length of absence once treatment has been initiated. Children need to be seen by a doctor for any contagious disease or if they have 3 or more absences for an illness. A doctor's excuse is needed to return to school.

**Your child may be sent home if:**

- **She/he has a fever of 100 or higher**
- **She/he has flu-like symptoms (diarrhea, vomiting, etc.)**
- **She/he has open, bleeding, or oozing sores**
- **She/he may be contagious (see list above)**

**Agency contracted nurses are notified when necessary to help determine if a child should be sent home.**

**Medication**

If your child needs to take medicine at school, our staff can give your child medication **only if it is prescribed by a doctor. The medicine you bring in must be in the original pharmacy container.** It must be clearly labeled with:

- Child's first and last name
- Physician's name
- Date the prescription was filled
- Name and strength of the medication
- Instructions from the manufacturer, pharmacy, or doctor

**We are not able to give your child any over-the-counter medication** such as cold medicine, Tylenol, and diaper cream without a doctor's prescription. Over-the-counter medications prescribed by your doctor must be in the original manufacturer's container, labeled by the parent, with the child's first and last name and specific instructions given by the child's doctor.

You will also need to fill out a **Medical Authorization form** that gives our staff permission to give medicine to your child. The authorization is good for 30 days.



## Education Services

### **Classroom Services**

We design and provide “developmentally appropriate” activities throughout the school day. Through discussions with you and classroom observations, these activities address each individual child by matching his/her interests and abilities. Due to planning for each child individually, we welcome children who have disabilities. Teachers implement the Creative Curriculum in all of the classrooms.

We want to make sure your child is ready for kindergarten. We will provide you with information on their progress toward School Readiness Goals. These Goals have been aligned Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), the Iowa Early Learning Standards (IELS), and GOLD, our assessment tool. This progress, along with activities you can use at home, will be discussed during home visits and conferences. We encourage you to take an active role in your child’s education.

### Early ACCESS Service Coordinator (EASC)

The EASC coordinates services for any child and family eligible for Early ACCESS and Early Intervention services. The EASC also works directly with the Home Visitor and teacher in following through on the child’s Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP).

### Education Specialist

This person is responsible for making sure the curriculum is implemented in the classrooms and monitors the continuing education of the teaching staff. This ensures that high-quality services are delivered to the children and

families.

## Screens and Assessments

Federal Head Start regulations require that every child in a Head Start program receive a developmental screen within the first 45 days of enrollment. This means that the teacher may sit down with your child and ask them some questions or ask them to do certain tasks or you may ask you about certain skills your child may have. The information is summarized and shared with the parent/caregiver. It is also used to better plan the experiences that staff will offer to your child.

Children's skills are also assessed by observing the child individually as they use them in the learning environment. How your child is using his/her skills is shared with you on a home visit or during conferences. Results of these assessments are also used to plan the best possible learning experiences for your child.

## Field Trips

During the year, classrooms may have enhanced learning experiences that require being transported on a bus. All children, 3 to 5 years old, will wear safety harnesses. Adults will wear a seat belt on the bus.

Children currently enrolled in the Early Head Start program will not participate in off-site field trips.

Parents/Caregivers that attend a field trip with their child may ride the bus if space is available. Siblings will not be permitted to ride on the bus.

If you arrive at the center after the bus has left, your

child will be taken to another class until their classroom returns from the field trip. A parent/caregiver may transport the child to the field trip location and the child will return to the center with the classroom.



## Incidental Trips

Occasionally, staff may have to transport children in agency vehicles without a parent/caregiver present. (Example: transporting to the dental clinic). Two staff will accompany children in such an event. An Incidental Trip Release will be signed in advance by the parent.

## Bus Evacuation Drills

Children will participate in bus evacuation drills throughout the year. They will practice exiting from the back of the bus and using the line ropes.

In case of an emergency:

- Bus drivers will contact their bus garage.
- The bus garage will notify Tri-County Child and Family administrators.
- Parents/Caregivers will be contacted by our staff.

## Pedestrian/Bus Transportation Safety

### **Pedestrian Safety**

Tri-County Child and Family is committed to keeping your children safe. Please share the following information with your child. Classrooms will reinforce to children the importance of pedestrian safety.

Please take a moment to go over these tips provided by the

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. You can also visit their website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids\\_](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/kids_)

**Pedestrian:** A person traveling on foot; a walker

**Safety:** The condition of being safe; freedom from danger, risk, or injury

### **Pedestrian Safety Facts**

- Children hit by cars can be hurt or killed, even when cars are moving slowly.
- Toddlers (1 and 2-year-olds) are most often hurt by a vehicle backing up.
- Preschoolers (3 and 4-year-olds) are most often hit when running across a street near home.

### **Young Children Are Not Small Adults**

- Children cannot judge the speed or distance of vehicles.
- Children move quickly and can run into the street without warning.
- Children don't know safety rules and expect adults to watch out for them.
- Children are small and hard for the driver to see.

### **Safety Tips for Walkers**

- Always walk on the sidewalk.
- If there is no sidewalk and you have to walk in the street, always walk facing traffic so you can see any vehicle that might go out of control.

### **Crossing the Street**

- Cross only at corners or marked crosswalks.
- Stop at the curb or edge of the road.
- Stop and look left, then right, then left again before you step into the street.

- If you see a vehicle, wait until it goes by. Then look both ways before crossing.
- Do not cross the street in-between cars.
- Children should hold onto an adult's hand while crossing.

### **Busing Safety Tips**

- The bus driver cannot see you if you are closer than ten (10) feet to the bus.
- Stay out of the "Danger Zone."
- If you have to cross the street to get to the bus, wait until the bus has stopped and the safety lights are flashing. Cross the street after the bus driver directs you. Look both ways before crossing the street.
- If something is dropped at or near the bus, tell the driver before you retrieve it.

Source: National Association for Pupil Transportation

### **Busing Rules**

- There will always be at least one bus monitor on the bus. They are responsible for the children in our care.
- School begins the moment a child enters the bus. Bus monitors will make the ride enjoyable for children.
- Children will use inside voices on the bus so that the driver can hear sounds outside of the bus.
- Children remain seated until the bus monitor allows them to get up. Children are never allowed to move while the bus is moving.
- Loose objects and medication cannot be transported on the bus.
- No food or drink is allowed on the bus.

### **Safety Education for Parents Offered Throughout the Year**

Safety information will be available during the year for families in the center newsletters. Please look over this information with your child. Transportation and pedestrian safety information is also reinforced in your child's classroom. Parents/Caregivers are encouraged to participate in bus evacuation drills with their child(ren). Parents/Caregivers can also receive bus aide training. Please contact your Family Service Worker if you are interested in this training.

For more information regarding Tri-County Child and Family Development's transportation services please contact the Transportation Lead, Pauline Jones at 235-0383.

### Physical Activity

Active play and exercise are part of healthy child development and our curriculum. While at Head Start, **children's shoes must allow safe participation in activities.** Tennis shoes with socks are the best choice to prevent injuries. During the *summer months*, flat sandals with a secure heel strap are okay, but sandals with heels, thin straps, or flip flops do not promote safe active play. Snow boots are needed during the winter months to allow for outdoor play when snow is on the ground. Please notify your Family Service Worker if you need help getting safe shoes for your child.

### Family Partnership Agreement (FPA)

We believe in building strong partnerships with our families. These partnerships are based on shared respect and trust. They are aimed at helping you reach goals for your family. Your Family Service Worker will be helping you identify a goal that you want

to work on. Your Family Partnership Agreement goal will be a family goal, something that you want to achieve. Your FPA goal will be reviewed regularly with your Family Service Worker throughout the year. Once you have reached a goal, another goal will be developed. By working together, we can achieve great things! If you have any questions, please ask your Family Service Worker.



## Nutrition Services

Head Start provides healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks to all children, served family-style when appropriate.

Your child will enjoy healthy meals and snacks which meet at least 1/3 of the daily nutritional requirements and follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program(CACFP) Guidelines. Our Head Start dietician provides a monthly newsletter and menu for families via the agency's website.

Your child will participate in nutrition and physical activities to promote healthy life-long habits.

Your child will learn self-help skills such as hand washing, brushing teeth and making healthy food choices, and good mealtime manners.

**Please let staff know if your child must eat or avoid any foods for religious or other reasons (food allergy or intolerance). We will provide food substitutes if a completed diet modification request form is on file with a doctor's signature.**

## Child and Adult Care Food Program(CACFP)

### Building for the Future

This child care receives Federal cash assistance to serve healthy meals to your children.

Good nutrition today means a stronger tomorrow! Meals served here must meet nutrition requirements established by USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Questions? Concerns?

Call USDA toll-free: 1-866-USDA CND (1-866-873-2263)

Visit USDA's website: [www.fns.usda.gov/cnd](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd)

### USDA Civil Rights Regulations and Policies

*In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture*

(USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

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 responsible State or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at **(202)720- 2600** (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at **(800)877-8339**. Additionally, program information is available in languages other than English.

To file a complaint alleging 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), or 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 **mail**: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410. **fax**: (202)690-7442; or **email**: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

"It is the policy of Tri-County not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin,



disability, or religion in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code section 216.7 and 216.9. If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by Tri-County, please contact the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, Grimes State Office Building, 400E. 14th St., Des Moines, IA 50319-1004; phone number 515-281-4121, 800-457-4416; website: <http://www.state.ia.us/government/crc/index.html>

## Wellness Policy

Our goal is to help children develop healthy habits. Your child learns to eat healthy at mealtimes and monthly snack activities. We provide 60 to 90 minutes of active play each day.

MyPlate is a good guide for eating healthy. It is important for children aged 3 to 5 to eat around the following amounts from each food group:

- Grains: 4-5 ounces per day
- Vegetables: 1 ½-2 cups per day
- Fruits: 1-1 ½ cups per day
- Dairy: 2-2 ½ cups per day
- Protein Foods: 3-5 ounces per day



Your child should be actively moving 60 or more minutes a day. To raise an active child:



Make active play fun for the whole family, focus on fun, not performance, and limit TV and computer time to less than 2 hours a day.

## Healthy Ways to Celebrate Special Days

### **Birthday treats**

Children are allowed to bring treats once a year on their birthday (or another day if their birthday is not on a school day). **Agency policy does not allow us to serve food from home or homemade treats.** If food is brought in that is not in the original store packaging, we cannot serve it to children.

Here are some healthy treat ideas: graham crackers, pretzels, fresh fruit, string cheese, etc. Other ideas include stickers, pencils, or a small toy.

### **Holidays**

Treats are not allowed at Head Start for holidays, including Halloween, Christmas, and Valentine's Day. If they are sent to schools, they will not be distributed to the classroom. Each classroom will have healthy ways to celebrate special days. You can show your appreciation by volunteering, donating a book, or sending cards to the classroom for special occasions. **Please do not bring in any other additional food or drink into the center or school your child attends.**

## Health Services

To be successful in school and life, it is important to stay as healthy as possible. Here at Head Start, we have health requirements for your child:

- Health and Development Assessment Form (Filled out during your application)
- A copy of your child's Immunization Record that is current and up to date for his/her age.
- Well Child/Physical Exam Form with all necessary blood work, according to your child's age. This must be signed

by a health care provider and remain current during the year. Regular age-appropriate well-child exams must be completed throughout the year.

- Dental exams for all children must be signed and dated within 90 days of the program start date, if applicable. Fluoride varnish will be administered three times per year with parent permission.

Health Screens are provided for all children with parent permission. The screens include vision, hearing, and dental screening which includes Fluoride Varnish.

It is your responsibility to keep your child's health information up to date (immunizations, physicals, dental).

If you do not have private insurance, Title XIX, or Hawk-I insurance, we will help you with the application process.

## Prenatal Services

Full-year, full-day sites can offer enrolled families a slot for newborns with a prenatal application. Family Service Workers will meet with the parent/caregiver to offer information regarding pregnancy and post-pregnancy healthcare, fetal development, breastfeeding, and how to prepare for the birth of the baby. Please see your Family Service Worker if you are expecting.

## Incident Reports

Children involved in an incident while in our care will have the appropriate first aid given. Staff will complete an Incident Report to share with the parent/caregiver explaining what took place. Staff will ask for the parents/caregiver's signature on the report at the time of pick-up. Phone calls are made to the

parents/caregivers when children are involved in a head injury or other serious injury. Staff also contact our contracted registered nurses when needed. When a head injury occurs, the parents/caregivers will also receive a Head Injury form that talks about what signs to watch for when the child is injured.

## Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided by Tri-County's contracted mental health professionals from Central Rivers AEA. These services include coaching, classroom observations, staff consultations, family consultations, and individual observations as requested. The mental health professional assists staff with developing strategies to build social-emotional skills, strong attachments, and healthy environments. Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a process used to teach children the necessary social and emotional skills to replace challenging behaviors. All Head Start classrooms (3-5 years old) also implement the Second Step curriculum.

## Transition Services

What is a transition? Transition is any kind of change in routine for children or families. Children and families may experience many transitions during their time at Tri-County. These transitions include moving from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to kindergarten.

Teachers, and Family Service Workers will be working with your family to help you and your child plan for program changes. Together, this transition planning will help you and your child prepare for change and be successful.

## Staff Qualifications

Tri-County Head Start is committed to the professional development of all our staff. We know that a quality program is the result of well-trained, qualified, and dedicated staff. As a result, all of our teachers have an AAS in Child Development or BA in Early Childhood Education. All Family Service Workers have a BA. All staff is trained and certified in the following: CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, Safety Emergency Procedures, and Child Abuse Reporting. There are several professional development days set aside during the school year for training. Refer to Tri-County's program year calendar.

## Confidentiality

At Head Start we respect your privacy. Your child's file is kept in a locked cabinet that can only be accessed by staff involved with your child's program. We carefully follow our policies and procedures for data management to protect the privacy of your child and your family's records according to all federal, state, local and tribal laws, rules and regulations. We will only allow access to this information as is required by law and procedures from agencies governed above. As a parent/caregiver, you personally have the right to inspect your child's records.

## Personal Belongings

We encourage you to leave any toys or valuables at home rather than sending them with your child to prevent loss or damage. **The agency is not responsible for stolen or damaged items.** Please mark any clothing items with your

child's name. Weapon-like toys are not allowed.

**Please bring an extra set of clothing for accidents and/or messy play.**

### Child's Schedule

**Please pick your child up promptly.** Children build trust by knowing you will arrive on time. If your child is not picked up by the closing time of the school, the teacher will contact individuals on your child's emergency cards.

**If the teacher has not reached any contacts by 15 minutes after the school closes, the local police department and DHS will be notified.**

### Incident Weather/Emergency Closings and Cancellations

In order to ensure the safety of your child, it is likely there may be times when we have to cancel school or close school early if the weather is bad. Partnership classrooms follow the closing/delay policies of the school district that the classroom location is in. If you have any questions about the policy for your school district, please speak with your Family Service Worker.

Please refer to KWWI for weather-related information about school closings. You will also receive a text message and/or email from Tri-County.

### Gifts

Staff members are not allowed to accept gifts from our families. We appreciate the



trust you show in us, and the opportunity to be a part of your child's life.

### Child's File Information

Mothers and fathers have the right to inspect the child's records. Others who legally stand in the place of parents will also have the right to inspect the child's records or portions of the child's records. Please respect our need to verify your status as a parent or other qualifying individual before allowing inspection.

### Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

All Head Start staff are mandatory reporters for child abuse. The Head Start program complies with the State of Iowa law requiring all mandatory reporters working in licensed child care to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Human Services. This is in the best interest of your child.

The law tries to protect children from abuse and helps others find ways to handle the stress of raising children. If you would like help in coping with any area of your child's behavior, please call your child's teacher or Family Service Worker. We will try to help you find solutions to your concerns.

Children's safety and best interests are always our goals. We will notify authorities should we have concerns regarding any child's safety. If you would like training in the reporting of child abuse, please contact your child's teacher.

### Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

The teacher's goal is to create a positive, supportive

environment and offer activities that encourage a fun, learning, and safe classroom. To do this, all staff provide a nurturing atmosphere, activities that are developmentally appropriate, a consistent schedule, as well as clear and reasonable rules and expectations. Tri-County's expectations are to *Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be a Team Player*.

A teacher's response to behavior depends on the individual child's age, development, and personality. Some of the responses may include:

- **Redirection:** Staff will redirect a child to a more appropriate activity.
- **"Be by Myself Place":** The teacher encourages the child to go to a quiet place (e.g. tent or calm corner) to help him/her gain some self-control.
- **Relaxation Techniques:** The teacher helps the child take 3 deep breaths to help him/her relax.
- **Visual Cues:** Staff will show a picture to a child to remind them about what his/her job is.

## Biting Policy

Biting can come from different emotional feelings at different ages. Biting is a common behavior in the infant or toddler who is expressing a feeling.

When an incident of biting occurs, the child/children involved and the classroom teacher will use age-appropriate problem-solving techniques and positive behavior supports that care for the victim and avoids rewarding the biter with attention. The classroom staff will also use classroom strategies to identify acceptable alternatives for expressing emotions.

An Incident Report will be written for the child that was bitten as well as the child that did the biting. The names of the



children will be protected to assure confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. Parents/Caregivers are required to sign all Accident/Incident Reports.

- All bites will be given proper first aid or medical attention.
- If biting becomes a recurring issue, caregiver supervision techniques and/or appropriateness of classroom activities will be reviewed by classroom staff and their supervisor.
- If biting still continues a conference may be set with center staff and the family to discuss possible solutions.

Source: [Caring For Our Children Standards 2.039 and 8.010]

## Parent Involvement

At Head Start, we believe that parents are the most important teachers their children will ever have. We also want you to become involved in the program. Parents/Caregivers are welcome to visit **your child's** classroom at any time, so you always have access to your child. There are many ways for parents to get involved in Head Start.

## Home Visits

Your child's teacher will meet with you and will do two home visits and two conferences with you per year. Your Family Service Worker will also visit with you at least 4 times a year. During those visits, you may be asked to sign and/or complete required Head Start documents that contribute to your child's enrollment.

### **Purpose of home visits:**

- To allow **you** to tell us about **your** child and what **you** want

for him/her and your family.

- To give you a chance to learn more about your child's day and progress at school.
- To provide a time for you to ask questions.
- To discuss any situation regarding your child or yourself.
- To give you information and resources to meet your goals for your family.

If you are unable to keep a scheduled visit, please let your Family Worker or teacher know in advance so it can be rescheduled.

### Family Fun Events

These events are held throughout the year at a variety of locations in the community. These events promote education and offer a variety of activities for children and families to do together.

### Policy Council

Policy Council is made up of Early Head Start and Head Start parents, as well as community members. Center Base parents/caregivers, as well as Home Base, elect members of the Policy Council. Policy Council meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month to discuss agency-wide issues, act on these issues, and discuss any community concerns that may impact their family's lives.

### Volunteer Policy/Access and Visitation

Head Start encourages parents and caregivers to be involved in classroom and center activities. We encourage your active

participation with your child. Our programs also welcome students from area high schools, colleges, and universities. With this in mind, our agency takes the necessary steps to assure your child's safety and all children served at our centers.

According to Iowa Code, the Iowa Department of Human Services Licensing Requirements state all volunteers and substitutes shall:

- 109.6(5)a
  - Be at least 16 years of age
  - Have signed statements indicating no conviction of any law in any state or record of founded child or dependent adult abuse
  - Have signed statements indicating no communicable disease or other health concerns that poses a threat to children
- 109.6(5)b
  - Have a signed statement indicating they have been informed of responsibilities as mandatory reporters
- 109.6(5)c
  - Undergo a record check if any of the following apply:

§ They are used to meet child/staff ratio in the classroom

§ They have direct responsibility for a child or children

§ They have access to a child or children when no other staff is present

When student volunteers from area colleges and universities are placed in classrooms, the Educational Services Director works with the placement coordinator to verify completion of record checks.

Our centers are secure buildings; entry is gained by being “buzzed in” or admitted after identifying yourself. Please know staff may ask for picture identification at any time. We do this to protect the safety of all children.

Staff members are always responsible for the direct supervision of parents, caregivers, and other classroom volunteers to ensure children are safe at all times. Any person who exhibits inappropriate or unsafe behavior will be asked to leave and may be denied entrance to a center.

### **Access denial of individuals on the sex offender registry**

A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor and who is required to register with the Iowa sex offender registry (Iowa Code Chapter 692A):

- Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at a child care center
- Shall not be present on the property of a child care center without the written permission of the center director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender’s own minor child or ward to and from the center (109.10(16)d)

**Before giving written permission, the program manager shall consult with the DHS licensing consultant. The program manager is not obligated to provide written permission.**

### **Safe Sleep Policy**

Infants under 12 months of age shall be placed on



their backs on a **firm tight-fitting mattress** for sleep in a **crib only**.

Infant car seats, bouncers, and swings are not safe places for infants to sleep. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) risks such as re-breathing and overheating can be caused by these devices.

Only one baby will sleep in each crib.

Sleeping babies shall be monitored by sight and touch periodically while they are napping.

The first symptom of SIDS is death. The sight alone will not tell you if something is wrong.

The Baby's core temperature should be checked for comfort.

**Pillows** and other soft surfaces shall be prohibited as infant sleeping surfaces.

All pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft products shall be removed from the crib.

If extra warmth is needed, safe clothing sacks, one-piece sleepers, or other clothing designed for safe sleep can be used.

All children's heads shall remain uncovered during sleep. (Caring for Our Children, Standard FA 190A)

Unless the child has a note from a physician specifying

otherwise, infants shall be placed in a supine (back position) for sleeping to lower the risks of SIDS.

The note from the physician needs to include why the baby requires an alternate sleep position, how long they can be kept in this position while sleeping, and when the alternate sleep position expires. This note is to be kept in the child's file and documentation kept with the allergies/medications postings in the classroom.

A note stating "I require an alternate sleep position as requested by my doctor" shall be placed on that child's crib so that those that enter the classroom are aware of the infant's needs.

When infants can easily turn over from the supine to the prone position, they shall be put down to sleep on their back, but allowed to adopt whatever position they prefer to sleep in.

Unless a doctor specifies the need for a positioning device that restricts movement within the crib, such devices shall not be used. (Caring for Our Children, Standard HP006) See attached exception form.

Strings and cords long enough to encircle a child's neck shall not be accessible to children while in child care. (Caring for Our Children, Standard 5.160)

Cribs must be kept away from window coverings. Pacifier strings shall not be attached to infants' clothing.

### [Problem-Solving Procedures](#)

#### **Step One - Staff**

If you have a complaint or concern about the school or our

services, we ask you to first discuss the issues with the staff you work with (teacher, Family Worker) and try to work out a solution.

Most issues get worked out with a simple conversation. If that does not work, go to Step Two.

### **Step Two- Program Manager**

If you are not comfortable talking directly to the staff person OR you do not work out an acceptable solution in Step One, contact the staff person's Program Manager. Call the Tri-County Administration office at 235-0383 to get the Program Manager's name and contact information. The Program Manager will help resolve the situation and may help facilitate a conversation between you and the staff person.

A few issues need more people involved in the problem-solving. If working with the Program Manager does not resolve the issue, go to Step Three.

### **Step Three- Educational Services Director**

If the Program Manager is not able to resolve the problem, contact the Educational Services Director(ESD) at 235-0383. The ESD will try to resolve the issue and may request a group meeting with others who can help. That might include parents/caregivers, staff persons, the Executive Director, and the Policy Council's chairperson.

Occasionally problems need to be looked at by the agency policymakers. If the Educational Services Director is not able to help work out a solution, go to Step Four.

### **Step Four- Policy Council**

If you still have a concern after working with Program Services

Director, request the **Executive Director** to refer the issue to the Policy Council. The Policy Council will establish a special committee to talk to you and the other persons you have been working with to try to come up with a solution to the issue you raised. That Committee will make a recommendation to the Policy Council for action as a whole.

If you or the Executive Director do not agree with the decision of the Policy Council, the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc. Board of Directors may be asked to review the decision of the Policy Council as Step Five.

### **Step Five- Board of Directors**

If requested by either you or the Executive Director, the Policy Council Decision will be reviewed by the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc. Board of Directors. The Board may appoint a special committee to make a recommendation to the Board.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Why talk to the staff person if they are the problem?**

Most problems come from a lack of understanding. Talking about it usually fixes the problem.

#### **Do I have to talk to the staff person? I am not comfortable doing that!**

No, if you are not comfortable talking to the staff person by yourself, you can go directly to **Step Two** and contact their supervisor, the Program Manager.

#### **May we skip steps?**

You may always skip Step One. Other steps may be skipped



**only** if everyone in the steps being skipped agrees.

For example, if the parent/caregiver, the staff person, and the Program Manager all agree the situation should be handled by the Educational Services Director, Step One and Step Two could be skipped and the ESD would immediately assist in working on the issue.

### **Why not just quit the program if I have a problem?**

Your family is important to us. We want to work with you to help our program be what you need. We need your feedback to make our programs work.

### **Will my child be treated badly because I complained?**

No. We encourage our families to let us know when they are not happy with our programs. It helps us make our programs better.

## Separation Challenges

Separation difficulties can happen with any child at *any* time during their preschool years. Whether this is your child's first preschool experience or a mid-year crisis, you have probably tried everything, including a few special treats, but he/she will not be convinced that preschool is the place where he/she should be. It is very important that you are ready for the separation, also. If you are anxious about your child starting preschool, they will pick up on that anxiety.

### **Drop-off routine to the rescue!**

Whether this is your child's first school experience or a new phase, these meltdowns are difficult for everyone involved.

What do you do when your child refuses to say goodbye and happily go into the classroom? What you need is a "drop-off routine." Children like routines because they provide a sense of security. Just as a good bedtime routine helps in the evening hours, a good drop-off routine will help you at preschool.

Creating the drop-off routine should include your child's teacher. Decide on steps that you will take every day when you and your child arrive at preschool. The goal is to establish and follow a routine for saying goodbye. The more your child knows what to expect, the more likely he/she will remain calm as the "goodbye" approaches.

### **Keep it simple!**

Your routine could be as simple as helping your child hang up their coat, reading a book in the reading corner, and then waving goodbye at the door. Or you might watch your child color a picture and take it with you when you leave. Routines can change over time and eventually you might not even need one.

A drop-off routine will not always keep your child from crying, especially at first. Some children cry for days or even weeks before they adjust. You may need the teacher's reassuring arms to help your child as you leave.

Helping children with separation is a large part of a teacher's job. Often the teacher is very effective at calming down your child after the goodbye has passed. Believe your child's teacher when she/he says that your little one only cried for ten minutes or so.

### **Some simple steps for separation!**

There are other simple steps that can help your child adjust to the separation:

- Leave a family picture in your child's cubby.
- Show your child that you trust and like his/her teacher

with a happy “hello” in the morning.

- Provide your child with the chance to talk about his/her feelings, but then change the subject to something positive.
- Try to relax and believe that this problem will pass.

Before you know it you will be hearing them say "but I said I wasn't ready to go home!"

### Making a Difference

Parents are key in helping children stay in school! The federal government gives the school money. But did you know we have to make a certain amount of in-kind? In-kind is like money. It is a form of money that you are giving back to the school for your child to have a good education. In-kind is donated time, space, or services that are provided by parents/caregivers and the community. Without enough in-kind, we get less money next year and this will happen each year until there is no more money and no more program!!

### **Help Us Get the In-Kind We Need**

- Help staff plan Family Fun Events at your school
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Read to the children in your child's classroom
- Complete take-home activities and return to the school
- Participate in parent-child activities
- Go on field trips with your child's classroom
- Transport your child to and from their dentist and/or doctor appointments
- Work on your child's goals at home
- Serve on Policy Council

- Serve on the Health Advisory Committee
- Join the Employee, Family & Community Engagement Committee

Your child's education depends on in-kind! Please contact your Family Service Worker or classroom teacher for more information.

### Partners

Head Start partners with Waterloo, Cedar Falls, Dunkerton, and Buchanan County School Districts. These classrooms are required to meet Head Start performance standards.

## Confidentiality Statement

Information shared with Tri-County Head Start Staff will be kept strictly confidential unless the family authorizes a release of information in writing. This includes your Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) goal or family goal that you make for your family. FPA forms will be kept in locked files.

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

have received and reviewed a copy of the Tri-County Child and Family Development Council, Inc. Parent Handbook.

---

(Signature)

---

(Date)

---

(FSW Signature)

Entered on Child Plus date: \_\_\_\_\_