
Tri-County Child and Family
Development

Center-Based Handbook

2023—2024





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Introduction

Welcome

This handbook is designed to provide families with information on Tri-County Head Start DHS Licensing, Head Start Performance Standards and the role parents play in their child's educational experience.

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.

Administration Directory

Executive Director	Dr. Robert Welch
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 Coordinator	Melissa Edwards
Education Specialist	Angela Syhlman
Interim Enrollment Manager	Michelle Mattingly
Program Managers	Angie Barth Haley Bradford Ashley Caldwell Dusty Olson Sarah Ross

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

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 a CDA, an AAS in Child Development or BA in Early Childhood Education. All Family Service Workers have a BA. All staff are 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 for specific dates.

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.



Center-Based Information

My Child's School

My child's school is located at	
The school 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: The use of any tobacco, vape, or nicotine product is strictly prohibited. Prohibited tobacco, vape, and nicotine products include but are not limited to: tobacco or tobacco-like products, and all nicotine products not regulated or approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for tobacco cessation. Alcohol, illegal drugs, and weapons are also prohibited at all sites.

Confidentiality and Child's File Information

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.

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.

Change of Information

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. At least ONE emergency contact person, other than the primary guardian, is required on each child's emergency card. In addition, each child's emergency card needs to include current medical and dental providers (addresses and phone numbers). Please notify the classroom or Family Service Worker 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 after 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.

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.

Arrivals and Departures

Parents/Guardians 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 picture identification and either be on the child's "release to" list or (in special circumstances) have other written permission from the parent/guardian.



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

Tri-County Head Start 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.

Separation Challenges

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

Drop-off routine

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 struggles to 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 school.

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 school. 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 his/her 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!"

Clothing Guidelines

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. Winter gear (winter coat, snow pants, boots, mittens, hat, etc.) 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 appropriate clothing for your child. Please mark any clothing items with your child's name.

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



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.** Weapon-like toys are not allowed. Please communicate with your child's teacher if a security blanket/item is needed.

Education Services



Curriculum

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. Head Start classrooms also utilize Second Step, a social-emotional curriculum. Our parent curriculum includes Ready Rosie and Growing Great Families.

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 with Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF), the Iowa Early Learning Standards (IELS), and Teaching Strategies 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.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

The teacher’s goal is to create a positive, supportive environment and offer activities that promote fun, learning, and a safe classroom. To do this, all staff provide a nurturing atmosphere, developmentally appropriate activities, a consistent schedule, and clear rules and expectations. Tri-County Head Start’s expectations are to [Be Safe, Be Respectful, and Be a Team Player](#). All teachers are trained in the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. In addition, each classroom contains a PBIS kit to support teachers as they help children develop self-regulation skills.

Source: <https://challengingbehavior.org/>

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 area) to promote self-regulation skills.
- **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.



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 your child's teacher may ask him/her questions or have them do certain tasks. For some screenings, the parent/guardian will be asked about certain skills their child may have. The information from screenings is summarized and discussed with the parent/guardian. It is used to guide planning for individual children and the entire class. Children's skills are also assessed through observations as they explore their learning environment. How your child uses his/her skills is shared with you on home visits or during conferences.

Disability Services

The results of screenings, assessments and/or other data, may determine the need for additional services for a child. For Early Head Start (birth to three years of age), the Early ACCESS Service Coordinator (EASC) coordinates the process for referrals and the child and family's eligibility for Early Intervention services. The EASC works directly with the teachers and Central River AEA specialists to implement the child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). For Head Start children (three to five years of age), Tri-County partners with Central Rivers AEA. Teachers and Central Rivers AEA specialists will coordinate eligibility and delivery of services. Parents/guardians are viewed as their child's first and most important teacher. Parents/guardians are included in all meetings and decisions regarding disability services for their child.

In the event a parent/guardian has any concerns about their child's development, he/she is encouraged to discuss these concerns with the teacher to determine the need for additional services.

Family Services

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



Home Visits & Conferences

Your child's teacher will meet with you to conduct two home visits and two conferences per year. Your Family Service Worker will also visit with you at least four times a year. These visits are a requirement for continued enrollment in the program.

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 experiences and his/her 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 family goals.
- To offer learning opportunities within the home.

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



Transition Services

What is a transition? A 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 Head Start. These transitions include moving from Early Head Start to Head Start, from Head Start to kindergarten and from Tri-County Head Start into the community.

Teachers and Family Service Workers will work with your family to develop a transition plan. The plan will prepare you and your child for change and help everyone be successful.



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/guardian 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.

Health



Health Services

To be successful in school and life, it is important to stay as healthy as possible. Tri-County Head Start’s child health requirements include:

- 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 remain current during the year and be signed by a healthcare provider.
 - The regular health maintenance exams must be completed throughout the year.They occur at the following times:

★ 2 weeks	★ 6 months	★ 15 months	★ 3 years
★ 2 months	★ 9 months	★ 18 months	★ 4 years
★ 4 months	★ 12 months	★ 24 months	★ 5 years

- 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 (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.



Mental Health Services

Mental health services are provided by Tri-County Head Start'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 professionals assist staff with developing strategies to build social-emotional skills, strong attachments, and healthy environments.

In the event a parent/guardian has any concerns about their child's social-emotional development, he/she is encouraged to discuss these concerns with the teacher to determine the need for additional services.



Illness Policy

We want to protect children against the spread of illness. Hand washing with soap and water is the most effective way to protect 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 101 ° F by any method or 100.4°F if under two years old 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 Infection(s)	Chicken Pox	Pertussis
Scarlet Fever	Rotavirus	RSV
E. Coli	Scabies	Fifth Disease
Diphtheria	Ringworm	Croup
Enterovirus	Measles	Mumps
Influenza	Covid-19	Unknown Rash

A medical provider will determine the length of absence once treatment has been initiated. Children may 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.



Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

All Tri-County 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 families 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 contact your child's teacher or Family Service Worker. We will try to help you find solutions to your concerns. We will notify authorities should we have concerns regarding any child's safety. Children's safety and best interests are always our goals.

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 what took place with the parent/guardian. Staff will ask the parents/guardian to sign the report at the time of pick-up. Phone calls are made to the parent/guardian 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 parent/guardian will also receive a Head Injury Form that talks about signs to watch for when the child is injured.



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 teacher will use age-appropriate problem-solving techniques and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) to care for the children involved. An Incident Report will be completed for both children involved. The names of the children will be protected to assure confidentiality to the greatest extent possible. Parents/guardians are required to sign all Incident Reports.

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

Source: [Caring For Our Children Standards 2.2.07]

Safe Sleep Policy

In order to help reduce the risk of sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUIDs), infants under 12 months of age will be placed on their backs on a **firm, tight-fitting mattress** for sleep in a safety-approved **crib only**.

Infant car seats, bouncers, swings, or any other type of furniture/equipment 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. Babies shall be monitored by sight and sound at all times (including while falling asleep, sleeping, and in the process of waking up). Sleeping babies shall be monitored by touch periodically as well. The first symptom of SIDS is death. The sight alone will not tell you if something is wrong. The room temperature should be comfortable for a lightly clothed adult. Teachers should check infants to ensure they are not sweaty or overheated and comfortably clothed.

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. Bibs, necklaces, and garments with ties or hoods shall also be removed to ensure safe sleep.

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 SUID. 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. If your child needs this type of device, a signed waiver from your health care provider is required.

Strings and cords long enough to encircle a child’s neck shall not be accessible to children while in child care. Cribs must be kept away from window coverings. Pacifier strings shall not be attached to infants’ clothing.

Source: [Caring For Our Children Standards 3.1.4.1 and 5.4.5.1]

Nutrition

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Head Start provides healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks to all children in a family-style setting. We provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. Meal times vary by center. The menu is included in the Monthly Nutrition Newsletter found on our website. The menus are also posted on the Parent Board at each classroom.

All meals and snacks meet CACFP Guidelines. We strive to provide a variety of foods and recipes, local and fresh fruits and vegetables, and culturally appropriate meals.



Healthy Habits and Nutrition Assessment

Our goal is to help children develop healthy habits. Your child will practice healthy eating habits and learn about various foods, nutrition, cooking, and gardening through monthly activities. Your child will also learn self-help skills including hand washing and brushing teeth.

Tri-County Head Start follows the 5-2-1-0 format for healthy habits, which is defined as 5 or more fruits/ vegetables per day, 2 or more hours of activity per day, 1 hour or less screen time per day, and 0 sugary beverages.



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 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.

Your Head Start Family Service Worker will assist you in completing a Nutrition Assessment to identify any areas of concern in your child's eating habits. Information will then be provided in those areas.

Outside Food and Beverage

Tri-County Head Start and the CACFP program do not allow for your child to bring their own food or beverages to school.

Families are discouraged from bringing treats to class, including holidays. Outside food or treats will not be accepted. Children are allowed to bring treats once a year on or around their birthday; however, the agency does not allow us to serve homemade treats. Treats must be pre-packaged.

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

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.

Allergy and Diet Modification Policy

Substitutions will NOT be provided due to personal preference without medical necessity. Picky eating is a normal part of early childhood. Your child will be offered all foods and may choose to not eat the food. We will never force your child to eat something they do not want to.

Appropriate food substitutions for children who cannot have certain menu items due to cultural or religious reasons will be made. Please work with your Family Service Worker to complete the Diet Modification Guardian Request Form.



Substitutions will be made for food allergies and intolerances with a doctor's note and completion of the Diet Modification Form. Tri-County Head Start will make a reasonable substitution.

Allergy and Intolerance to milk do not require a doctor's note but will require the Diet Modification Form. Tri-County Head Start will provide soy or lactose-free milk, as these are nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk.

USDA Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights 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 (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), 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.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted 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; or

2. Fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. Email:

Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Transportation

Field Trips

During the year, classrooms may have enhanced learning experiences that require being transported on a bus. Children currently enrolled in the Early Head Start program will not participate in off-site field trips. All children, 3 to 5 years old, will wear safety harnesses. Adults will wear a seatbelt on the bus. Parents/family 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/guardian may transport the child to the field trip location and the child will return to the center with the classroom.

In case of an emergency:

- Bus drivers will contact their bus garage.
- The bus garage will notify Tri-County Head Start administrators.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted by our staff.

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. Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in bus evacuation drills with their child(ren). Parents/guardians 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 Head Start's transportation services please contact the Transportation Lead, Pauline Jones at 235-0383.

Incidental Trips

Occasionally, staff may have to transport children in agency vehicles without a parent/guardian 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/guardian.

Pedestrian/Bus Transportation Safety

Pedestrian Safety

Tri-County Head Start is committed to keeping children safe. Classrooms will reinforce to children the importance of pedestrian safety (HSPS 1302.46(b)(v)) and we ask for you to please share the following tips with your child. This information is provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. You can also visit their website at www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/pedestrian-safety.

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.
- 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.

Parent Involvement



At Tri-County Head Start, we believe that parents and/or primary caregivers are the most important teachers their children will ever have. We honor your role and urge you to become involved in your child's education by working closely with staff. We encourage parents/guardians to visit **their child's** classroom at any time and become involved in the many other opportunities provided by Tri-County Head Start.

Volunteer Policy/Access and Visitation

Tri-County Head Start encourages parents/guardians 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 [109.6(5) a-c] state all volunteers and substitutes shall:

- 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 pose a threat to the health, safety, or well-being of the children.
- Have a signed statement indicating they have been informed of their responsibilities as mandatory reporters.
- 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 with no other staff 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/guardians, 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.



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 a group of Head Start and Early Head Start parents/guardians, as well as community members. Center-Based and Home-Based parents/guardians elect members of the Policy Council. Policy Council meets on the 3rd 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.

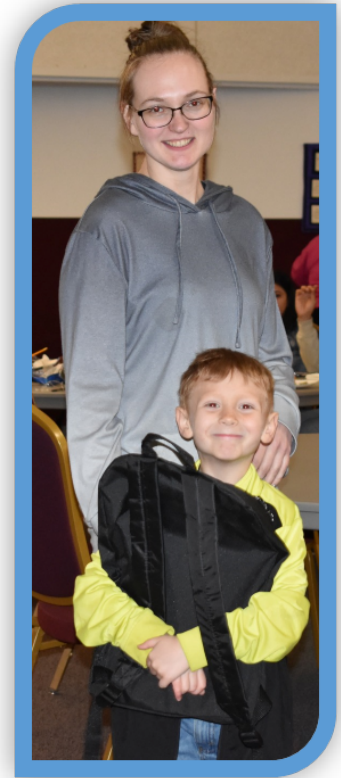
Making a Difference

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 programs.

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.



Parent Expectations

Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct Policy

The Parent/Guardian Code of Conduct Policy acknowledges the services of the program be provided according to the highest ethical standards. These standards ensure the parent/guardian contributes to the success and growth of the services and programs provided by Tri-County Head Start.

The Parent / Guardian Code of Conduct Policy will include, but not be limited to, the following standards:

1. When in the presence of children on an EHS/HS premise, in a classroom, at a program function, or during a home visit, parents/guardians will use language appropriate for young children to hear. Cursing/swearing is not allowed.

2. When in the presence of children on an EHS/HS premise, in a classroom, at a program function, or during a home visit, parents/guardians will address the misbehavior of their own children through positive guidance. Physical or verbal punishment of children is not allowed by parents/guardians.
3. To promote the safety and health of all children, and in accordance with Iowa law, we request all children be placed in appropriate vehicle restraints or approved car seats at all times.
4. The parent/guardian will update their emergency contact information with EHS/HS Family Service Worker, Home Visitor, or Teacher as changes occur. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to keep the information accurate, including changes in names, addresses, and phone numbers for themselves and the child's emergency contacts.
5. The parent/guardian will direct all concerns regarding other children to EHS/HS staff immediately. It is never appropriate for a parent/guardian to discipline another child in an EHS/HS classroom or during a program function.
6. If a parent/guardian has a disagreement or concern with another parent/guardian while on the premises, individuals will address concerns with appropriate behavior away from children and families. The parent/guardian should notify the Program Manager immediately. It is never appropriate for a parent/guardian or staff to threaten another parent/guardian verbally or physically on Tri-County Head Start or partnering site's property. Law enforcement will be notified to remove violators.
7. If a parent/guardian witness staff guiding or redirecting children in an inappropriate manner, the parent/guardian should notify the Program Manager immediately. The Program Manager will follow up on the concern.



It is not our intent to exclude or terminate the enrollment of any child or family. Tri-County Head Start reserves the right to re-evaluate the enrollment status of a family if a situation is extreme and affects the direct safety of a child, family, or staff.

Concerns and Problem-Solving

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 Service 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 Head Start Administration Office at (319) 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.

Some situations may require additional people to be involved in the problem-solving process. 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 (319) 235-0383. The ESD will try to resolve the issue and may request a group meeting with others who can help. This might include parents/guardians, staff person(s), the Executive Director, and/or the Policy Council's chairperson.

Occasionally problems need to be looked at by the Senior Leadership Team. If the ESD is not able to help work out a solution, go to Step Four.

Step Four- Policy Council

The next step is to request the **Executive Director** to refer the issue to the Policy Council. Policy Council will establish a special committee to talk to you and the other person(s) you have been working with to try to come up with a solution to the issue you raised. The special 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 Head Start 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's decision will be reviewed by the Tri-County Head Start 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/guardian, 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.





Verification of Parent Handbook Receipt and Confidentiality Statement

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: _____