



Harris County Department of Education  
Early Head Start and Head Start

# PARENT HANDBOOK



*One source for **all** learners*

**Harris County Department of Education Head Start Mission**  
*To improve school readiness for children, families and the community*

Dear Early Head Start/Head Start Parent:

Welcome to Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) Area I Head Start! We are happy to have you and your family as a part of our program. As you may know, Head Start services include education, health, family services, nutrition, mental wellness, disabilities and parent involvement. Our philosophy is that parents are the primary and most important educators of their children and we engage parents in all aspects of our program.

Early Head Start/Head Start is a federally funded program that has been around since 1965. It has stood the test of time because it supports families with needed resources while partnering with families to ensure students are school ready. We prepare students to enter school ready to learn and partner with parents to access needed resources that supports their family goals. Early Head Start/Head Start takes a comprehensive view of learning, realizing that education can only happen when a child's other needs are also met. HCDE has been operating the Head Start program in east Harris County since January 1999.

Your campus staff will be working closely with you throughout the school year and I encourage you to be as engaged as possible in Head Start services and programs. There will be many opportunities for you to participate in decision-making, educational programs and to volunteer.

This Parent Handbook explains many of the policies and procedures for our Head Start program. Please take some time to review this handbook. Campus staff can answer any questions that you may have. We look forward to working with you and your family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Venetia L. Peacock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "V" and "P".

Venetia L. Peacock, Senior Director  
HCDE Area I Head Start

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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

(Parent/Guardian Completes this Page)

Campus Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Campus Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Manager's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Asst. Center Manager's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Services Provider's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Child's Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Child's Teaching Asst.'s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Harris County Department of Education – Head Start  
6300 Irvington Boulevard – Houston, Texas 77022  
Phone: 713-694-6300**

Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) Early Head Start and Head Start help prepare children for success in school and in life. Children enrolled in the program receive a positive introduction to learning, playing with others, eating a variety of foods and practicing healthy habits. Early Head Start and Head Start build confidence in children and their parents. Parents become involved in their children’s education, discovering their own strengths, and continuing to develop to their fullest potential.

**HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start Mission Statement**

To improve school readiness for children, families, and the community.

**HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start Vision**

To create a learning environment of excellence dedicated to positively impacting children, families, employees, community partners, and society.

**HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start Values**

Honesty, Integrity, Respect, Communication and Teamwork

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**The Early Head Start and Head Start Family’s Commitment to School Readiness Agreement**

At Harris County Department of Education Early Head Start and Head Start, we live by our mission, *“To improve school readiness for children, families and the community.”* As a premier early childhood program, we are dedicated to enriching the lives of the children and families who join our program. As you become a part of our Early Head Start/Head Start family, we look forward to growing with you and adding your family’s unique strengths to our own. In the spirit of partnership and success, we ask that you join our commitment to achieving school readiness for your child and family.

**HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start commits to:**

- ★ Value and honor you as your child’s first teacher.
- ★ Believe that you always have your child’s best interests at heart.
- ★ Initiate and maintain a receptive, responsive, and respectful relationship with you.
- ★ Have timely, relevant, honest communication with you.
- ★ Engage you as equal partners in your child’s education and your family’s growth.
- ★ Seek feedback from you about how we are doing and how we can improve.
- ★ Provide a welcoming, safe environment for you.
- ★ Provide quality teaching and well-equipped classrooms.
- ★ Provide value-added volunteer opportunities for you.
- ★ Ensure that your opinions are heard and included in the program planning process.

**As a parent I commit to:**

- ★ Be a positive role model for my child.
- ★ Display a high degree of personal respect and character.
- ★ Follow the HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start parent dress code.
- ★ Partner with staff to support my child’s health and well-being.
- ★ Support my child to achieve perfect attendance by attending school daily.
- ★ Read to my child at least 15 minutes (Early Head Start)/20 minutes (Head Start) each day.
- ★ Engage with Early Head Start/Head Start Staff to address goals for my child and my family.
- ★ Have timely, relevant and honest communication with Early Head Start/Head Start staff.
- ★ Comply with Arrival and Pickup times.  
Campus Arrival times \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ Campus Pickup times \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_
- ★
- ★ Attend, or have a family representative for my child, at each Family Connection event.
- ★ Make myself available for program activities and interactions with program staff.
- ★ Volunteer at my child’s campus at least once each month for one hour.

# HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start Program Policies and Procedures

## Hours of Operation

The HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start program operates Monday through Friday. The HCDE Early Head Start program operates August through July. The HCDE Head Start program operates August through May. School hours vary based on location. The hours of operation for your child's campus will be shared by the campus staff and posted on the Family Information Board located in the facility.

## Student Attendance

HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start recognizes the importance of daily school attendance and establishing school readiness practices that will follow each student throughout their school learning experiences. In order to receive the maximum benefit from the Early Head Start and Head Start program, it is essential that students attend school daily, remain at school for the entire instructional day, arrive to school on time and be picked up from school at dismissal time. When your child attends school regularly, they receive a better program experience.

## ISD Head Start Student Attendance

The Texas Education Code §25.095 requires the school district to notify a student's parents, in writing, at the beginning of the school year if the student is absent from school for ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year:

1. The student's parent/legal guardian is subject to prosecution under TEC §25.093S; and
2. The student is subject to referral to a truancy court for truant conduct under TEC §65.003S

It is the parent's duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school or the student will be subject to truancy prevention measures under TEC §25.0915S

## Student Arrival

All students must arrive to school prior to the scheduled instruction time for your school. Parents must sign in their child on the designated Sign-In Sheet located in the child's classroom by writing the drop-off time and providing a signature in the designated space. Parents/guardians of Early Head Start students, must also fill out the Infant Toddler Daily Report. ***If your child will be arriving late to school, you must contact the school directly to notify a member of the Campus-Based Management Team (CBMT).***

During arrival time, please inform your child's teacher of any illness, injury or other information she/he may need to know about your child in order to meet her/him needs. Students attending Head Start programs on school district campuses may be received by school district staff before the Head Start program day begins and should adhere to the school campus drop-off procedures. Breakfast is served at every school before the instructional day begins. Students are encouraged to participate in breakfast meal services each day.

## AM/PM Health Inspection

It is HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start's goal to protect the health and safety of all students in our programs. All enrolled students are visually checked by their Teachers daily upon arrival and departure for potential problems that may be harmful to themselves or others. If any concerns are observed when you bring your child to the school or are noticed later in the day, those concerns will be documented on the Documentation of Student Inspection form, AM/PM Inspection Log and/or an Illness/Injury Report. Parents will be contacted by phone and/or during student departure time about problems and/or concerns.

## Student Tardiness

If you will be late dropping off or picking up your child, it is important that you contact the campus directly to inform the office. It is essential that all students benefit from the full day of Early Head Start/Head Start services by arriving **on time** and that each child is picked up **on time** at the end of the school day. ***Excessive tardiness in arrival or departure may result in your child's dismissal from the Early Head Start/Head Start program.*** Parents arriving late must be signed-in at the front office and will be reminded about the importance of arriving to school on time. After the second tardy occurrence, parents will be issued an Attendance Alert. Additional tardy occurrences will involve parent conferences to address the issue of tardiness and the possibility of being placed on an Attendance Improvement Plan to identify strategies to overcome challenges to tardiness.

## Early Departure

Students are expected to participate in the entire instructional day. Students should be picked up early **only** in case of emergency or illness. Parents must sign their child out in the front office and be prepared to explain the reason for the early dismissal. Parents picking students up early will be accompanied to class by a campus staff member.

### **Student Departure and Release of Students**

All students must be picked up by the designated dismissal time for their center. Students on school district campuses may remain in the care of school district staff after the Head Start program ends. Students will only be released to parents/guardians, or other authorized adults listed on the Student Emergency Contact information form. The authorized adult must be at least 18 years of age and must present a valid government-issued picture identification. The identification will be scanned using our Raptor Visitor management system to instantly screen all visitors, volunteers and contractors against the nationwide sex offender registry database to uphold the highest standards of safety for all students.

In case of emergency where you or other authorized adult is unable to pick up your child, you must contact the school directly and speak with a member of the Campus-Based Management Team (**CBMT**). You must provide the pick-up person's full name and give consent to release your child to a person not listed on the Student Emergency Contact list. The school staff will contact you at a phone number on file to verify the person's identity. Upon arrival, the pick-up person must present a valid government-issued picture identification, which will be photocopied. The license plate of the vehicle will also be recorded.

**NOTE: The school staff reserves the right not to release an Early Head Start/Head Start student to any unauthorized persons.**

### **Student Absences**

Appropriate documentation of student absences should be given to a member of the CBMT prior to the student being absent (if planned) or immediately upon your child's return to school. If the absence is unplanned, you must contact the school within one-hour of the start of the school day.

**The following absences are considered Excused Absences:** Student illness verified by a doctor's excuse, illness or death in the family, mandated court appearance, Children Protective Services appointment(s), parent hospitalization, religious observations and/or healthcare appointments

The well-being of all our Early Head Start/Head Start students and families is of the utmost importance. Accordingly, students who are absent for 3 consecutive days, with no contact from the parent, will receive a home visit from the Family Services Provider (FSP). Students who are absent for 5 consecutive days, with no contact from the parent, will be withdrawn from the Early Head Start/Head Start program. ***Chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and early departures of a student for unjustified reasons may result in withdrawal from the program.*** If your child attends a Head Start program located on a school district campus, additional attendance policies may apply.

### **Exclusions**

In consideration of the safety and well-being of your child, in addition to, all the students and staff at your school, there are certain circumstances which may result in your child being temporarily excluded from participation in the program. These circumstances include:

1. The onset of illness during the Early Head Start/Head Start School day which requires further medical attention; or
2. Contagious conditions such as:
  - ★ Chicken Pox
  - ★ Diarrheal diseases
  - ★ Scabies
  - ★ Influenza
  - ★ Live Head Lice
  - ★ Mumps
  - ★ Measles
  - ★ Tuberculosis – pulmonary
  - ★ Oral Temperature of 101 degrees or higher that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs
  - ★ Tympanic (ear) or Axillary (armpit) Temperature of 100 degrees or higher that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs
  - ★ E. Coli
  - ★ Hepatitis A
  - ★ Ringworm
  - ★ Pink Eye
  - ★ Pertussis (whooping cough)
  - ★ Strep Throat
  - ★ Scarlet Fever

**If your child has a contagious condition, please inform the Center Manager immediately so that other parents can be made aware of symptoms to look for in their own children. Full confidentiality will be maintained, and your child's name will not be revealed to other parents.**

Students who are absent from school due to a contagious illness will not be readmitted without a signed statement from a physician indicating that the student is no longer contagious. The Center Manager may require a note from a physician if there is a concern regarding a child's health condition.

### **Student Withdrawals**

The Early Head Start/Head Start program hopes that all students can fully benefit from the services of the program from the beginning to the end of the school year. If you plan to withdraw your child from the program, please immediately inform your FSP of your child's last day of school. The campus staff will help prepare your child and his/her classmates for the transition.

Parents should notify a member of the CBMT if they are planning to move. Your CBMT will determine whether your new home address is within the assigned zip codes for your school. If your new address is outside the boundaries, your FSP will work with you to determine if a transfer to another school or Head Start program is possible, based on vacancies at the new location. If there are no vacancies, your FSP will discuss available options, which may include withdrawal from the HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start program. If your child is absent for 5 consecutive day and your FSP has not been able to reach you, your child will be withdrawn from the program

### **Legal Custody**

School staff cannot restrict parents from picking up their own children unless it has been obligated by a court order. A copy of the official stamped court document indicating this ruling must be given to the Center Manager and designated campus staff to maintain in the child's file before the restriction can be honored.

### **Parent Dress Code**

Our program strives to prepare every student for success in life. One of the concepts we teach students is to dress for success. This means coming to school dressed and prepared for learning and participation in daily activities. Children look to parents as their role models. It's important that we strive to teach and model good examples of behavior and attitude. One of the many ways to do this is to ensure that you model the "dress for success" attitude. This means getting dressed and wearing clothing that shows children that school is an important place to go.

When you come to the school, we ask that you wear clothing that respects school as an important place for your child to go every day. Please note the following items as inappropriate clothing for the Early Head Start/Head Start campuses:

Pajamas	Revealing clothing	Low-cut tops
House shoes	Short shorts	See-through clothing
Sagging pants	Short skirts/dresses	Inappropriate/offensive logos

HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start's vision is to create a learning environment of excellence dedicated to positively impacting our children, families, employees, community partners and society. We appreciate your partnership in making this vision a reality!

### **Student Dress Code**

All students must be dressed to safely and comfortably participate in classroom and playground activities. Students should wear:

- ★ Comfortable, washable clothing appropriate for the weather and labeled with a permanent marker
- ★ Clothes the student can easily remove by him/herself
- ★ Flat shoes that cover his/her toes and hold the heel of the foot securely in the shoe (no sandals)
- ★ A sweater or jacket as needed for the weather
- ★ For ISD school campuses, school uniforms may be required

***Note: Earring studs are acceptable, but no dangling earrings. We strongly discourage parents from bringing students to school wearing any additional jewelry. HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start are not responsible for any lost or damaged jewelry.***

### **Spare Clothing**

Every student must maintain an additional set of clothing at the center, clearly labeled with the student's name. This must include:

- ★ A pair of underwear
- ★ A pair of socks
- ★ Complete set of clothing (dress or pants and shirt)

### **Items Needed for Nap/Rest Time**

Students have a rest or nap time every day. Please be sure that your child has the following:

- ★ a sheet, blanket or 2 beach towels at the school so that he/she can rest comfortably on his/her mat.
- ★ **Early Head Start infants**, cannot be covered with anything until they can walk.



### Prohibited Items

Students are not permitted to bring money, toys, candy, food, drinks, valuables or dangerous objects to the school. Toys brought from home are also not permitted at the school.

### Transportation

Transportation is not provided at any of our campuses. Parents are responsible for arranging transportation to and from school. ISD locations may provide school bus services. Check with the ISD campus principal for more information.

### Early Head Start and Head Start Program Eligibility and Enrollment

- ★ Student must be between 0 –35 months of age for Early Head Start
- ★ Student must be 3 or 4 years of age for Head Start
- ★ Student must live within HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start service boundaries
- ★ Family must meet income guidelines

#### Application Process:

- ★ Application is completed by parent or guardian
- ★ Student's name is placed on waitlist
- ★ FSP will inform parent/guardian when a space is available
- ★ Parent/guardian completes a Family's Commitment to School Readiness Appointment with the Center Manager or Assistant Center Manager
- ★ Re-enrollment forms must be completed at the end of each school year for students who are age-eligible to return to Early Head Start/Head Start

### Records Request

Parents may request that we send student's records, including screening information and educational evaluations, to the student's new school or childcare program. The request must be made in writing to the FSP as soon as you know that you are leaving Early Head Start/Head Start. Please allow 5-10 days to process your request.

### The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for Early Head Start/Head Start

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

- ★ **The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the Early Head Start/Head Start School receives a request for access.** Parents who wish to inspect their child's records should submit to the Center Manager a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The Center Manager will arrange for access and notify the parent of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
- ★ **The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.** Parents who wish to ask the school to amend their child's education record should write the Center Manager, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent, the school will notify the parent of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent when notified of the right to a hearing.
- ★ **The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.** One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the school as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the school Board; a person or company with whom the school has outsourced services or functions it would otherwise use its own employees to perform (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

- ★ **The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA.** The name and address of the office that administers FERPA are:

**Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202**

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance regarding all our educational and social services. Confidential information given to the Early Head Start/Head Start staff will not be shared with anyone outside of the HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start program without your written consent. Records are maintained in locked file cabinets as required by Federal Laws. At the end of the school year, records are boxed, sealed and placed in storage for five (5) years, and then destroyed. Records will only be sent to another agency with written permission of the parents or legal guardian. Only the parent or guardian signing the enrollment form will have access to the records. ***Special rules are necessary when parents are divorced or separated. If this applies to your family Early Head Start/Head Start will need to know who has legal custody and who has physical custody of the child.***

There are a two (2) important exceptions to this confidentiality policy:

1. If you threaten to harm yourself or someone else, we have an obligation to get help.
2. We are also required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse, neglect and/or maltreatment.

**Access to Records**

You have the right to access your own child's record during a parent conference with the Early Head Start/Head Start staff. You may request, and be provided with, an additional copy of any document that was initially supplied by you. Any documentation pertaining to the Early Head Start/Head Start student that was NOT initially supplied by the parent is considered property of the Early Head Start/Head Start program and shall not be released from the school. In addition to Early Head Start/Head Start personnel, Child Care Licensing representatives may request and receive access to student's files for the purpose of audits or investigations.

**Non-Discrimination Policy**

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

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Child Abuse, Neglect and Maltreatment Reporting**

Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Texas, and so is failure to report it. All HCDE employees receive training on Child Abuse & Neglect upon hire and annually thereafter. Every Early Head Start/Head Start employee is a mandated reporter and, as such, by law must report any concerns of child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Reports must be made within 48 hours

from the time when a staff detects any potential abuse or neglect. The HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start staff does not investigate whether abuse, neglect or maltreatment took place. However, Children’s Protective Services (CPS) does. Calls made to the Child Abuse Hotline (**800-252-5400**) are confidential. It is important to remember that a report made to CPS does not mean abuse or neglect took place. Early Head Start/Head Start staff will support families who are involved with CPS and will preserve absolute confidentiality of all records pertaining to the report in accordance with state law.

### **Who can I contact if I need help?**

There are numerous community resources available to support parents and family members stop the cycle of abuse. Your FSP is available to discuss ways in which the Early Head Start/Head Start program can help.

### **Information Parents Must Keep Up-To-Date**

We need your HELP! If any of the following items change in your family, please contact the Center Manager and/or FSP. This way we can assist you better in meeting your child’s needs. Please update your child’s Emergency Contact Information form if the following information changes:

- ★ Name
- ★ Address
- ★ Phone number
- ★ Emergency Contact Person and their phone number
- ★ Authorized Person and their phone number

### **Parent Concerns/Complaints**

In the event a parent or guardian has a grievance, the following steps should be taken:

1. The concern should first be brought to the attention of the Center Manager.
2. If the proposed solution is unsatisfactory to the parent, he/she may submit a written grievance describing the problem or complaint to the Head Start Senior Director at:

Harris County Department of Education  
Attn: Senior Director Head Start  
6300 Irvington Blvd – Houston, TX 77022

The parent shall be contacted by the Senior Director within 10 working days of the proposed action to resolve the grievance. If the proposed action is unsatisfactory to the parent, the matter may be further appealed to the HCDE Assistant Superintendent of Programs, who will notify the parent of his/her decision within 10 working days. Letters should be addressed to:

Harris County Department of Education  
Attn: Assistant Superintendent for Academic Support Services  
6300 Irvington Blvd – Houston, TX 77022

### **Changes in Program Operation Policies**

Any change in program policy and operation is shared with parents during the monthly Parent Committee Meeting. The document stating the change is sent to all parents and is also posted on the school’s Family Information Board.

### **Parent and Staff Communications**

Each school is staffed by a team of many caring professionals. This includes Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Family Services Providers (FSP), and a Center Manager (CM). Depending on the location, it may also include an Assistant Center Manager (ACM), Cook(s), and Housekeeper(s). Each of these individuals is available throughout the day to provide you and your child with any assistance needed to make your Early Head Start/Head Start experience an enjoyable and successful one! Your CBMT consists of your Center Manager, Assistant Center Manager (if applicable), and Family Services Provider(s). They are available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have regarding the Early Head Start/Head Start program.

Emergency situations such as inclement weather and power or water outages may cause the center to be closed. It is important that you keep the center informed of how you can be reached, at all times, by updating your contact information when changed. In cases of inclement weather or other emergencies that result in center closure, an automated system or campus staff will notify you by phone. Information regarding Early Head Start/Head Start program closures can also be found at [www.hcde-texas.org](http://www.hcde-texas.org).

In the event of an emergency evacuation, the Emergency Plan is different for each location and contains information about how, when and where we will evacuate the campus. The Emergency Plan is located for review in the school’s lobby and in each classroom.

## **Sex Offender Exclusion Policy**

For the safety of all enrolled students, HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start excludes persons known to be convicted of a sexual offense from participation in program activities in compliance with Texas Licensing Standards for Child Care Facilities. The names of all parents/guardians, authorized persons to pick up a child and volunteers are checked against the Texas State Sex Offender registry and findings are documented in the student's electronic file in the program's database. Staff ensure a family's right to confidentiality is not breached while also communicating to any staff who need such information in order to perform their job responsibilities. A plan is developed with the family and the family must agree to adhere to the plan.

The biological parent/stepparent/guardian, who is a convicted sex offender must provide an official letter from his/her probation/parole officer proving that the conditions and restrictions allow his/her presence on school property. The sex offender must provide the letter whenever they appear on the property unless the individual's identity can be verified. A copy of the letter also remains in the electronic file of each child in the family. A biological parent/stepparent/guardian, who is a convicted sex offender **will only be allowed to drop off or pick-up a child, sign him/her in and/or out, at the front desk only (not the classroom) and immediately depart the school. The individual may not participate in any Early Head Start/Head Start group activities which bring them into contact with other children.**

**Any adult who is a convicted sex offender and not related to an enrolled child is not allowed to:**

- ★ Volunteer in the program in any capacity
- ★ Be listed as a contact person or authorized pick-up person on the Emergency Contact Form
- ★ Attend socialization (learn and play groups), parent meetings, school events, or any Early Head Start/Head Start sponsored activities
- ★ Be at the school or on program premises for any reason

**THIS POLICY IS STRICTLY ENFORCED AS OUTLINED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY LAW**

## **The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

We know that families experiencing homelessness often keep their situation and circumstances hidden from others because they worry about being judged, or they are fearful of involvement from child welfare services. What a family may not realize is that their living situation qualifies them for additional support and that children and youth experiencing homelessness are guaranteed educational rights and protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The ***McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's*** definition of homelessness reflects the reality of many families today, and it specifically addresses what is meant by the term "homeless children and youth." The term "homeless children and youth" refers to *individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes the following four categories:*

### ***Children and youth who:***

- *share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;*
- *are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations;*
- *are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or*
- *are abandoned in hospitals;*
- *are awaiting foster care placement;*
- *have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;*
- *are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;*  
*or*
- *children of migrant or seasonal workers who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances.*

The McKinney-Vento Act does not provide a definition for "*fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence*", as stated in the definition above. Here is how we describe those terms:

- A "fixed nighttime residence" is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.
- A "regular nighttime residence" is used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis.
- An "adequate nighttime residence" sufficiently meets the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

The following are some of the ***educational rights and protections that apply to all homeless children and youth:***

- Non-discrimination
- Homeless children and youth may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.

- Homeless children and youth may not be segregated or stigmatized based on their status as homeless.
- Early Head Start and Head Start eligibility
- Homeless infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children automatically qualify for Early Head Start and Head Start services.
- **School enrollment.** Schools must enroll students in homeless situations immediately, even if the students do not have the documents normally required for enrollment (such as medical or immunization records, proof of residency, birth certificate, proof of guardianship, or other documents). Students must remain enrolled in school while the records are obtained. If a student does not have immunizations, an immunization record and/or medical records, the school must assist the student to obtain them and the student must remain enrolled in the meantime. Schools must maintain records for students experiencing homelessness so that they can be transferred promptly to future schools, as needed.
- **School selection.** Students can continue attending the school they are in the entire time they are homeless, and until the end of any academic year they move into permanent housing.
- **Transportation.** At a parent or guardian's request, homeless students must be provided with transportation to and from their school. Local Education Agencies must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.

## Campus Closures

### Holidays

Although we try to keep our calendar as similar as possible to the surrounding school districts, it is not always possible to schedule the exact same holidays, early dismissals, and/or professional staff development days. Please see the Student Calendar posted at the school for the exact dates for Early Head Start/Head Start.

### Professional Staff Development Days

In order to allow staff to continue to learn about the important job they do with students and families, Early Head Start and Head Start campuses close for staff workdays and staff development days. Any additional closures will be announced as early in the year as possible in order to enable parents to make other child care arrangements.

### Bad Weather & Emergency Closure Days

HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start classes are closed based on the determination of the Head Start Senior Director and/or HCDE Superintendent. Notifications of such closure will be sent out to families by phone call and the voice messaging system called School Messenger. Feel free to contact your child's campus for a recorded message.

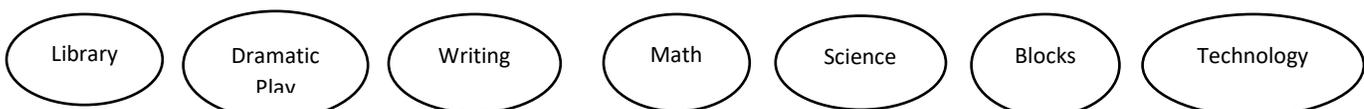
## Education and Special Services

### Early Childhood Curriculum

Educational activities are planned to encourage, excite and promote a curiosity for learning in students. The activities provided are developed from the use of several early childhood curriculums. By carefully planning activities that promote learning, your child will leave Early Head Start/Head Start with the skills and knowledge that he/she needs to be school ready. At ISD campuses, the students are dually enrolled (which means they are enrolled in both the Head Start program and the school district). Therefore, there may be a school-adopted curriculum implemented as well.

### The Classroom Setting

On the Parent Board located in each classroom, you will find the weekly classroom lesson plan and classroom schedule. Each day, your child will have the opportunity to choose from a variety of learning centers set up to develop and extend learning in the areas of math, science and literacy. At school sites, your child's educational experience may be extended to an additional classroom for learning activities like art, physical education, or other extracurricular activity. You will see some of the following learning centers your child's classroom:



The below Guiding Principles of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework for birth to 5 underlie the program policies and practices that prepare young students for success in school and beyond:

CENTRAL DOMAINS					
	APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication Literacy	Mathematics Development Scientific Reasoning	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development

### Enrichment Activities

Your child will participate in a variety of enrichment and in-school activities beyond the regular classroom such as plays, traveling petting zoos and Mad Science traveling experiments, just to name a few. He/she will also enjoy opportunities to learn which may be located outside of the school, including nature walks. Parents will always be notified if/when their child will be participating in an activity located away from the school.

### Parent-Teacher Interactions

A key component of the Early Head Start and Head Start program is the ongoing communication and relationship between Early Head Start/Head Start staff and you. Working together, we are sure to achieve the greatest results for your child. Two (2) Teacher Home Visits and two (2) Parent Teacher Conferences are scheduled to allow time for you and the teachers to discuss the progress of your child. During this time, you and the Teachers will:

- ★ Get to know each other and ask questions
- ★ Share information and concerns
- ★ Create goals and plans
- ★ Report student progress
- ★ Discuss volunteer activities
- ★ Plan transition activities



### Home Visits

Teachers conduct at least two (2) home visits per program year. The purpose of having a visit in the home is for staff to begin and extend the relationship with you and your child in a setting where you and your child are most comfortable. The first home visit will involve a discussion about your child's development and his/her strengths and needs. Teachers and parents begin planning goals and activities for the child based on information shared. The second home visit is to plan for transition out of the classroom or program and to discuss the child's progress in the program.

### Transitions

The School Readiness goals of the HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start programs are to prepare students and parents for a successful transition from one learning environment to the next. Transition activities will be used throughout the year to help your child move with ease from the Early Head Start classroom to the Head Start classroom or other preschool, and on to the kindergarten classroom. Listed below are some of the activities that may be used to help make the transition to new environments easier for you and your child:

- ★ Reading books about moving to a new school/starting school
- ★ Introducing your child to new activities, schedules and routines that may be at their new school
- ★ Discussing your expectations of your child's transition during home visits and parent-teacher conferences
- ★ Encouraging you to take your child to the new school prior to the first day so that he/she can feel more comfortable
- ★ Having representatives from local schools come to speak at our Head Start school

### Student Guidance and Discipline

The HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start program strives to create an environment that supports growth, development and positive self-esteem for all students. Our discipline practices are:

- ★ Individualized and consistent for each student
- ★ Appropriate to the student's level of understanding
- ★ Directed toward teaching the student acceptable behavior and self-control

Early Head Start and Head Start staff **only** use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:

- ★ Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior

- ★ Reminding a student of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- ★ Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- ★ Using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the student's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the student's age
- ★ Teaching students how to calm themselves

There will be **NO** harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any student. The following types of discipline and guidance are **PROHIBITED**:

- ★ Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- ★ Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- ★ Pinching, shaking, or biting a student
- ★ Hitting a student with a hand or instrument
- ★ Putting anything in or on a student's mouth
- ★ Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a student
- ★ Subjecting a student to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- ★ Placing a student in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- ★ Requiring a student to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the student's age

The following steps are ways staff will help a student who is having a behavioral problem:

- |  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| ★ Set limits                             | ★ Appropriate touch          |
| ★ Give reminders of appropriate behavior | ★ Removal to a safe place    |
| ★ Maintain a calm voice and attitude     | ★ Removal from the classroom |
| ★ Redirect the student's behavior        | ★ Removal from the school    |

### **School Celebrations**

These celebrations vary from school-to-school. Many schools host holiday events and activities throughout the year. Events are hosted towards the end of the school day as not to interrupt the important instructional schedule. Contact your school for specific event times and dates.

### **Student Birthday Celebrations**

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday during the Early Head Start/Head Start day, our staff is happy to support you in making it an extra special day for the students. Please notify the Teacher at least 2 weeks in advance so that we can make the appropriate preparations. Early Head Start/Head Start will provide the meals and snack for the day. **No outside food of any kind will be permitted to give to the students** (i.e. cake, cupcakes, candy, snacks etc.). The following ideas are recommended for parents who would like to do something special for the class:

- ★ Bring party bags filled with age-appropriate, non-food items such as stickers, crayons, erasers, etc.
- ★ Pick your child's favorite book to read to the students and donate the book to the class
- ★ Help set up and play party games with the students
- ★ Make and/or use puppets with the students
- ★ Share a variety of poems or stories with the students

### **Early Head Start/Head Start Food Guidelines**

Texas state requirements do not allow meals prepared at home to be served on the campus. Only food prepared at the school may be served on the campus. **Parents are not permitted to bring any food, candy, or snacks to the campus for distribution to students at any time.**

### **Screenings**

All Early Head Start/Head Start students participate in a screening/assessment process within their first 45 days of entry into the program. Students are assessed in the following areas:

- ★ Developmental
- ★ Articulation
- ★ Vision
- ★ Hearing
- ★ Nutrition
- ★ Height and Weight

These screenings are provided at no cost to you. A screening is a brief check to identify the students who may need further evaluation or treatment. It provides valuable information that is used along with parent reports, observation data and home visit information to assess the strengths of your child. Screening results are shared with you during your Teacher Home Visit or Parent Teacher Conference. If screening results indicate further assessment or treatment is needed, your Education and Special Services team will assist you in the referral process. The earlier that we screen your child, gather information and make any necessary referrals, the sooner your child will receive the appropriate services or treatment that he/she may need. At HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start, we believe that this early intervention is vital to meeting your child's needs. All screening information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only to help access appropriate care as needed. If you have any questions about the screening process or questions about the recommended follow-up, please contact your Center Manager, Assistant Center Manager (if applicable) or FSP(s).

### **Disabilities Services**

Head Start Program Performance Standards require that students be referred to their local school district for evaluation as soon as they have been identified as having a suspected disability. It is the goal of HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start to identify all students with disabilities in a timely manner to ensure they receive the appropriate special services at no cost.

Areas of disability include the following:

- ★ Autism
- ★ Intellectual disabilities
- ★ Developmental delay
- ★ Hearing impairment
- ★ Speech impairment
- ★ Visual impairment
- ★ Health impairment
- ★ Physical impairments
- ★ Emotional disturbance

Whether your child is enrolled in an Early Head Start/Head Start program located on a school campus or not, we work with the local education agency to meet the needs of your child. For example, your child may be enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start while also receiving speech therapy from his/her local school district or ECI. Parents and agency staff work together to create an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each Head Start student, or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for each Early Head Start student with an identified disability. Early Head Start/Head Start staff will then work with parents and agency personnel to ensure that the plan is carried out to best meet the needs of the student. If you have any questions/concerns about accessing disability services for your child, please contact the FSP at your campus.

### **Mental Wellness Services**

HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start Mental Wellness services include a regular schedule of center visits by a Mental Health Professional to:

- ★ Ensure positive teacher- student interaction
- ★ Develop activities to address the specific behavioral needs of a student or a group of students
- ★ Provide individual or group sessions for students to support social-emotional development
- ★ Provide training and workshops based on parent and staff needs
- ★ Make referrals to community resources



As a student in the Early Head Start/Head Start program, your child may be observed by the Education and Special Services staff in his/her classroom. No additional mental health evaluations or counseling services will be provided without your prior approval and written consent.

## **HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES**

The Early Head Start/Head Start program strives to support healthy and happy lifestyles for all our students. This includes working with families to ensure that they have access to local healthcare resources and medical care providers. It also includes working with you to ensure that your child is receiving ongoing medical care such as regular physical exams, dental exams, and follow-up care from healthcare providers as needed. If you encounter any challenges in obtaining any of the items mentioned above, please contact your FSP. We are pleased to help you locate low-cost provider options.

### **Physical Exams**

Head Start students are required to complete an annual physical exam. Early Head Start students must complete a physical exam at 2 weeks, followed by visits at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24 and 30 months. A Well Child Physical Exam form will be provided to you by the FSP to be completed by your child's physician. This document must be completed in its entirety and returned to the FSP within 90 days of starting the Early Head Start/Head Start program or whenever due according to age. You may also be required to provide documentation that your child has tested negative for Tuberculosis (TB). To monitor your child's health, you will also be required to submit further diagnostic testing like lead and hemoglobin/hematocrit results.

### **Dental Exams**

Beginning at 6 months of age, all students are required to complete a dental exam every 6 months. A Dental Exam form will be provided to you by the FSP to be completed by your child's dentist. This document must be completed in its entirety and returned to the FSP within 90 days of starting the Early Head Start/Head Start program, and as they are due during the school year. The Early Head Start/Head Start program also incorporates toothbrushing into the classroom daily routine to teach students proper dental hygiene habits. We provide gauze or toothbrushes and toothpaste for each student. Establishing good dental hygiene habits at a young age will help students develop strong, healthy teeth as they grow up.

### **Immunizations**

To prevent the spread of dangerous and deadly diseases, all students are required to be current on their immunizations throughout their participation in the Early Head Start/Head Start program. Your child's immunization record will be reviewed upon admission into the program. Students must receive all vaccinations in accordance with the Recommended Immunization Schedule by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Failure to update your child's immunizations prior to their expiration date will result in your child being excluded from participation in the program. Your child will be unable to return until all immunizations have been updated. Extended absences may result in your child being withdrawn from the Early Head Start/Head Start program.

### **Special Healthcare Needs and Medication**

HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start will not deny program admission or exclude any enrolled child from program participation for a long-term period solely based on his/her health care needs or medication requirements. However, if keeping the student poses a significant risk to the health or safety of the student or anyone in contact with the student, and the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable modifications, alternative placement may be recommended. Students with chronic or recurring health conditions must have an Individual Care Plan (ICP) completed by a physician. In addition to the ICP, students with asthma must also have an Asthma Action Plan completed by a physician. These documents must be completed in their entirety and returned to the FSP prior to enrollment into the Early Head Start/Head Start program. The ICP documents the specific medical concern and any specialized treatment or medication that your child must receive while participating in the Head Start program. The Asthma Action Plan describes how to control asthma long term and how to handle worsening asthma or attacks. Prescription medication will only be administered in the Early Head Start/Head Start school if:

- ★ An ICP is completed by the physician
- ★ The medication is in its original container and has an original prescription label with your child's full name on it
- ★ The prescription label has specific instructions on when and how much of the medication to give your child
- ★ The medication is within its expiration date
- ★ You sign an authorization form for Early Head Start/Head Start staff to administer medication to your child

Early Head Start/Head Start staff will strictly adhere to the administration directions and dosages on the physician's order. Any changes must be made in writing and signed by the physician. Over-the-counter medication may be administered when it is in its original, unopened container, and is identified on the ICP. Any notes written by you giving directions for medication administration will not be accepted. Only ICPs completed by your child's physician will be accepted.

**Parents/guardians should make every attempt to administer medicine to their child before and after school hours. Campus staff is only allowed to administer medicine that has been prescribed by a health-care professional and documented as required during school hours. Medication must be transported to and from the school by the parent/guardian and may not be placed in a child's backpack. There may be additional medication requirements for students on ISD campuses.**

### **Diaper Ointment, Insect Repellent and Sunscreen**

You may bring diaper ointment, non-aerosol insect repellent and/or sunscreen to the campus to have it applied to your child during the program day. The items must be within their expiration date and will be administered according to the instructions indicated on the product labeling, appropriate for the student's age. You must supply the items in their original containers and sign a permission form before Early Head Start/Head Start staff can apply them to your child.

### **Diapering**

Early Head Start/Head Start staff will provide diaper changes for those students in need of this service. Early Head Start and Head Start will provide diapers, pull-ups and wipes for students at its campuses. You can address whether your child has a skin allergy or if a child's pediatrician does not recommend use of topical products when diapering.

### **Notification of Health Insurance**

One of the key factors in a family's ability to access affordable ongoing healthcare is whether they have health insurance coverage. As a part of the Early Head Start/Head Start program, all students must obtain health care coverage. Proof of coverage must be provided to the FSP within 30 days of entry into the Early Head Start/Head Start program. The Family Services Provider will assist families who are currently uninsured to obtain healthcare coverage. This may be Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, or another form of coverage. Health insurance coverage will be verified at the start of each school year and again during the spring semester.

### **When Your Child is Sick**

If your child is brought to school when sick, or becomes ill, we will require that he/she be taken home immediately. Your child is not well enough to be in class if any of the following symptoms are noted:

- ★ An oral temperature of 101 degrees or higher
- ★ A sore red throat, even if no fever is present
- ★ An earache
- ★ A deep hacking cough
- ★ Severe congestion
- ★ Vomiting (3 or more times in 24 hours)
- ★ Diaper rash that is bleeding or contains pus
- ★ Diarrhea (3 or more times in 24 hours)
- ★ Yellow discharge from the eyes
- ★ An unexplained rash
- ★ Complaints of stiff neck and headache with symptoms
- ★ Seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes
- ★ Cuts or pus-filled openings in the skin
- ★ A contagious disease

If your child gets sick while at school, your child will be isolated from the group to protect other students from exposure. Staff will closely supervise the student until the parent/guardian arrives. If a student gets ill at school with a communicable illness, staff will provide a notice to notify other parents. The student's name will be kept confidential.

A student can return to school when he/she has been free from fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea for 24 hours. A student with a contagious illness will be allowed to return to campus when the parent/guardian provides a "permission to return to school" note from his/her health-care provider.

### **Head Lice**

Head lice are common among prekindergarten students. If your child has live head lice, you will be contacted to come and pick him/her up from school. Upon pick-up, the parent (or person responsible for pick-up) will be provided with RID by staff and a parent checklist that provides guidance and educational material regarding lice and the removal process. For safety reasons, RID is only provided for students who are 24 months of age or older. Students may not return to school until they are free of the live head lice.

### **Accidents, Emergencies & Injuries**

HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start works hard to provide a safe environment for our students at all times. Staff always make every attempt to prevent accidents/injuries by closely supervising students. Schools are equipped with age appropriate equipment and toys in the classrooms, and we take extra measures to provide protective playground surfaces and equipment. If a student has a minor accident and/or injury during the school day, the staff will:

- ★ Provide appropriate First Aid to your child
- ★ Inform you of the incident by phone immediately (or as soon as practicable) and in writing the day of the incident/injury

Each Early Head Start/Head Start campus employs staff members who are trained in both First Aid and CPR. If your child has a serious accident and/or injury during the school day, a trained staff member will:

- ★ Call 911 (if needed)
- ★ Provide First Aid/CPR
- ★ Contact you to pick up your child

**NOTE:** If your child needs to be transported by an ambulance and you are not available, a staff member will accompany your child. If you are not available, the Emergency Contact names you have provided will be contacted.

### **Vaccine Preventable Diseases for Employees**

Employees of HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start are not required to be immunized.

### **Safety & Sanitation**

The health and safety of our students is a high priority. Accordingly, the Early Head Start/Head Start program practices strict cleaning and sanitation practices. In addition to creating a healthy and safe environment through cleaning practices, we also work to ensure that the staff hired to work at the Early Head Start/Head Start school are in good health and free of communicable diseases. Upon hire, each employee must present results of a health assessment, including tuberculosis testing. HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start Area I does not require staff to have any vaccinations against preventable diseases at this time.

### **Healthy Meals and Special Diets**

The Early Head Start and Head Start Program promotes good nutrition and healthy eating habits. At free-standing locations, we participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and receive reimbursement for serving meals that meet the USDA program requirements, providing your child with 2/3 of their daily nutrient requirements. Students enjoy three meals a day including breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Meals are served Family Style, with the exception of some ISD locations.

Family style meal service helps students learn to serve themselves, developing motor, social and language skills, in addition to the importance of sharing with classmates.

The menu for our free-standing locations are created by Licensed and Registered Dietitians and include a variety of foods. Parents are encouraged to provide their input for future menus. Early Head Start and Head Start Programs can accommodate special food needs for the following reasons:

- ★ **Medical diagnosis** – A form must be completed by a physician, documenting the restricted food and acceptable substitutes. This form is required and updated annually.
- ★ **Religious or cultural preference** – A form must be completed by the parent and updated annually.

Special dietary needs for children with medical conditions or disabilities will be accommodated at no extra cost to the family. Special dietary needs for children with allergies, medical restrictions, or religious preferences will be accommodated to every extent possible. A Individual Care Plan must be on file to accommodate any special diet modifications. Please speak to your Center Manager and FSP for instructions regarding special diets.

### **Early Head Start Feeding Practices**

We welcome breastfed babies and support and encourage mothers to continue breastfeeding when returning to work or school. If your child is exclusively breastfed, you can choose to come to the center and breastfeed your infant. Breastfeeding mothers will be ensured a place to breastfeed by contacting the Center Manager. Mothers can also provide the center with expressed breastmilk. Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the best source of nutrition for infants. The Institute of Medicine and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be exclusively breastfed for the first six months and then the continuation of breastfeeding in conjunction with complementary foods for 1 year or more.

For formula fed infants, HCDE Early Head Start offers the following iron-fortified infant formulas to babies in our care:

- ★ Milk based formula: Similac Advance
- ★ Soy based formula: Gerber Good Start Soy
- ★ Lactose-sensitive formula: Similac Sensitive

You may decline the infant formulas offered to you and supply your own preferred infant formula. We can only supply other brands of infant formulas for your baby when it is required due to a medical diagnosis. Additionally, when your infant is developmentally ready, HCDE Early Head Start will provide infant cereal and other developmentally appropriate solid foods. After the age of 1 (13-23 months), all children will be served the regular Early Head Start menu with whole milk and at 24 months to age 5, skim milk will be provided with the meals.

Early Head Start maintains individual feeding information for each infant and toddler about what foods the student is eating and is being introduced to; and foods to which they may be allergic. Together, the parent and teacher update the information every 30 days. The food your child eats is documented on the Infant Toddler Report.

### **Head Start Nap/Rest Time**

Head Start's daily schedule includes time for students to rest. Students are not required to sleep if they are not tired. Students are encouraged to rest by lying down or by doing a quiet activity. Students rest in their classrooms in designated areas and on designated mat/cots. Mats/cots are sanitized daily and as needed. His/her name is placed on it to identify it for his/her use only. Parents are asked

to bring a small blanket for their child to cover up with during rest time. Parents may also bring a small pillow if a student would like one.

### **Early Head Start Nap/Rest Time**

Early Head Start's daily schedule includes time for infants and toddlers to rest. However, infants and toddlers rest as often as needed. Infants and toddlers rest in their classrooms in designated areas and on designated mat/cots/cribs. Infants are provided a with an individual crib. His/her name is placed on it to identify it for his/her use only. Infants will not be left in their crib if they are awake. Toddlers are provided an individual mat/cot. His/her name is placed on it to identify it for his/her use only. Cribs are sanitized by staff weekly or as needed. Mats/cots are sanitized daily and as needed. Sheets and blankets are washed by staff weekly or more frequently, as needed.

Early Head Start is required to follow safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS). Each parent/guardian is required to read and sign the Operational Policy on Infant Safe Sleep and will be provided a copy of the policy.

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at will follow these safe sleep recommendations:

- ★ Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation and signed by the infant's health care professional;
- ★ Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full-size cribs and for non-full size cribs;
- ★ For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices; Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing; not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation;
- ★ Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult;
- ★ If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing such as footed pajamas and/or a non-swaddling wearable blanket, as an alternative to blankets;
- ★ Place only one infant in a crib to sleep;
- ★ Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must not be attached to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk;
- ★ If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health-care professional;
- ★ Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e-cigarettes and any type of vaporizers);
- ★ Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound;
- ★ If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position;
- ★ Awake infants will have supervised "tummy time" several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally; and
- ★ Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide Form 3019, Infant Sleep Exception/Health Care Professional Recommendation, signed by the infant's health care professional.

### **Toilet Training**

Early Head Start/Head Start school staff will begin toilet training when the student shows signs of readiness and parents indicate they are ready for the commitment it takes. Many children begin toilet training when they turn 2 years old. Toilet training takes a lot of patience and consistency. Staff never gets upset or punish students if they have a toileting accident. "Pull-ups" can be used during toilet training. The staff want to be consistent with what you use at home so the student will not be confused. During this time, it is important to bring extra sets of clothes to school.

## **FAMILY SERVICES**



In addition to providing learning and development opportunities for your child, the Early Head Start/Head Start program also focuses on providing growth opportunities for you and family members.

### **Family Services Providers**

FSP are located at each Early Head Start/Head Start school. Beginning at the time of application and throughout the school year, FSP maintain constant contact with families to ensure that they are aware of the many benefits offered by the Early Head Start/Head Start program. FSP are available to assist families at any time during business hours. During the enrollment process, FSP conduct a Family Services Assessment to identify and address family's needs and strengths.

### **Individualized Family Partnership Agreement**

Throughout the year, FSP work with families to address any identified needs and build upon identified strengths. This often occurs through the completion of the Individualized Family Partnership Agreement (IFPA). You may identify interest in returning to school, obtaining job training, learning English, obtaining better housing, or any other personal goal. The FSP will locate the necessary resources in the community to support your family in accomplishing your goals. Throughout this process, the Family Services Provider will check in with you and your progress until the goal is accomplished. The FSP is always available to support you throughout the school year, to ensure that you have all the tools and support necessary to meet your goals.

### **Referrals**

The Early Head Start/Head Start program works collaboratively with many agencies in the community to offer low cost or no cost services to Early Head Start/Head Start families. To best meet families' needs, FSPs maintain a list of local resources and community agencies who provide a variety of social services throughout Harris County. FSPs provide families with referrals to programs in the community for services including counseling, job training, adult education, healthcare, and much more. FSPs also provide ongoing support and follow up with families to ensure that you have been able to successfully benefit from the referrals provided.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are a way for FSPs to schedule personalized and individualized meeting times with you in the comfort of your own home. Home visits may occur when there are student attendance concerns or other identified needs of the family.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

A Parent's involvement in their child's education is one of the most effective indicators of a child's success in school and in life. There are many ways that you can become involved in your child's success at HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start. One of the ways to accomplish this is to observe your child during the school day. You are always welcome to visit the school and observe your child at any time during the school day. No appointment is necessary.



### **Family Connection**

Early Head Start/Head Start Family Connection teaches parents how to make the most of everyday moments with their child/children. Because families are their child's first and most important teachers and role models, the rich language experiences provided by parents in everyday life allow children to enter school as better readers and learners. Early Head Start/Head Start Family Connection is available at each of our centers and is open to all our families. Join us for this series of sessions conducted as an extension of the academic day, throughout the school year and make sure your child is set up for success in reading, learning, school and beyond!

### **Volunteers**

You are always encouraged and welcomed to come to the campus to volunteer your time with the Early Head Start/Head Start program. This may be in your child's classroom, in the campus office or participating in a campus activity. Volunteer criteria are available in each campus office. Just sign in at the front desk and speak with one of our helpful campus staff.

### **Parent Committee**

Each parent enrolled in the Early Head Start/Head Start program automatically becomes a member of their school's parent committee. Parent Committee meetings are held monthly to give you an opportunity to provide input on the events and activities at your school, as well as to attend informative workshops of your choice. They are also held to provide you with information about services in the community, tips and tools for healthy families and various training topics requested by parents/guardians.

Each school's Parent Committee elects officers during the first meeting of the school year. At this meeting, you will have the opportunity to run for one of the following positions:

- |                         |                       |                                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| ★ Chairperson           | ★ Secretary           | ★ Policy Council Representative |
| ★ Assistant Chairperson | ★ Assistant Secretary | ★ Policy Council Alternate      |

Participation and attendance at Parent Committee meetings is essential to the success of each Early Head Start/Head Start campus as well as the success of your child in the Early Head Start/Head Start program.

### **Policy Council**

Being on Parent Committee you get to make decisions that affect your school. Being on Policy Council you get to vote on decisions that shape the entire program. Two parents from each center are elected by the Parent Committee to serve on the Policy Council, one serves as a representative and one serves as an alternate. The Policy Council also contains community members and HCDE board members. The Policy Council meets monthly to review and vote on ideas and plans concerning the Early Head Start/Head Start program. It is also an opportunity for parents to network and advocate for Early Head Start/Head Start children. At every meeting, babysitting is provided, and dinner is served for both adults and children. Mileage reimbursement is also offered from your home to the location Policy Council is held.

### **Services Advisory Committees**

Advisory Committees are designed to gather input from a variety of sources regarding program plans and services. HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start currently offers two Services Advisory Committees. The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) is comprised of parents, health care professionals, and other volunteers from the community. HSAC provides input on program procedures and guidance on program issues related to health and safety. The Education Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) is comprised of parents, education professionals, and other volunteers from the community. ESAC reviews child outcomes data and adjusts school readiness goals as needed. We welcome the addition of new parent representatives and encourage you to contact any member of your CBMT if you are interested in participating.

## **IN-KIND**

Early Head Start/Head Start receives 80% of its funding from the federal government. Early Head Start/Head Start families, local businesses and other community agencies graciously generate the other 20% through in-kind contributions, donations and volunteerism.

### **Volunteer Program**

Our volunteer program promotes parental and community involvement in all aspects of Early Head Start/Head Start. Volunteers may assist in Early Head Start and Head Start campuses or in other functions of the program outside of the centers. All prospective volunteers must:

- ★ Attend a Volunteer Orientation Training
- ★ Fill out a Volunteer Application and Interest Survey Form/Volunteer Agreement
- ★ Allow HCDE to conduct a criminal background check (paid by HCDE)
- ★ Complete a TB Questionnaire and if necessary complete a TB skin test
- ★ For parents or volunteers that cannot afford to get a TB skin test, FSPs will work with community agencies to locate low cost options in your community.

**Parent Contribution**

The time that you spend working with the Early Head Start and Head Start program is very valuable to us! Not only does it help support the success of your child in the program, it also helps the program to meet its 20% goal of in-kind contributions. Some of the ways in which you contribute towards reaching the in-kind goal are:

- ★ Volunteering in the classroom
- ★ Attending Parent Committee Meetings
- ★ Volunteering as a Super**M**entor
- ★ Attending Policy Council Meetings
- ★ Volunteering at Early Head Start/Head Start Events
- ★ Working on Head Start special projects
- ★ Volunteering to help with school gardens

Parent participation is vital to the success of the Early Head Start/Head Start program! Here are just a few of the many ways that you can help as a volunteer:

- ★ Assist teachers in the classroom
- ★ Assist teachers with preparation for class activities
- ★ Create learning activities for students
- ★ Help with enrichment activities
- ★ Assist in the school's office
- ★ Greet visitors
- ★ Share a talent or special activity
- ★ Assist during mealtimes
- ★ Answer calls
- ★ Help with general maintenance of schools
- ★ Help with landscaping projects

For more information on volunteering, please contact your Center Manager.

## ADDITIONAL SAFETY REGULATIONS

**Safety Regulations**

To help keep your child safe, Early Head Start and Head Start campuses must follow the safety rules and regulations of:

- HCDE Facilities Department
- HCDE Policies and Procedures
- DFPS Child Care Licensing Division
- Local Government Safety Codes
- Head Start Program Performance Standards

Early Head Start/Head Start has made every effort to be prepared to handle emergency situations. Our staff is trained in CPR and First Aid and we conduct regular fire and disaster drills. The local fire department makes inspections regularly. In all emergency situations, Early Head Start and Head Start schools will follow the HCDE Emergency Response Plan.

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalty.



**Persons under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not allowed on the premises nor will children be released to anyone suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.**

*The following items are available for review at your Early Head Start/Head Start Campus:*

- ★ Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers (also available at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us))
- ★ Your center's most recent DFPS Inspection/Investigation Report (compliance information is also available at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us) or from your local Child Care Licensing office)
- ★ Documentation of liability insurance that complies with Human Resources Code, Section 42.0491
- ★ The most recent Fire Marshal Inspection Report
- ★ The most recent Health Department's Sanitation Inspection Report
- ★ The most recent Gas Pipe Inspection Report
- ★ The Child Care Center's Operational Policies

#### **Video Surveillance Cameras**

Video surveillance cameras are installed in common rooms, hallways and spaces at most the HCDE Early Head Start and Head Start campuses. These cameras are installed for the purpose of internal monitoring of students and employees to ensure the safety and security within our facilities. Cameras help us establish an environment of trust, communication and goodwill as part and parcel of the relationship between our schools and families. Footage is viewed only by authorized employees of Harris County Department of Education Early Head Start and Head Start and by state inspectors.

# APPENDIX

# HCDE Early Head Start/Head School Site Locations

## **Barrett Station Head Start**

11901 Mulberry Street  
Crosby, TX 77532  
Phone: (713) 696-3119  
Fax: (713) 696-3110

## **Compton Head Start**

9720 Spaulding Street  
Houston, TX 77016  
Phone: (713) 635-4142  
Fax: (713) 631-8598

## **Fifth Ward Head Start**

4014 Market Street  
Houston, TX 77020  
Phone: (713) 237-0264  
Fax: (713) 225-5341

## **J. D. Walker Head Start**

7613A Wade Road  
Baytown, TX 77521  
Phone: (713) 696-3122  
Fax: (713) 696-3113

## **San Jacinto Head Start**

5800 Uvalde Road  
Houston, TX 77049  
Phone: (713) 696-1853  
Fax: (281) 459-7647

## **Baytown Early Head Start & Head Start**

317 Massey Tompkins Road  
Baytown, TX 77521  
Phone: (713) 696-3120  
Fax: (713) 696-3111

## **Coolwood Head Start**

767 Coolwood Drive  
Houston, TX 77013  
Phone: (713) 451-9024  
Fax: (713) 451-8356

Closed for rebuild

## **Fonwood Head Start**

9709 Mesa Road  
Houston, TX 77078  
Phone: (713) 556-6125  
Fax: Not Applicable

## **La Porte Head Start**

927 South 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
La Porte, TX 77571  
Phone: (713) 696-3123  
Fax: (713) 696-3114

## **Sheffield Head Start**

14300 Wallisville Road  
Houston, TX 77049  
Phone: (713) 450-3813  
Fax: (713) 330-8466

## **Administrative Office**

6300 Irvington Boulevard  
Houston, TX 77022  
Phone: (713) 672-9343  
Fax (713) 672-9363

## **Channelview Head Start**

16102 Ridlon Street  
Channelview, TX 77530  
Phone: (713) 696-1852  
Fax: (281) 452-4707

## **Dogan Head Start**

4202 Liberty Road  
Houston, TX 77026  
Phone: (713) 672-0207  
Fax: (713) 672-7838

## **Humble Head Start**

130-A Atascocita Road  
Humble, TX 77396  
Phone: (713) 696-3121  
Fax: (713) 696-3112

## **Pugh Head Start**

1042 Henke Street  
Houston, TX 77020  
Phone: (713) 675-6222  
Fax: (713) 675-6226

## **Tidwell Head Start**

8302 John Ralston Road  
Houston, TX 77044  
Phone: (713) 696-3124  
Fax: (713) 696-3115

## Parent Community Resources

Wesley Community Center	713-223-8131
United Way of Greater Houston	713-685-2300
Bay Area Homeless Services Inc.	281-837-1654
Catholic Charities	713-526-4611
Emergency aid coalition (South Main)	713-528-3663
FEMA	800-621-3362
Harris County Social Services	713-696-7900
Houston Food Bank Hotline	713-223-3700
Medicaid	877-541-7905
Memorial Assistance Ministries	713-468-4516
Red Cross	713-526-8300
Salvation Army	800-728-7825
Salvation Army Family Center Family Rescue	713-650-6530
Sheltering Arms Senior Services	713-685-6577
Star of Hope Women and Family Center	713-222-2220
Texas Information and referral	877-541-7905
The women's home	713-521-3150
WIC State Program	800-942-3678
Yahweh Mission	713-466-4785
Love Network of Baytown	281-422-5683
Chicago Family Center	713-923-2316

### **Child Abuse and neglect:**

Child Advocates Inc.	713-529-1396
Children's Assessment Center	713-986-3300
Children Court Services/Houston Area Women's Center	713-528-2121
Houston Police Department	911

### **Counseling and parenting skills classes:**

Alliance for Multi-Cultural Community Services	713-776-4700
Bo's Place	713-942-8339
DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
Escape Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Family Services of Greater Houston	713-861-4849
Legacy Community Health Services: Baker Ripley	713-351-7350

### **Domestic Violence and Victims Services:**

Aide for Victims of Domestic Abuse	713-224-9911
Bettys Haven	281-457-6775
Casa Juan Diego	713-869-7376
Family Violence Center: Northwest Assistance Ministries	281-885-4555
Houston Area women's center	713-528-2121
Houston Police department family violence unit	713-308-1100

### **Mental Health Services:**

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance	713-600-1131
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
MHMRA Crisis Line	713-970-7000
NAMI Greater Houston (National Alliance on Mental Health)	713-970-4419
Neuropsychiatric Center (NPC)	713-970-7070
West Oaks	713-995-0909

# HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start Parent Handbook Consent Form

## Parent Handbook Receipt

**Campus's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Student's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the HCDE Early Head Start/Head Start Parent Handbook for the \_\_\_\_\_ school year. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

I agree to bring this Parent Handbook to the Parent Orientation where it will be reviewed with me.

I understand that I have an obligation to inform the Center-Based Management Team of my child's school of any changes in personal information such as phone number, address, or emergency contacts. If I have any comments and/or questions about anything in the Parent Handbook I will contact a member of the Center-Based Management Team.

Parent/ Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please print)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Our school has adopted The "I Love U Guys" Foundation's Standard Response Protocol (SRP). Students and staff will be training, practicing, and drilling the protocol.

## COMMON LANGUAGE

The Standard Response Protocol (SRP) is based on an all-hazards approach as opposed to individual scenarios. Like the Incident Command System (ICS), SRP utilizes clear common language while allowing for flexibility in protocol.

The premise is simple - there are five specific actions that can be performed during an incident. When communicating these, the action is labeled with a "Term of Art" and is then followed by a "Directive." Execution of the action is performed by active participants, including students, staff, teachers and first responders. The SRP is based on the following actions: Hold, Secure, Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter.

## HOLD

**"In Your Classroom or Area"**

**Students** are trained to:

- Clear the hallways and remain in their area or room until the "All Clear" is announced
- Do business as usual

**Adults and staff** are trained to:

- Close and lock the door
- Account for students and adults
- Do business as usual



## SECURE

**"Get Inside. Lock outside doors"**

**Students** are trained to:

- Return to inside of building
- Do business as usual

**Adults and staff** are trained to:

- Bring everyone indoors
- Lock the outside doors
- Increase situational awareness
- Account for students and adults
- Do business as usual



## LOCKDOWN

**"Locks, Lights, Out of Sight"**

**Students** are trained to:

- Move away from sight
- Maintain silence
- Do not open the door

**Adults and staff** are trained to:

- Recover students from hallway if possible
- Lock the classroom door
- Turn out the lights
- Move away from sight
- Maintain silence
- Do not open the door
- Prepare to evade or defend



## EVACUATE

**"To a Location"**

**Students** are trained to:

- Leave stuff behind if required to
- If possible, bring their phone
- Follow instructions

**Adults and staff** are trained to:

- Bring roll sheet and Go Bag (unless instructed not to bring anything with them, dependent on reason for evacuation.)
- Lead students to Evacuation location
- Account for students and adults
- Report injuries or problems using Red Card/Green Card method.



## SHELTER

**"State Hazard and Safety Strategy"**

**Hazards** might include:

- Tornado
- Hazmat
- Earthquake
- Tsunami

**Safety Strategies** might include:

- Evacuate to shelter area
- Seal the room
- Drop, cover and hold
- Get to high ground

**Students** are trained in:

- Appropriate Hazards and Safety Strategies

**Adults and staff** are trained in:

- Appropriate Hazards and Safety Strategies
- Accounting for students and adults
- Report injuries or problems using Red Card/Green Card method.





# STANDARD RESPONSE PROTOCOL

## PARENT GUIDANCE

In the event of a live incident, parents may have questions about their role.

## SECURE

“Get Inside. Lock outside doors”



Secure is called when there is something dangerous outside of the building. Students and staff are brought into the building and the outside doors will be locked. The school might display the Building is Secured poster on entry doors or nearby windows. Inside, it will be business as usual.

### SHOULD PARENTS COME TO THE SCHOOL DURING A SECURE EVENT?

Probably not. Every effort is made to conduct classes as normal during a secure event. Additionally, parents may be asked to stay outside during a Secure event.

### WHAT IF PARENTS NEED TO PICK UP THEIR STUDENT?

Depending on the situation, it may not be safe to release the student. As the situation evolves, Secure might change to a Monitored Entry and/or Controlled Release.

### WILL PARENTS BE NOTIFIED WHEN A SCHOOL GOES INTO SECURE?

When a secure event is brief or the hazard is non-violent, like a wild animal on the playground, there may not be a need to notify parents while the Secure is in place.

With longer or more dangerous events, the school should notify parents that the school has increased their security.

## LOCKDOWN

“Locks, Lights, Out of Sight”



A Lockdown is called when there is something dangerous inside of the building. Students and staff are trained to enter or remain in a room that can be locked, and maintain silence.

A Lockdown is only initiated when there is an active threat inside or very close to the building.

### SHOULD PARENTS COME TO THE SCHOOL DURING A LOCKDOWN?

The natural inclination for parents is to go to the school during a Lockdown. Understandable, but perhaps problematic. If there is a threat inside the building, law enforcement will be responding. It is unlikely that parents will be granted access to the building or even the campus. If parents are already in the school, they will be instructed to Lockdown as well.

### SHOULD PARENTS TEXT THEIR STUDENTS?

The school recognizes the importance of communication between parents and students during a Lockdown event. Parents should be aware though, during the initial period of a Lockdown, it may not be safe for students to text their parents. As the situation resolves, students may be asked to update their parents on a regular basis.

In some cases, students may be evacuated and transported off-site for a student-parent reunification.

### WHAT ABOUT UNANNOUNCED DRILLS?

The school may conduct unscheduled drills, however it is highly discouraged to conduct one without announcing that it as a drill. That’s called an unannounced drill and can cause undue concern and stress.

Parents should recognize that the school will always inform students that it is a drill during the initial announcement.

It’s important to differentiate between a **drill** and an exercise. A drill is used to create the “Muscle Memory” associated with a practiced action. There is no simulation of an event; this is simply performing the action. An exercise simulates an actual event to test the capacity of personnel and equipment.

### CAN PARENTS OBSERVE OR PARTICIPATE IN THE DRILLS?

The school welcomes parents who wish to observe or participate in drills.

