WCMCA
HEAD START

Parent
Policy
Handbook

2019 - 2020

Serving Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wadena Counties

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc.
411 Industrial Park Blvd
Elbow Lake MN 56531
218-685-4486 or 800-492-4805
Also available on our website at
www.wcmca.org/programs/headstart-program
WELCOME TO HEAD START!

WEST CENTRAL HEAD START MISSION STATEMENT

Head Start provides a supportive environment that encourages children, families, staff, and communities to thrive by identifying strengths and opportunities, and developing strong partnerships to meet needs.

Serving Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse and Wadena Counties

This handbook is for parents of children enrolled in Head Start in West Central Minnesota. It contains important information for all parents about the Head Start program. Included is specific information on the Center Based and Home-Based options used in our program. Your child will be enrolled in one of these options. Each of our center classrooms are licensed for 20 Preschool aged children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Center My Child Attends:</th>
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<td>My class meets on these days:</td>
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<td>My class meets at the following time:</td>
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<td>Location/Address:</td>
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<td>Telephone Number of Center:</td>
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<td>Emergency Weather Stations in my Area:</td>
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<td>Family Education Specialist’s Phone Number(s):</td>
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<td>Your Family Education Specialist’s Supervisor is:</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Head Start Main Office Numbers:</td>
<td>1-218-685-4486</td>
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<td>Head Start Main Office Address:</td>
<td>West Central Head Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start Director:</td>
<td>Valerie Arnquist</td>
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Our Community Resource Guide is located on our website [http://www.wcmca.org/programs/headstart-program/](http://www.wcmca.org/programs/headstart-program/)

Approved by Policy Council on 4/19/19
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Dear Head Start Parents,

West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc. (WCMCA) would like to welcome your family to the Head Start Program and to the many services of WCMCA. During your time in Head Start, the Agency would like to assist your family with any other agency programs that you find helpful for your family.

For more information on the services offered by WCMCA please refer to the Head Start Community Resource Guide located on our website: www.wcmca.org/programs/headstart-program. If your family is in need of these services, you may ask for assistance from your Head Start staff person or contact our office directly.

Enjoy your Head Start experience!

Missy Becker-Cook, Chief Executive Officer
Carol Boyer, Chief Financial Officer

The Head Start Staff Welcomes You!

We would like to welcome your family to Head Start. We are a program of West Central Minnesota Communities Action, Inc. Head Start could not exist without the involvement of families like yours.

Head Start focuses on YOU as the first and most important teacher in your child's life. Your family and our Head Start staff member will work together to develop individualized services for your child and family.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO VISIT YOUR CHILD'S CLASS AT ANYTIME.

This book tells about your year in Head Start. Please ask any questions that may come up as you are reading it. We look forward to our year with you and your family!

Sincerely,

Val Arnquist
Head Start Director

WCMCA MISSION STATEMENT
“Partnering to build community and empower people to overcome poverty and achieve their full potential.”

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION
Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.
WCMCA Head Start Standards of Conduct

WCMCA Head Start will protect the health, safety and well-being of children and families through professional standards of conduct.

Head Start staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers will not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including at a minimum, the staff must not:

- Use corporal punishment including but not limited to: rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, kicking, biting, pinching, hitting and spanking
- Use isolation or separation from the group to discipline a child
- Use physical restraint other than to physically hold a child when containment is necessary to protect a child or others from harm
- Use mechanical restraints to bind or tie a child to restrict movement; or tape a child's mouth
- Withhold food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care as a punishment for unacceptable behavior
- Use food as a reward
- Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean or humiliate a child or use punishment for lapses in toilet habits
- Use any form of emotional abuse including but not limited to public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, corrupting a child, name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family; and using language that threatens, humiliates or frightens the child
- Physically abuse a child
- Use any form of verbal abuse, including profanity, sarcastic language or threats
- Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward

Head Start staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.

Head Start staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers will comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members in accordance.

No child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers. Personnel policies and procedures include appropriate penalties for staff, consultants, and volunteers who violate the standards of conduct.

Aligned with MN DHS Child Care Center Laws and Rules and Head Start Performance Standard 1302.90(c)
Your Head Start Services

Head Start services are somewhat different from community to community. It is important to us to provide the type of Head Start experiences that the community needs and wants.

- **Classes That Meet Four Days per Week** for either half-day or full-day sessions. Families in these classrooms also receive four home visits during the program year.

- **Early Head Start Home Based Programming:** Early Head Start serves children birth to three years of age and expectant families in full year programming. Families enrolled in Early Head Start receive weekly home visits. Parents are supported as their child’s most influential and valuable teacher in promoting their child’s development.

- **Early Head Start Socialization:** Opportunities are held twenty-two times per year. Participation in socialization events with other parents and children is an essential piece of the programming. Parents will interact with their child in a variety of activities, promoting their interest and supporting the development of new skills.

- **Home Visits:** All families in Head Start receive home visits. The home is the young child’s primary learning environment. The focus of the home visit is to support parents in their important role as the child’s primary teacher.

- **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** Each family participates in two parent-teacher conferences each year. The child’s progress and accomplishments are discussed during a conference between the child’s parents and the child’s teacher.

- **Parent Committee Meetings:** Each center plans regular parent gatherings which often involve the whole family and may be paired with other early childhood community gatherings. An important part of each gathering is the parent meeting, which gives families the opportunity to engage and interact with other families and children and share ideas. Information received from these meetings are important input to the Head Start Program’s Policy Council. Policy Council members will report to parents the work and discussions of the Policy Council. The ongoing communication from the parent group to the policy group and back to the parent group is key to developing a strong Head Start program committed to meeting the needs of children and families. Policy Council minutes are shared with families in a variety of ways; posted at the center, during home visits and parent meetings or sent home with children.
School Readiness Goals for WCMCA Head Start

**School Readiness:** “Children possessing the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning in life.” (Office of Head Start)

WCMCA Head Start School Readiness Goals follow a birth-age five approach and align with the *Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress*, the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework* (HSELOF) and the *Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Outcomes Framework*.

Research based curriculum and assessment are used to measure child outcomes and to plan for individualized instruction that supports the development of each child.

WCMCA Head Start’s School Readiness Goals are organized into five Developmental Domains. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* Report Cards are shared with families three times per year (fall, winter and spring).

**Domains of School Readiness:**

- Approaches to Learning
- Social Emotional Development
- Language and Literacy
- Cognition
- Perceptual Motor and Physical Development

**Researched-Based Teaching Curriculums:**

- *Partners for a Healthy Baby* (Prenatal-age 5): Focuses on strengthening the family by addressing the overall well-being of both the child and the family
- *Creative Curriculum* (Birth-age 5): Supports teachers to create meaningful daily routines, environments and learning experiences for children
- *The Creative Curriculum Learning Games* (Birth-age 5): Interactive games for parents that promote learning through simple daily activities

**Assessment and Screening Tools:**

- Teaching Strategies GOLD
- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIS)
- Brigance Inventory of Early Childhood Development III
- Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R)
- The Ages & Stages Questionnaires-Social Emotional (ASQ-SE)

“The program has provided excellent resources for supporting my child’s development using things we already have. The teacher asked lots of questions about preferences, and planned activities accordingly.”

- Head Start Parent
Planning for Your Child’s Head Start Day

- **Attendance**: It is important that you and your child participate regularly in programming. The routine of regular attendance supports your child’s learning and social development. “Research shows that children with poor attendance are at a disadvantage later in life. Poor attendance and punctuality, even at the earliest age, can affect achievement in later life.” Establishing good habits from the start helps children to settle more quickly into a new setting and routine. If attendance is not regular, your Family Education Specialist will be contacting you to develop a plan to make it possible for your child to attend regularly.

- Indoor clothing should be the "everyday play" kind. The children will be climbing, crawling on floors, using paint and other messy materials, and though we have aprons they aren’t always foolproof -- so please save children's good clothes for other times.

- Please dress your child warmly enough for outdoor play every day. Children have an outside play period on all but the coldest days -- they need jackets, mittens, hats, socks, extra slacks or snow pants, boots and scarves.

- Labeling all clothing prevents a lot of mix-ups and losses. Write your child's name on the inside of all clothing, boots and shoes.

- Children need to wear shoes in the classroom so please remember to send them in the backpack on those days when boots are necessary.

- Items from home are difficult to share. Head Start is not responsible for items brought from home that are broken or lost.

- While Head Start does not provide transportation, staff will assist you in exploring transportation options.

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**Cultural & Religious Beliefs**

Cultural and religious beliefs are an important part of family life. Families have the opportunity to identify their beliefs at the time of enrollment. Adaptations are made according to what families identify. There are many items and activities in the classroom reflecting different cultures. We encourage you to share additional items and activities to demonstrate your family’s culture. Please help us in planning a program that meets your needs as a family and as a classroom group.

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**Backpacks**

- Backpacks are useful in ensuring that children have their shoes, extra clothing and cold weather gear all in one spot. Please write your child’s name on the inside of the backpack.

- Plastic bags are unsafe in our classrooms. Cloth or paper bags may be used.

- **Important information is often sent home in your child's backpack, so it is necessary to check it daily.**

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**When dropping off or picking up your child at the center:**

- Please be on time and take the child right to the teacher or teacher aide. NEVER send a child into the center alone. The teacher’s responsibility will begin only when the child reaches the classroom.

- When you pick-up your child from the center it is very important that you tell the teacher that you are taking him/her.

- Children will only be released to those people indicated on the Enrollment & Emergency Agreement 12 years of age or older. Let the teacher know or send a note as to who will be picking up your child if it is someone other than the persons listed. If you or an authorized person appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol while attempting to pick up your child, the staff will not release your child until his or her health and safety is assured.

- Staff are not allowed to transport children or families in their personal vehicles

- Please share this information with your child’s child-care provider.
Pets in the Classroom:
Due to potential allergies in the classroom no visiting pets will be allowed.

My child’s classroom may obtain a class pet during the year that is for observation purposes and not handled (ex. fish, butterflies, hermit crabs, etc.)

I will be notified of any new classroom pets in advance.

Please inform your teacher of your child’s pet allergies.

Field Trips:
Your child may participate in a variety of field trips. Our favorite experience is to invite “experts” from our community to come to our classroom to visit with our children. Examples would be parents, a football team or player, a fire fighter, a nurse, a musician etc. sharing with children about their activities in their occupation. Another field trip method is a walking trip to nearby parks, play yards or local business or community services. For all out of the center field trips parents will be asked to sign a permission slip for each occurrence.

Head Start Cancellation Policies: In the case of extreme weather, Head Start will follow the guidelines listed below:

- **Morning Classes:** Head Start will cancel if the local public school has a late start.
- **Afternoon Classes:** Head Start will **not** cancel if the local public schools have a late start however, if the local public school has an early dismissal so will Head Start.
- **Full Day Classes:** Head Start will follow local public schools late start or early dismissal.

Public School cancellations are announced over the local TV and radio stations, as listed on page 1. You will also be notified by your teacher via phone call or text or our messaging alert system.

Holidays:
Holidays are listed on your calendars. Monthly calendars will indicate the scheduled days for your center.

Home Visit Cancellation Policy:
Home visits are an important part of programming. Parents are encouraged to meet at their scheduled times. If you need to reschedule due to the weather or other circumstance you will need to communicate with your Family Education Specialist.
Photograph, Video and Social Media Policy

To ensure confidentiality for all children and families, Head Start parents/guardians may take pictures/videos of their own child in our classrooms as long as their child is the only child in the picture.

Head Start staff and parents/guardians may not share any photos or videos of classmates or their families on Facebook, Twitter, My Space, or any other online social networking sites.

Nap and Rest Policy

Preschool children need some amount of rest during the day. For full-day classes, a quiet nap and rest time will occur daily in the afternoons. During rest time, calming music will be played, lights will be dimmed and each child will be provided with a cot. The cots will be stored in an area that is easily accessible and during rest time will be placed so there are clear aisles and adult/child access on at least one side.

After the children have napped or rested for 30 minutes, they will have the option to get up and engage in a separate activity. The activities offered, will occur in an area with sufficient light and where they do not disrupt the remaining napping children. Bedding and blankets will be washed weekly and when soiled or wet.

Problem Solving

Most questions and concerns in Head Start are solved through open communications. Every effort is made to find out all the facts before making a judgment. First ask your questions and concerns of the individuals who are directly involved.

If your questions are not answered in these communications, call the Head Start office and ask to speak to the Head Start Supervisor. The Head Start Supervisor’s number is on the first page of this book. The Head Start Supervisor will respond within 10 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with the response from the Supervisor, you may appeal by calling or writing the Head Start Director. The Head Start Director will respond within 10 working days.

If you remain dissatisfied with the response received, you may appeal to the Head Start Policy Council, who will consider your concern at their next regularly scheduled meeting. There you will have the opportunity to address the council. The decision of the Policy Council will be final.
Confidentiality

WCMCA respects your right to privacy. Parents/guardians must sign a Release of Information form before any WCMCA information will be released. All staff, volunteers and parents are informed of the confidentiality policy and reminded to keep all information regarding families confidential. All staff shall be informed prior to beginning work and reminded regularly thereafter that any information concerning a family is private and shall not be discussed with anyone outside the agency without authorized parent/guardian permission. Staff who leave WCMCA will be reminded of the confidentiality still binding them. All documents, forms, and files regarding families in the program will be kept in a locked space when not in use.

There are some exceptions when written consent to share information is not required:

- When the information is requested by a government agency for law-enforcement activity
- When there is an appropriate court order, such as a subpoena
- In an emergency situation to protect the health or safety of an individual
- In a program review or review audits conducted by child care licensing, federal Head Start reviews, or state agencies.

Information regarding a child or family may be shared with consultants and other Head Start staff, as indicated on the enrollment agreement, if the information is needed for that person to adequately do their assigned duties and serve the family.

Smoking Policy

Smoking is prohibited in Agency vehicles, buildings and in those areas of other buildings used, operated or occupied by WCMCA, including leased offices and off-site Agency sponsored conferences and meetings. Smoking, including e-cigarettes, is prohibited at all Head Start sites and at Head Start sponsored activities and events. Smoking is prohibited in the presence of Head Start children.

Mandated Reporting

WCMCA Head Start staff are legally required or mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If staff know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused up to the previous 3 years, they must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report. A copy of the full policy is available upon request.

Parent Permission Required

Should the Head Start program choose to participate in any research, experimental procedures or public relations activity, parental permission will be obtained before participation.

All centers follow the MN Department of Human Service Rule 3 Licensing requirements:

MN Dept. of Human Services Licensing Division
651-431-6500
Parent Code of Conduct

Courteous and respectful behavior between and among all program participants is essential for West Central MN Communities Action, Inc. Head Start participants to achieve its mission, help assure a positive environment and promote the safety and security of children, families and staff. Like employees, parents, volunteers, participants and everyone else involved with the program must follow the Code of Conduct as outlined below.

Standards of Conduct: All parents and volunteers will:
A. Respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
B. Follow the program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families and other staff members.
C. Leave no child alone unsupervised while under their care:
   a. All children must be escorted by an adult upon entering and leaving the building.
   b. All children must be checked in and left only in the direct care of a teacher; and checked out daily.
D. Use positive methods of child guidance and do not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. Do not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward or the denial of basic needs.
E. Conduct themselves personally and professionally in a manner that reflects positive upon the program's reputation and upon the children and families the program serves.

WCMCA will not tolerate behavior by parents or volunteers that violates the Code of Conduct. Examples of violations could include but are not limited to the following:
- Threats to staff, parents or children
- Physical or verbal punishment of a child
- Cursing
- Smoking
- Quarreling, verbal fighting, loud shouting and other displays of anger
- Bringing drugs, alcohol or weapons to program sites or events
- Physical violence
- Inappropriate or excessive displays of physical affection between adults
- Inappropriate dress, including for example, low-cut tops, bare midriff, sagging pants below the buttock or clothes with words or pictures inappropriate for young children

If a parent or volunteer violates the Code of Conduct, WCMCA reserves the right to allow Family Education Specialists to handle situations as they see appropriate.

Procedures:
1. The Family Education Specialist will speak directly with the parent or volunteer in private when possible and safety is not an issue.
2. When safety is threatened staff will call the police.
3. Staff should report violations to their Head Start Supervisor promptly. In the event of the Head Start Supervisor's absence, another Supervisor will be notified.
4. The Head Start Supervisor will notify the Head Start Director who will determine the program response to the violation and will notify the person(s) involved.
Communications
Between Families and Head Start Staff

The Head Start program believes communication between families and Head Start staff is critical to the success of your child. A variety of methods are used to stay in contact with the families and children we serve:

- **Home Visits**: These visits give everyone the opportunity to get acquainted with one another and for the Head Start staff to collect the needed information to create a safe environment for your child. The frequency of home visits will vary depending on the program option in which your child is enrolled. At least one home visit is completed before your child’s first center day. During these initial home visits, information is collected from the family to insure your child’s successful transition into our classrooms.

- **Parent Conferences**: Head Start holds two parent conferences during the year. During these conferences your child’s progress and development will be discussed with you. Parents can discuss their child’s progress at any time with their teacher, but during a parent conference the information discussed will be recorded, dated and signed by the participants. Parent conferences may take place in the family home, the classroom or an agreed upon location.

- **Telephone Calls**: Staff are available to you when you have questions or concerns. Parents and Teachers will talk often by phone, text or perhaps email. All teaching staff have cell phones with voice and text messaging and our program uses a school related alert system to contact families as well. You are automatically opted in upon enrollment and can opt out by informing your teacher that you do not want to receive these messages on your cell phone. If you would like to speak with a Supervisor/Director, please call 218-685-4486 or 800-492-4805.

- **Emergency Situations and Other Incidents**: You will be contacted immediately if your child gets ill, has an allergic reaction, or is involved in any incident out of the ordinary. Before your child can attend the center, we must have emergency contact information for you and two other reliable sources in case you can’t be reached. **If we cannot reach you or your emergency contacts, we will contact the local social service or law enforcement agency.** It is the parent’s role to notify your Family Education Specialist if there are changes to your emergency contact information at any time throughout the year. Our program has policies and procedures in place to keep your child safe. Our staff are trained in first aid and CPR, universal precautions and Minnesota Department of Human Services Rule 3 licensing requirements. In the event that your child sees a doctor as a result of an accident or injury that occurred while your child is at the Head Start center, it is important to report this to your Head Start staff.

- **Monthly Newsletter and Calendar**: Families will be given a calendar each month with the scheduled center days and a newsletter which includes information about classroom activities and upcoming events.

- **Policy Council**: Family members attending parent meetings will elect a representative from their center to be on the Head Start Policy Council. Policy Council members meet monthly to review program goals and oversee the general program operation and budget. Policy Council participation is an excellent leadership opportunity. This great learning experience provides you with first-hand experience in parliamentary procedure and decision making which better prepare you for community involvement.

- **Head Start Committees**: Parents, Community Partners, West Central Staff, and Head Start Field and Central Office Staff come together to provide input on program operations, policies, procedures and systems. The training of stakeholders is planned to ensure systems are understood, valued and implemented consistently through monthly meetings with this group. Committees may include: Curriculum, Advisory, Hiring, Family Services, Professional Development, Bylaws & Policies, Selection & Criteria, and the Agency Staff committee.
Walking Safely with Children
Pedestrian Safety

Walking with a toddler or preschooler opens a whole new world at a whole new level. These young walkers are looking at new and exciting things and often too busy and too young to be aware of any dangers. That is a parent or caregiver’s job that is made especially harder when these newly independent mobile children don’t want to hold hands.

Generally speaking, children under 9 years of age lack the hearing, peripheral vision and judgment capabilities necessary for them to be able to safely navigate busy streets. These tips may help keep these little wanderers safe and happy:

- Children under 9 should not walk alone.
- Hold hands at all intersections and when crossing any driveways or lanes.
- Teach and enforce a rule that the child must stop immediately when told to do so and follow further instructions.
- Teach children to stay away from the edge of the sidewalk.
- If children are riding a ride-on toy, keep them close at all times.
- One of the premier rules of the road to teach your children is “Stop, Look and Listen.”
- Always look both ways and exercise caution when crossing at a cross walk or intersection. It is important to not just look at the cars stopped at the intersection but any approaching vehicles and cyclists as well. Even when crossing at a green light it is still important to look all ways and watch for turning cars. Never run across an intersection.
- Make eye contact with drivers to be sure you have been seen and that all cars have come to a complete stop before crossing at an intersection or crosswalk.
- Constantly reinforce and demonstrate safety rules when walking with children and even by yourself – you never know who may be watching.
- Stay away from and never go into a car with a stranger.
- Teach children to walk in safe areas – avoid parking lots, paths through wooded areas, secluded areas, loose gravel and busy roads.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing for night or evening walks.
- Walk across cross walks and intersections only. Do not cross the street between parked cars.
- When walking on roads without sidewalks, always walk on the side of the road facing traffic and as close to the edge as possible.
- Stay out of ditches and away from ponds, streams and rivers.
- Stay away from school buses and other buses.
- If you hear a siren, it is best to move away from the road as far as possible, stop and wait until the emergency vehicle has passed before continuing your walk.
- Come to a complete stop at all stop signs and obey all other road signs.
- Plan routes that are not too long for the age of the youngest walker.
- Consult with your local library, government offices and health departments for booklets, programs and guides about road safety.
A big part of your child's Head Start experience will be spent interacting with other children and caregivers. Great care has been taken to provide a learning environment which invites your child to learn as he/she plays.

Education activities in Head Start are individualized for children based on learning styles, interests and developmental needs. Head Start is most successful when parents and staff work together by linking home and school activities. Each of us has something valuable to contribute. You are the most familiar with your child's interests, routines, and experiences. This important information will be used to plan your child's Head Start year to develop cognitive, social, physical, and emotional skills.

WCMCA implements the Creative Curriculum, which allows children to participate and learn from investigative studies, all of which promote deep thinking and learning. Each child is assessed three times per year to monitor progress. Progress reports are shared with parents throughout the year.

Partners for a Healthy Baby Curriculum is an evidence-informed curriculum which focuses on the importance of prenatal and early childhood health and development and the power of early family relationships.

Language and Literacy:
This year as you partner with your child's Family Education Specialist (teacher) to set goals and individualize your child's classroom experience you will find that you will be planning opportunities for literacy and language development in the classroom and at home. Head Start promises to provide you with some simple activities you can do at home with your child.

West Central Head Start believes the environment can enrich your child's language development. A well-planned classroom or home environment supports children’s ability to learn literacy skills at their own rate.

We believe a quality environment includes:
- Caring and nurturing adults that encourage a child’s natural ability to learn. Adults give children chances to practice the literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Head Start staff and parents working together to develop plans that include goals at each child’s level.
- An organized Head Start classroom with enough appropriate equipment and learning materials offers opportunities to experience language in every aspect of their day.
- Every area in the classroom is carefully planned to include literacy items such as books, writing and drawing tools, tablets, maps etc.
- Intentionally teaching skills such as letter recognition, rhyming and sounds of letters.
- Interaction with playmates creating the opportunity for children to practice their language and social skills.

How can I teach my child at home?
- Talk and listen to your child. Ask questions and allow thinking time before he or she answers.
- Provide a few firm, consistent rules.
- Play games and read stories your child enjoys.
- Give your child age appropriate tasks to complete.
Play in Your Child’s Classroom

Head Start believes play is an important part of your child's learning. During play children are solving problems, experimenting, developing social skills and increasing language and vocabulary. These activities help your child to develop physically, intellectually, socially and emotionally. Your child’s classroom is divided into very specific areas. Listed below are some of the skills the children are working on while they are playing.

**Manipulative (Small Motor Area)**
This area helps to enhance children’s fine motor skills and cognitive or thinking skills. They practice sorting objects into categories. A variety of materials are here such as puzzles, stacking toys, shape toys, homemade games, peg sets, or small building sets.

**Active Play (Large Motor)**
This is an active area where children work on developing and improving large muscle skills.

**Dramatic Play Area**
This is a “make believe” area. Children have a chance to practice family and community roles. They begin to understand themselves and the culture better. They are able to practice problem solving by coming up with solutions to everyday problems. This area is often set up as a house but might also be turned into a grocery store, post office, doctor’s office or veterinarian’s office.

**Discovery Area:**
Invites children to explore & investigate. This area may include some basic tools as well as objects & materials from the natural world.

**Library - Listening Center**
This is a quiet area where children can relax by ones or twos. A variety of books are provided. This area may have beanbags, stuffed animals, pillows, or a small rocking chair. Children can explore books by themselves. This area may also have a flannel board, story tapes, puppets, etc. Children practice pre-reading skills such as: sequencing, right to left progression and predicting outcomes.

**Writing Center**
The writing area encourages children’s personal writing, which may not look anything like the letters, as we know them!

**Creative Art**
In this area children are exposed to as many “messy” art projects as possible. We are not concerned with the end product but rather the process of creativity and doing. Children are able to express original ideas and feelings creatively.

**Block Area**
This area contains large and small blocks plus props such as trucks, animals, block people etc. Children learn pre-math skills, eye hand coordination and practice social interactions.

“Head Start has given me new ideas and approaches to learning.”

- -Head Start Parent
How Do We Guide Children’s Behavior in Head Start?

All children display mistaken behavior from time to time. Behavior is one of the ways a child communicates with adults. Head Start uses behavior guidance, not punishment. Guidance teaches children the behaviors we want them to show.

The general policy for guiding the behavior of children is based on respect for the child as a person. This involves respectful communication. This means we will:

- Kneel or get down to the child’s eye level to assure their attention
- Tell children what they CAN do rather than what they cannot
- Set secure limits
- Remind children of the rules
- Value the child, while changing his/her behavior
- Teach children the appropriate language skills to help them tell about their emotions
- Teach children language for solving problems

Appropriate guidance meets the individual needs of each child. Creating positive, respectful communication helps us to meet each child’s needs. In the same way, interaction and involvement with family and community members ensures that we address each child’s needs and interests. Home visits give us another chance to provide support for the family and child.

When a child displays mistaken behavior, they will be redirected to another activity. If a child is very distressed, staff may work with the child away from the group until the child can gain control of herself. Children are always within sight and hearing of an adult. Physical punishment is not used. Withholding food is not used as punishment.

Each classroom is set up to support development of social-emotional skills, cognitive skills, language and literacy, and fine and gross motor skills. We also use the Second Step Program as a way to teach social-emotional and problem-solving skills.

What can parents do?
- Be consistent
- Talk with your child instead of at your child
- Provide limits and boundaries
- Work together and be involved in your child’s life and education
- Tell them you love them
- Use positive reinforcement and encouragement to help develop self-esteem

Parents may request a copy our Head Start Program’s Behavior Guidance Policies from our office or your teacher.

Remember that YOU are your child’s most important teacher.
Our program shares a common goal with you: that your child is healthy and ready to learn!

To promote healthy development, every child in Head Start needs a physical and dental exam plus any follow-up from these exams. Because parents have a primary long-term responsibility for their child’s health, we expect you to be fully involved in your child’s medical and dental services.

Head Start believes that early intervention improves a child’s capacity to learn and develop. Families are encouraged to follow the Minnesota Child and Teen Checkups Schedule for age related health components that are required.

What parents are encouraged and supported to do:
- Provide Head Start with an enrolled child’s immunization records before the first day of class (required for entry) and keep the child’s immunizations up to date.
- Complete a health and nutrition history on the enrolled child.
- Apply for health care coverage if the child is not covered.
- Submit a current physical/well-child exam record within 30 days of enrollment.
- Complete a developmental screening within 45 days of enrollment.
- Complete a social/emotional screening within 45 days of enrollment.
- Complete a dental exam within 90 days of enrollment, recommended for children at first tooth eruption or one year of age.
- Inform Head Start when child appointments are and complete, including all follow-up appointments.
- Keep Head Start updated about the child’s health, illnesses, injuries, allergies, special diets or special needs.

What our Head Start will do:
- Help families make an appointment for a physical or well child check-up/screening.
- Help families make a dental exam and/or treatment appointment.
- Remind families of upcoming health appointments and topics to talk with health providers about.
- Provide information and resources to connect families with health care coverage and a system of ongoing health care.
- Assist families in applying for health care coverage.
- If your child has no health care coverage and has no other available funds to support health requirements, assist in paying for the physical and/or dental exam and/or follow-up care.
- Assist in arranging transportation or mileage reimbursement for appointments.
- Support good oral health through classroom tooth brushing.
- Provide equipment or accommodations for special needs.

**Important Information**: Our Head Start funding may be at risk if physical, dental exams, and follow-up exams are not completed while your child is in Head Start!

Child Care licensing requires every child to have a physical exam on file within 30 days of starting class. **Your child will not be allowed to attend the center if we do not have this on file.** Physical exams and screenings may be done through the Child and Teen Checkup Program at your county Public Health Nursing Service. Portions of Head Start health services may be refused with a signed statement from you but the physical exam is required for all children.
Procedure for Administering Medication
in the Head Start Program

The Minnesota Department of Human Services requires that the following procedures be in place if it is necessary for your child to receive medication at licensed centers. All medication should be given at home unless it is **absolutely necessary** for it to be given during center time. If a prescription and/or over the counter medication is to be given during center time, this procedure must be followed:

1. Written directions from your doctor including:
   - the child's name
   - name of the medication
   - the illness or diagnosis
   - exact time to be given, this includes clarification of “as needed” or “prn” determination
   - possible side effects
   - the physician's signature

2. Authorization for administering the medication must be signed by the parent or legal guardian, giving Head Start permission to give it.

3. The medication must be in a labeled prescription bottle or original over the counter container with the doctor's name, the name of the medication, the dosage and the starting date.

4. The person assigned to administering the medication will closely watch for side effects. If side effects are noted, staff will notify the parent immediately, so that they can notify the doctor.

5. All medication will be stored in a locked cabinet at all times when not in use. If it is to be refrigerated, it will be stored on a shelf away from food and out of children's reach, and in a locked container.

6. A log will be kept to include the child's name, date, dosage and time administered. All logs will be kept on file and side effects and follow up recorded for the child's file.

7. All emergency medication (i.e. Epi pens, inhalers, Benadryl) must be provided before your child attends class.

8. If there are any questions regarding the medication administration policy or record keeping, please contact the Health Supervisor at the Head Start office.

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“Head Start made a difference tremendously. Helped us by providing programs that I never knew about.”

- -Head Start Parent
**Illness Exclusion Policies**

Head Start staff promote wellness, health and safety through proper hand washing, sanitation and safety policies to prevent the spread of illness and prevent accidents and are certified in CPR and First Aid. Please let your teacher know as soon as possible if your child is sick. If your child becomes sick at the center, staff will move them to a quiet supervised area away from the other children and notify you to pick your child up. Our Head Start program follows the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Health for exclusion policies and the policy on when they can return to class. If there has been an exposure in the center, you will be sent information on the illness in your child's backpack.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISEASE</th>
<th>INCUBATION</th>
<th>SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>TREATMENT</th>
<th>RETURN TO SCHOOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Pox</td>
<td>10 - 21 days, usually 14-16</td>
<td>Starts as red bumps then turns to small blister-like sores that fill up with fluid, fever, itching</td>
<td>Discuss this with your physician. NO aspirin unless directed by physician.</td>
<td>When all sores are dry and scabbed and no new blisters or sores have started within 24 hours (usually by 6th day after rash began)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Sores</td>
<td>2 – 14 days</td>
<td>Fever blisters on lips, face or mouth</td>
<td>Call your physician to see if medication is necessary</td>
<td>No exclusion, unless sores do not heal or they become infected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colds (Respiratory Infections)</td>
<td>1 - 10 days</td>
<td>Runny nose, sneezing, chills, tiredness, fever, muscle aches, sore throat and cough</td>
<td>See physician for high fever, persistent cough or sore throat</td>
<td>Until fever is gone and child is well enough to participate in routine activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea</td>
<td>Varies by germ. 1 day – 4 weeks</td>
<td>Increased number of loose, watery stools, nausea, stomach pain, vomiting, fever</td>
<td>Wash hands thoroughly w/soap &amp; warm running water after using toilet and before eating food. See physician if the conditions persist</td>
<td>24 hours after diarrhea has stopped or written physician's permission required if caused by an infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Disease</td>
<td>4 - 21 days, usually 4 - 14 days</td>
<td>Rash causing intense redness of the cheeks (&quot;slapped cheek&quot;) that often later move around the body</td>
<td>None, but pregnant women that are exposed need to consult with physician</td>
<td>None if other rash causing illnesses are ruled out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Lice</td>
<td>7 - 10 days</td>
<td>Itching of head and neck or scratch marks, small white particles often found behind ears or back of neck</td>
<td>Lice killing products and removal of the nits. Vacuum home &amp; vehicles, wash clothing &amp; bedding</td>
<td>When treatment is complete and no live lice are seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impetigo</td>
<td>1 - 10 days</td>
<td>Typically begins at break in skin (ex. Insect bite, cut, etc.) Small pus-filled sores with yellow crust</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>When child has been treated with antibiotics for at least 24 hours and sores are drying and improving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pin Worms</td>
<td>2 - 8 weeks</td>
<td>Rectal itching especially at night, irritability and disturbed sleep</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>No exclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
<td>8 –12 days</td>
<td>Begins with fever, watery eyes, runny nose and cough. Red blotchy rash appears in 3 to 7 days</td>
<td>Must be reported to a physician</td>
<td>4 days after rash appears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Eye Conjunctivitis</td>
<td>1 - 12 days</td>
<td>Red, watery, burning or itching eyes, thick discharge</td>
<td>Contact your physician. Avoid contact with the eye drainage</td>
<td>When child has been seen by physician and until 24 hours after treatment begins or the physician has cleared child for readmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringworm (Body)</td>
<td>4 – 10 days</td>
<td>Flat, spreading, ring-shaped lesion. Center may be clear with red, raised edges</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>24 hours after treatment has been started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringworm (Scalp)</td>
<td>10 – 14 days</td>
<td>Small, scaly patches on scalp with mild redness, swelling, itching or pus-filled bumps. Infected hairs become brittle and break</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>24 hours after treatment has been started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV Infection</td>
<td>2 - 8 days, usually 4 – 6 days</td>
<td>Similar to mild cold. Cough, watery eyes, runny nose, nasal stuffiness &amp; sneezing</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>Until fever is gone &amp; child is well enough to participate in routine activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scabies</td>
<td>2 – 6 weeks</td>
<td>Rash, intense itching in the folds of skin</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>24 hours after treatment has been started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlet Fever Strep Throat</td>
<td>2 – 5 days</td>
<td>Sudden onset of fever, swollen glands, sore throat. Fine red rash (raised)</td>
<td>Contact your physician</td>
<td>At least 24 hours after treatment begins and child is without fever for 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRSA</td>
<td>Varies</td>
<td>Area of skin infection may be red, warm or have pus or drainage</td>
<td>Contact your physician. Avoid skin contact with others</td>
<td>When sores that cannot be covered quit draining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MN Child & Teen Check-ups Schedule

Head Start performance standards require all Head Start children to get up-to-date preventive health care which includes medical, dental and mental health.

The requirements, by age, are listed in the following chart:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C&amp;T Screening Components by Age</th>
<th>Infancy</th>
<th>Early Childhood</th>
<th>Middle Childhood</th>
<th>Adolescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;T FACT Sheet for each component</td>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipatory guidance &amp; health education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measurements:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Head circumference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weight and height</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weight for length percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Body mass index (BMI) percentile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Blood pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health history, including social determinants of health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Developmental screening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social-emotional or mental health screening*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Autism spectrum disorder screening</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maternal depression screening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tobacco, alcohol or drug use risk assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical exam: head to toe, including oral exam and sexual development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immunizations/review</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Newborn screening: follow-up: blood spot and critical congenital heart defect</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory test/risk assessment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hemoglobin/hematocrit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tuberculosis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sexually transmitted infection (STI) risk assessment, with lab testing for sexually active youth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• HIV screening for all youth at least one time*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dyslipidemia risk assessment*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vision screening: distance (3+years) and near (5+ years) acuity*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hearing screening: high frequency screening at 11+ years*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dental Checkups: Verbal referral to dental provider at eruption of first tooth or no later than 12 months of age</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fluoride varnish application (FVA) starting at eruption of first tooth*</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All C&amp;T visits require a HIPAA compliant referral condition code: ST, S2, SV or NU</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY:  
- Required component for the visit  
X: If no Newborn Screening results on file, or did not pass, follow up appropriately  
R: Recommended screening for visit  
X: Risk assessment followed by appropriate action  
* Indicates range to provide component at least once  
** Key:  

“My EHS home visitor has encouraged my family to stay on top of Well Child Checks and dental visits. She has shown us how important healthy habits are for me and my family.”  

- Head Start Parent
```
**Head Start Immunization Policy**

Head Start regulations require a record of your child’s immunizations. A child cannot attend center days without being immunized.

If a parent or guardian objects to immunizations, they must fill out an exemption form which is signed and notarized. Your Physician may complete an exemption form if your child cannot have immunizations for health reasons.

The current schedule of immunizations is:

![2019 Recommended Immunizations for Children from Birth Through 6 Years Old](chart)

**FOOTNOTES:**
- Two doses given at least four weeks apart are recommended for children age 6 months through 8 years of age who are getting an influenza (flu) vaccine for the first time and for some other children in this age group.
- Two doses of HepA vaccine are needed for lasting protection. The first dose of HepA vaccine should be given between 12 months and 23 months of age. The second dose should be given 6 months after the first dose. HepA vaccination may be given to any child 12 months and older to protect against hepatitis A. Children and adolescents who did not receive the HepA vaccine and are at high risk should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

*For more information, call toll-free 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) or visit [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents)
Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Vaccines that Prevent Them

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends all children receive vaccines according to the recommended immunization schedule to protect them from 14 diseases.

The following chart outlines these vaccine-preventable diseases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Vaccine</th>
<th>Disease spread by</th>
<th>Disease Symptoms</th>
<th>Disease complications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chickenpox</td>
<td>Varicella</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Rash, tiredness, headache, fever</td>
<td>Infected blisters, bleeding disorders, encephalitis (brain swelling), pneumonia (infection in lungs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphtheria</td>
<td>DTaP*</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Sore throat, mild fever, weakness, swollen glands in neck</td>
<td>Swelling of heart muscle, heart failure, coma, paralysis, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hib</td>
<td>Hib</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>May be no symptoms unless bacteria enter the blood</td>
<td>Meningitis (infections of the covering around the brain &amp; spinal cord), intellectual disability, epiglottitis (life-threatening infection that can block the windpipe and lead to serious breathing problems), pneumonia, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis A</td>
<td>Hep A</td>
<td>Direct contact, contaminated food or water</td>
<td>May be no symptoms, fever, stomach pain, loss of appetite, fatigue, vomiting, jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes), dark urine</td>
<td>Liver failure, arthralgia (joint pain), kidney, pancreatic and blood disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis B</td>
<td>Hep B</td>
<td>Contact with blood or bodily fluids</td>
<td>May be no symptoms, fever, headache, weakness, vomiting, jaundice, joint pain</td>
<td>Chronic liver infection, liver failure, liver cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Flu</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Fever, muscle pain, sore throat, cough, extreme fatigue</td>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
<td>MMR**</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Rash, fever, cough, runny nose, pink eye</td>
<td>Encephalitis, pneumonia, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumps</td>
<td>MMR**</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Swollen salivary glands (under the jaw), fever, headache, tiredness, muscle pain</td>
<td>Meningitis, encephalitis, inflammation of testicles or ovaries, deafness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pertussis</td>
<td>DTaP*</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Severe cough, runny nose, apnea (a pause in breathing in infants)</td>
<td>Pneumonia, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polio</td>
<td>IPV</td>
<td>Air, direct contact, through the mouth</td>
<td>May be no symptoms, sore throat, fever, nausea, headache</td>
<td>Paralysis, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal</td>
<td>PCV13</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>May be no symptoms, pneumonia</td>
<td>Bacteremia (blood infection), meningitis, death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotavirus</td>
<td>RV</td>
<td>Through the mouth</td>
<td>Diarrhea, fever, vomiting</td>
<td>Severe diarrhea, dehydration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubella</td>
<td>MMR**</td>
<td>Air, direct contact</td>
<td>Sometimes rash, fever, swollen lymph nodes</td>
<td>Very serious in pregnant women-can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tetanus</td>
<td>DTaP*</td>
<td>Exposure through cuts in skin</td>
<td>Stiffness in neck and abdominal muscles, difficulty swallowing, muscle spasms, fever</td>
<td>Broken bones, breathing difficulty, death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*DTaP combines protection against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis  
**MMR combines protection against measles, mumps and rubella
Nutrition in Head Start

Good nutrition is the cornerstone of a child's health. Our program meets the nutritional needs of your child by serving meals that offer a variety of foods meeting the requirements of the Child & Adult Care Food Program. The support of a nutritionist and classroom nutrition activities help your child develop good eating habits, offer nutritious food choices and promote healthy development.

Age appropriate food activities encourage positive attitudes toward healthy foods. During the meals parents, staff and volunteers eat with the children and talk about the foods that are served. Topics might include where the food fits on the Healthy Plate, how our bodies use the food, or if they have ever had the food before. Children are encouraged to try new foods and assist with meal service and clean-up. Food safety and sanitation measures protect the health and safety of everyone.

FOOD IS NEVER USED AS A PUNISHMENT OR REWARD. Each child is encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste foods served. Everyone is served a portion of each item offered, including the adults, unless they have a special diet or food allergy. Also, no rewards are given for those “cleaning their plates.”

Children with special diets and food allergies must have a statement from the doctor that documents:
- Exact special diet
- Dates the diets will be in effect
- Doctor’s signature
- The date it was signed

Please update us if your child’s diet or allergies change. If a child has a special need or disability, the menu and/or feeding utensils will be changed to meet their needs.

The Head Start Nutrition Consultant is available to all Head Start parents to discuss nutrition concerns and their child’s weight. Nutrition information for families is available to assist with:
- Food choices for healthy family meals within your budget.
- Balancing good nutrition and physical activity.
- Prevention of tooth decay.
- Portion sizes, portion control.
- Managing overweight and underweight children.
- Food allergies and sensitivities.
- Breast feeding

All Head Start children under the age of 5 are eligible for WIC. Please apply at your local Public Health office.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

~Policy on Bringing Food Into Centers~

Head Start must follow strict rules when serving food at the centers to ensure safe and healthy food service. Please note the following policies:
1) Adults are not allowed to have coffee, pop or similar drinks in the classroom.
2) No additional food should be sent with your child during center times. Children are served adequate amounts of food at center meals.
3) All foods served must be prepared in a kitchen licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health and served according to their standards.
4) Popcorn and similar items that could be a choking hazard will not be served. High sugar, high fat foods are avoided.
The Head Start program focuses on the child and family as individual program participants.

When a child shows concerns during our screenings or in the classroom, referrals to specialists will be recommended. Referrals will only be made with parent or legal guardian written permission. Our teachers will assist families in this process.

**Services Provided to Children with Special Needs**

Head Start provides the following types of services to children and their families with special needs:

- An inclusive educational experience
- Health and developmental screenings
- Ongoing educational assessments
- Parent involvement and education
- Family services
- Health and nutrition services
- Activities that will assist your child’s transition into Head Start, as well as out of Head Start into Kindergarten
- Special accommodations that your child may need: equipment, eating utensils, diapers, etc.

The local public school will provide:

- A diagnostic evaluation
- Special education planning
- A special program
- Other special education services as needed

Both Head Start and the local public school work cooperatively to combine the range of offered services to provide the best pre-school experience for a child with special needs.

“The staff asked questions, listened to our concerns, collaborated with special education staff and connected us to other resources.”

- -Head Start Parent
Your child's social-emotional development is an essential part of his/her overall growth.

A portion of your child's physical exam focuses on mental health. Head Start staff and a consultant are available to assist with any referrals to community resources. Referrals will only be made with parent or legal guardian written permission.

Consultants are available to all parents and meet with Head Start staff during the year to support how your child's mental health needs are being met and/or about any concerns that are developing in the classroom.

Individual goals based on a child's needs are developed by the parent and teacher to promote social and emotional development. Information is available for all parents on:

- Behavior patterns
- Child guidance
- Child development
- Stress management
- Activities to enhance a child's social and emotional development
- Parental concerns or needs
- Resources available in these areas

The classroom environment and activities enhance a child's self-concept with the overall goal of developing social skills. The Second Step Curriculum assists children in learning empathy skills, how to solve problems and what they can do when they are angry. This curriculum is shared with parents through parent pages, so they can support their child's learning in these areas.

Our Head Start program supports children's emotional development in the following ways:

**Prevention:** Help children learn to control their behavior, problem-solve, take turns, share, make friends and be successful in the classroom.

**Promotion:** Support children to form relationships with others, regulate their emotions and learn by exploring their environment.

**Intervention:** Assist families with screenings and follow-up on referrals.

“My child learned problem solving skills and how to better handle problems/conflict.”

- Head Start Parent
My Rights as a Head Start Parent

- To always be treated with respect and dignity.
- To receive a fair and courteous answer to each question.
- To be informed frequently about my child's progress in Head Start.
- To expect guidance for my child from my Head Start Teacher and staff, that will help my child's total individual growth.
- To be welcomed into the classroom.
- To be informed about community resources concerned with health, education and the improvement of family life.
- To receive information about menus and nutrition activities.
- To help develop adult programs which will improve daily living for my family and me.
- To take part in planning and carrying out programs designed to increase my skill in areas of possible employment.
- To be able to learn about the operation of the program including the budget, and the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions.
- To be represented at all Policy Council meetings.
- To take part in major policy decisions affecting the planning and operation of the program.
- Some Head Start services may be refused with a signed statement.

The Five Protective Factors

These are specific research-informed protective factors that help to prevent the occurrence of child neglect and abuse. In Minnesota, we are working to create community environments and public policies that promote these protective factors.

1. **Nurturing and attachment.** Building a close bond helps parents better understand, respond to, and communicate with their children.

2. **Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development.** Parents learn what to look for at each age and how to help their children reach their full potential.

3. **Parental resilience.** Recognizing the signs of stress and enhancing problem-solving skills can help parents build their capacity to cope.

4. **Social connections.** Parents with an extensive network of family, friends, and neighbors have better support in times of need.

5. **Concrete supports for parents.** Caregivers with access to financial, housing, and other concrete resources and services that help them meet their basic needs can better attend to their role as parents.

More about Protective Factors can be found in the Strengthening Families and Communities 2009 Resource Guide from [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)

"Head Start has been an amazing experience for my child & my family."

- - Head Start Parent
Good partnerships mean Head Start parents and staff are learning from one another. Acting as a team, they identify the strengths, needs and interests of the family. Parents are supported as they meet their own goals and as they nurture the development of their children.

Family situations affect children. The Head Start staff are prepared to assist families in finding needed resources for self-sufficiency. The Head Start Community Resource Guide is available online to assist each family in exploring their own solutions.

Head Start assists families by:

- Making home visits.
- Referring to other services, agencies or consultants. Head Start Mental Health and Nutrition Consultants are available to all Head Start families.
- Helping you identify the strengths and concerns of your family and providing a framework to help you set goals and time frames to meet your goals.
- Responding to your child's attendance to see if additional assistance could be provided.
- Working in a partnership that is driven by parent identification of their family's strengths and needs, parents and staff determine how the program can support families in pursuing their goals. Staff will assist families to accomplish their identified goals in many ways. Our goal is to link families within their community. If a barrier is identified, such as transportation or possible costs, our staff will assist you in looking at options in these areas.

Head start supports all children as they transition into and out of the program. Preparations for children transitioning out of Early Head Start and into Head Start or into a community Early Childhood program begins when the child reaches 30 months of age.

For children enrolled in Head Start, staff and parents will meet prior to the child entering Kindergarten. These meetings provide the opportunity to share information or concerns regarding the child and provides support in assisting the family for a smooth transition to the new program.

“My experiences have been great! Through conversation and home visits and family fun nights the staff have gotten to know our family.”

- Head Start Parent
You may already realize that Head Start is not just a program for children. It is also a program for PARENTS and FAMILIES.

Research says a parent supporting and encouraging their education strengthens children’s success as learners. Head Start wants to be there to support you during this important time. Please let us know how we can help.

Children do best in life when they grow up with the active, positive involvement of both a mother and father. Whatever the measure—physical and emotional health, educational achievement, behavior, substance abuse, crime or delinquency—children are more likely to lead healthy, productive lives when both their mother and father are actively involved in their lives in positive ways. This is because moms and dads tend to parent differently, at least in some important ways, and their complementary parenting skills and attitudes combine to give children the best environment in which to grow up healthy and successful.

Head Start believes parents are their child’s first and most important teacher AND parents are always welcome to visit their child’s classroom at any time.

Head Start works with parents to strengthen their role as the primary decision-makers for their children.

**Parent Involvement is Important**

**Together We Can:**
- Make **reading** to your child a priority.
- **Listen and talk** with your child.
- Make **class attendance** an important choice.
- Stay in close **communication** about your child’s development.
- Discover how your child **learns best**.

**Get Involved By:**
- Reading the newsletters and information Head Start offers.
- Volunteering or observing in your child’s classroom.
- Attending Parent-Child events
- Joining Policy Council or a committee to share your ideas.
- Applying to be a paid substitute in our classrooms.
- Talking with your Family Education Specialist about planning how you want to become involved.
- Taking your child to their dental and Child & Teen check-up appointments.
- Actively participating with your child during Early Head Start home visits and socializations.
Volunteering, In-Kind & Local Match

There are several reasons volunteers are needed to work with the Head Start staff person in the classroom:

- Head Start must provide opportunities for parent involvement on center days anytime during hours of operation.

- Parents benefit from their volunteer time. Children look forward to having their parents or other important people in their lives as the teacher. They enjoy teaching the parent about classroom rules and routines. The parent then has a chance to see firsthand how the child operates in a classroom setting.

- Parent involvement is significantly linked to children’s school readiness outcomes.

- To prove that there is community support for Head Start, each Head Start program is required to keep records of the amount of time and/or goods donated to the program. Each donation is given a dollar value. These amounts add up throughout the year until our local match requirement has been met. Last year we had to collect over $246,970 in local match.

Did you know?

For every hour you spend volunteering for Head Start or working with your child on education activities, you are donating $15.66 to your child’s program!

What About Becoming a Paid Staff Member?

When all qualifications are equal between current Head Start parents and other applicants, Head Start parents must receive preference for non-professional positions within the program. We encourage you to apply for these jobs as they become available and list the ways you have been involved in Head Start on your application. Training is provided to help you advance to a position requiring greater knowledge and responsibility.
Ways Parents Can Participate

You will find there are many ways parents can be involved in Head Start. This section of the Parent Handbook has information on each of them.

Parent Committees

Each classroom will have a parent committee made up of all the parents and guardians of children in that class. Committee meetings will be held on a regular basis during the program year.

ROLE OF THE PARENT COMMITTEE

With the help of your center’s teacher, Parent Committees will:

- Assist in planning classroom and group activities including field trips—under the direction of their staff person and in agreement with the growth level of the children involved.
- Provide the necessary volunteers for the classrooms, center days or field trips.
- Elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and a Secretary.
- Elect a delegate and alternates to Policy Council. One delegate from each full local group is elected. Alternates should be sent if the delegate is unable to attend. Parents should encourage their delegate to attend as they represent your views when writing the grant, budget and policies.
- Plan and schedule training activities that meet the needs of the parents on your parent committee.

Since staff attend parent meetings to provide input and act as resources for parents, they cannot be responsible for childcare during the meeting. Problems and concerns should be identified to your teacher before discussing them at parent meetings. Please give your teacher the opportunity to solve the concern.

Elected Officers and Duties

Role of Chairperson ________________________________ (Name)

1. Before the Parent Committee Meeting:
   - Discuss with your teacher the date and time for your next meeting.
   - Plan with your teacher the agenda items and program for the meeting.

2. During the Parent Committee Meeting:
   - Call the meeting to order on time.
   - Discuss the items on your agenda. These items may include:
     - Minutes of the last meeting - presented by Secretary
     - Old Business - take action as indicated
     - New Business - take action as indicated
     - Policy Council Report - by Policy Council Representative
     - Staff Reports - teacher
   - Set date and time of the next meeting.
   - Adjourn meeting.
   - Introduce the speaker or the program.

3. Cancel Parent Meetings - in consultation with the staff and other parents and in accordance with cancellation of school events and weather forecasts.

Role of Vice Chairperson ________________________________ (Name)

- Take over the duties of the chair in the absence of the chairperson.

Role of Secretary ________________________________ (Name)

- Write minutes of the meetings and give to your teacher for duplication for all parents.
- Handle other correspondence as necessary.
Head Start Policy Council

What is the Policy Council?
Policy Council is a group of parents and community members who meet monthly to oversee the delivery of services to children and families. Through Policy Council, members actively share in making decisions about the program.

What is the Work of Policy Council?
Policy Council works with Head Start Management Staff and the WCMCA Board to develop, review, and approve or disapprove:
- Funding applications
- Procedures for shared decision-making about long and short-range program planning
- The composition of the policy group and their selection procedures
- The annual and on-going self-assessment process
- Criteria for recruitment and enrollment
- Personnel policies
- Decisions for hiring or terminating staff

Who are the Policy Council Members?
- **Parents of enrolled children** - Over half the Policy Council membership is made up of parents with enrolled children.
- **Community representatives** include; past parents, representatives from local resource services, professional organizations or collaborative adventures.

How do I get to be a Policy Council Member?
Each local parent group elects a parent to represent their group at Policy Council. The time frame for these elections is September through November. The nomination process:
- Teachers explain process to parents at initial home visit and ask parents if they are interested. These names are brought forward to all the parents at their center.
- Nomination list is shared with all parents.
- An election is held at their local Family Event/Meeting/Socialization or via ballot.
- Verification of election is documented on the Family Event/Meeting/Socialization form

What is my Role on Policy Council?
- **Attend** the scheduled Policy Council meetings. Members who can’t attend will arrange for their Alternate Policy Council member to attend in their place, making sure your center is represented.
- **Listen** to the needs of your local parents and represent their interest at the Policy Council meetings.
- **Report** the work of Policy Council to your local parent group. (A meeting summary will be mailed to members to assist in reporting on the Policy Council meeting.)
- **Call** the office if you will be absent.
- **Serve** on committees such as hiring and firing of staff, budget or fiscal review, program self-assessment, and serve as Minnesota State Parent Affiliate (SPA) representative.
- **Communicate** if you are no longer available to participate in Policy Council.
- **Submit** your expenses for attending (child care and mileage) each meeting.

Being a member of Policy Council is a wonderful leadership opportunity!
Classroom Expectations

1. Cell phones and other personal belongings are to be put out of sight.
   - Cell phones cannot be used during class time. You may use your breaks to check your messages. You may give your family the classroom phone number to contact you in case of an emergency.

2. Break times are listed in your classroom schedules. You are responsible for taking your break at the designated time, the teachers will not remind you however, please make sure to tell the teacher you are leaving for your break.

3. Children come first. Remember we are here for them, therefore keep your focus on them. Keep adult conversations to a minimum and talk with children instead. Every conversation with a child promotes brain development and language skills.
   - Adults need to spread out throughout the children so if an adult is already sitting at an activity table, find another place to engage with children. At mealtime, be sure to focus on the children as well.

4. Pop, hot drinks or food are not allowed in the classroom. Please feel free to have water at any time. Remember, we are working to set a good, healthy example for the children.

5. Be excited! The best way to get children involved is to be excited with them. If you show excitement about even the most tedious activities, they will be excited about them.

6. Make sure you spend time with each and every child in a positive activity every day!

7. Use behavioral situations as learning opportunities. Children often misbehave because they do not know another way. Use these opportunities to teach appropriate behavior, rather than focus on punishment.

8. Remember volume control. Talk quietly at all times. The louder adults talk, the louder the children become. Even whispering conversations in the back of the room during teaching times is distracting. If someone needs to talk to you during teaching times, please step out of the classroom and be as least distracting as possible.

"Head Start has made a difference in both our family time and our daughter’s interactions with her peers and family. It has prepared her for school and allowed us to have more time together reading and interacting."
- -Head Start Parent