

OKALOOSA COUNTY
HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START
PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK
2014-2015



Mission Statement

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start is committed to the Empowerment of Children with Diverse backgrounds, families and staff through the Support of Our Community for Personal growth and Development that will lead to a Successful Future.



**Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start
Child Development, Inc.**

2018 Lewis Turner Blvd., Suite B

Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547

Phone (850) 651-0645 Fax (850) 651-8593

Dear Parents,

As we begin the 2014-2015 school year I would like to welcome all of you to the Okaloosa County Early Head Start/Head Start Program. For some, this is a new experience and for others, it is a return to a positive and rewarding partnership based on mutual respect and trust, and geared towards assisting you in meeting the needs of your child and strengthening the family.

Our program is designed to provide you and your child with comprehensive early care and education services. These services include developmentally appropriate educational experiences, health, mental health and dental services. We also provide family support services by offering parent training workshops on various topics, resource and referral information and most importantly a safe and secure environment for your child.

We encourage parents to participate in the Head Start Program through volunteering their time in the classroom and serving on the Policy Council. **Parents are a child's primary teacher** and when you assist teachers and other staff, you become a part of every achievement we strive for on behalf of your child and the program. **You are our most valuable resource.**

This handbook was prepared to assist you in your understanding as to how the Head Start Program works for you and your child. We ask that you read it and use it as a guide throughout the year in understanding the program's policies and procedures.

Again, welcome to Okaloosa County Head Start and thank you for giving us an opportunity to help you give your child a head start in life. We look forward to working with you and having a great year.

Sincerely,

Beverly Cornell

2013-2014 Policy Council Chairperson

Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start Child Development, Inc.

Okaloosa County Head Start Board of Directors



Dr. Lynn Boyer
Chairperson
(Psychology Representative)



Dr. Vivian Green
Vice-Chairperson
(Early Childhood Education Representative)



Steven Rausch
Treasurer
(Finance/Accounting Representative)



Dr. Joyce Gossom
City of Fort Walton Beach
Council Representative



Beverly McKay-Cornell
Policy Council Chairperson



Shannon Hayes
City of Crestview
Council Representative



Tonya Holman, Esq.
Attorney
Community Representative



Debra Broadnax
Clinical Social Work
Community Representative

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Okaloosa County Head Start Center Sites



Early Head Start/Head Start Programs Operate Monday-Friday
8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (VPK 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)

McGriff Center

Early Head Start & Head Start/VPK
22 McGriff Street,
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
(850) 244-2606

Edney Center

Early Head Start & Head Start/VPK
1198 West Edney Street,
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 682-2912

Chester Pruitt Center

Head Start
15 Carson Drive SE,
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
(850) 244-4959

Lakeview Center

Early Head Start
227 Lakeview Drive,
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 682-5931

Niceville Center

Head Start/VPK
1200 Valparaiso Boulevard,
Niceville, FL 32578
(850) 678-6893

Kennedy Center

Early Head Start
215 Kennedy Place,
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 682-1992

Bay Street Center

Head Start
700 Bay Street,
Crestview, FL 32536
(850) 689-3645

Laurel Hill Center

Head Start
8264 Stokes Road,
Laurel Hill, FL 32567
(850) 652-4909



WHAT IS HEAD START & EARLY HEAD START?

Head Start is a federally funded program that promotes school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start programs provide a learning environment that supports children's growth in the following domains:

- language and literacy
- cognition and general knowledge
- physical development and health
- social and emotional development
- approaches to learning

Head Start programs provide comprehensive services to enrolled children and their families, which include health, nutrition, social, and other services determined to be necessary by family needs assessments, in addition to education and cognitive development services. Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage. Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Head Start programs build relationships with families that support:

- family well-being and positive parent-child relationships
- families as learners and lifelong educators
- family engagement in transitions
- family connections to peers and community
- families as advocates and leaders

Okaloosa County Early Head Start/Head Start serves infants, toddlers, pregnant women, preschool-age children and their families. Over a million children are served by Head Start programs every year, including children in every U.S. state and territory and in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Since 1965, more than 30 million low-income children and their families have received these comprehensive services to increase their school readiness.

Centered-Based Program

Early Head Start services are delivered at centers located in Crestview and Fort Walton Beach; services are provided from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing transportation to and from all Early Head Start centers. Head Start services are delivered at centers located in Crestview, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, and Laurel Hill; services are provided from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Parents are responsible for providing transportation at centers that Head Start bus service is unavailable. VPK services are provided in Fort Walton Beach and Crestview; services are provided from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Further general Head Start information can be found at: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about>

**THANK YOU FOR ENROLLING YOUR CHILD IN OUR
HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START/VPK PROGRAMS!**

Guiding Principles of Okaloosa County Head Start

We believe.....

- Children are the priority of the Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head start Programs.
- In the personal growth and development of children and their families.
- In letting children express their individuality by teaching them to respect themselves and others.
- That children should be given the tools to maximize their learning potential.
- The philosophy that student improvement begins with teacher improvement.
- In seeking new ideas and innovations to the Head Start program by Board of Directors members, Policy Council members, community members, and Staff.
- In advocating for public policy for the future of our children.
- That all children, families, and staff deserve to be respected.
- In children receiving proper nutrition, health, and dental care.
- In making a positive difference in the lives of our children, families, and staff.
- That individuals who benefit from Head Start should give back to the program.
- In early identification and intervention of common risk factors for children and families.
- That open and honest communication is a key to the overall success of Head Start and the children we serve.
- That all staff should have the opportunity to be trained and advance within the program.
- In empowering the people around us.

Mission Statement

Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start is Committed to the Empowerment of Children with Diverse backgrounds, Families and Staff through the Support of Our Community for Personal Growth and Development that will Lead to a Successful Future.

Vision Statement

Okaloosa County Head Start/ Early Head Start is and will be the Leader in Early Childhood Education through Exemplary Passion and Commitment from Staff. Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start provides Cutting Edge Services and Support for our Families, Children and our Community.

Confidentiality Policy

One of the most important policies that has been established at Okaloosa County Head Start is our policy of confidentiality. All children's files are maintained in locked cabinets and are available to the parent/guardian during regular office hours. Only with your written permission, will we send any records or information to any other agency or individual.

Early Head Start

(Pregnancy through the age of 3 & their families)

Early Head Start Curriculum Model

In Early Head Start it is important to have a clear framework for planning and implementing a developmentally appropriate program. All Okaloosa County Early Head Start centers use the Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers to ensure that the services being delivered to our children and families are based on sound child development theories regarding how children develop and learn. The staff acts in a manner that acknowledges the importance of establishing a partnership with families and involving them in meaningful ways. We recognize that every individual is rooted in culture; has the right to maintain his or her own identity; and that culture and family are the core of children's social and emotional development. Our curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development:

- **Social:** to help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are part of the group.
- **Emotional:** to help children experience pride and confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude toward life.
- **Cognitive:** to help children become confident learners by letting them try out their ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems, ask questions, and use words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- **Physical:** to help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about what their bodies can do.

Head Start

(Children ages 3 to 5 & their families)

Head Start Curriculum

Okaloosa County Head Start utilizes the Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers within all of its classrooms. The curriculum plays a vital role in achieving Head Start's goal of enhancing the social competence and school readiness of children. The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says, it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in.

Head Start Domain	Creative Curriculum Developmental Continuum
1. Language	Language Development
2. Literacy	Reading & Writing
3. Mathematics	Logical Thinking
4. Science	Learning & Problem Solving
5. Creative Arts	Representations & Symbolic Thinking
6. Social & Emotional Development	Sense of Self
7. Approaches to Learning	Learning & Problem Solving
8. Physical Health & Development	Physical Development

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)

(Children ages 4 to 5 & their families)

We, at Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start Program, are committed to enhancing the quality care and education services that we provide to our children and families. Thus, we will offer the Voluntary Pre-kindergarten (VPK) School Year Program, which requires the delivery of 540 instructional hours over a 9-month period, at designated Head Start Centers during the 2014-15 school year. The VPK program is FREE for all children who are 4-years-old by September 1, 2014. This program is designed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and features high literacy standards, accountability, appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, manageable class sizes and qualified instructors. The VPK class schedule is Monday – Friday, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Parents are responsible for their child’s transportation to-and-from the VPK program.

Family Services

Family Services area coordinates the outreach and recruitment for the all Okaloosa County Head Start centers. The Family Services team support Head Start families in their efforts to improve their quality of life by assisting the family’s to identify short/long term goals and educates families to utilize available community resources as temporary assistance. Additional services include guiding families to initiate, advocate, follow up and maintain service; subsequently leading to self sufficiency or to continue delivery of services.

For example, Family Services Specialist (FSS) will provide direct service to a child’s parent/guardian, who identifies his or her child, does not have health insurance. FSS will explore with the parent/guardian the available health insurance coverage, assist the parent/guardian to obtain the application, guide the parent/guardian through the application process, and follow-up to ensure insurance was acquired. The FSS will then educate the parent/guardian on the importance of continuing the coverage, choosing the right medical provider, and following the provider’s guidelines to ensure continuity of coverage. In addition, your FSS can offer you vital information on various topics as well as complete a referral to community resources.

The Family Services team is looking forward to meet and establish a working relationship with you to accomplish your family’s goals or needs. FSS is available to meet with you throughout the school year.

Health Services

The objective of the Health Services area is to promote optimum physical, dental, nutritional, and mental health of all children enrolled in Head Start. All families will be assisted in obtaining a medical doctor, dentist, and medical insurance for their child if needed. Health Services staff will ensure that all children have a health, developmental, and behavioral screening within 45 days of enrollment. NOTE: No screenings or examinations will be completed without prior approval from the parent.

Our goal is to ensure that each child, either through Head Start funds or other community resources, receives the following:

- * Regular Well Baby Checks
- * Preventive health services
- * A complete physical
- * Dental examination

Immunization and Physical Policy

Florida State statutes mandate that all children in a childcare setting have a current immunization form (DH Form 680 or DH Form 681-Religious Exemption from Immunization) on file at the center prior to the child's entry into the program. It is also mandated that each child has a current physical exam documented on DH Form 3040, School Entry Health Examination within 30 days of enrollment. If either of these forms expires while your child is in the program, you will be notified approximately one month before the expiration date and reminded to take your child for the appropriate update. If this is not done, your child will not be able to come to the center until it has been accomplished. So please help us by keeping these items current. Your Family Services Specialist or Health Services Specialist can help you with this if needed.

Administering Medicine

Only prescribed medication in the original container showing the child's name, physician, administration instructions, and all pertinent information will be accepted by Head Start staff.

Parent / Guardian must:

- * Administer the first dose of medication at home.
- * Bring medicine in to the center.
- * Fill out an **Authorization to Dispense Medication** form every 30 days.
- * These permission forms are valid for one month only.
- * One form must be filled out for each medication.
- * Special permission for medication that is required on a continuous or as needed basis, such as inhalers for asthma, may be obtained from the physician.

Over the counter medicine such as Tylenol, cough syrup, etc., requires a doctor's note.

Illness

Do **not** send your child to school if he/she has a fever or is generally ill. If your child has any communicable disease such as: chicken pox, pinkeye, strep throat, etc., please keep him/her at home until the child's doctor or nurse gives him/her permission to return to school. After three days of absences because of a communicable disease, you must bring to school A Return To School Notice from your child's doctor or Health Department. This will ensure Head Start that your child is well enough to return to school without his/her illness affecting the other children.

Teaching staff will follow the **When to Keep Your Child Home Policy**. Teacher will document child's illness and reference the "When to Keep Your Child Home" document informing you when child is eligible to return to school if a child is sent home from school ill. Teachers will perform a daily health check on each child as the children enter the classroom. This check is a 30 second head to toe assessment of the child.

If a child becomes sick at school:

- The legal guardian will be notified immediately of the child's illness and need for care. If legal guardian cannot be reached, the emergency phone numbers listed on the child release form will be contacted. The teachers will fill out an Illness Report. A copy will be given to the Health Specialist and the parent/guardian.
- If a child comes to school with a parent/guardian/car pool, the child will be sent home immediately with that individual.
- If the Head Start Health Manager and/or nurse recommends treatment by a physician, a note from the doctor's office must be obtained stating that the child is being treated and that he/she is no longer contagious and it is okay for the child to return to school.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Symptoms	May return to Childcare	Requires M.D. Note
Fever Auxiliary - 100° Oral - 101°	After fever has subsided for at least 24 hours. (A child sent home from school should remain home the following day). Fevers are usually accompanied by other symptoms which may be reason for exclusion.	No
Vomiting 2 or more times in 24 hrs	24 hours after last episode	No
Diarrhea with fever Diarrhea without fever	24 hours after fever free When able to contain in a diaper or not Exhibiting other symptoms	Yes No
Skin Rash/Irritation	With medical note stating the child is not contagious and may return	Yes
Ringworm Ringworm on Scalp	24 hours after treatment is started. Must be covered while in center. Cannot be covered/contagious	No Yes
Impetigo	24 hours after treatment is started	Yes
Chicken Pox	6 days after the onset of rash and/or once sores have dried or crusted	No
Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease	After fever has subsided for 24 hours	Yes
Fifth's Disease	With a medical note stating child is not contagious	Yes
Strep Throat	24 hours after treatment is initiated/ 24hours without a fever	Yes
Scarlet Fever	With medical note stating child may return / 24 hours without a fever	Yes
Measles	6 days after onset of rash	Yes
Mumps	9 days after onset or swelling subsides	Yes
Lice	When child is louse free and the parent has provided proof of treatment & signed statement from parent/guardian.	No
Scabies	24 hours after treatment initiated and with a note stating child may return	Yes
Nasal Drainage (Rhino rhea) with fever Nasal Drainage (Rhino rhea) without fever	24 hours after fever free Will remain in the classroom unless specified by the physician	 Yes
Pinkeye/ Conjunctivitis	24 hours after treatment started with a note stating child is not contagious	Yes
Mouth sores with drooling	When sores are dried or with medical note stating is not contagious and may return	No
Signs of possible severe illness, unusual persistent crying, uncontrolled coughing, difficulties breathing	When child can participate comfortably in child care setting	Depends on diagnosis

Our agency follows the Florida Department of Children & Families (DCF) mandates regarding communicable diseases. If any regulations change throughout the school year parents/guardians will be notified via a written policy addendum.

Mental Wellness

Our agency recognizes that healthy social and emotional development depends upon how children view themselves, and that the behaviors that adults demonstrate are those which will be internalized and emulated by children. Therefore, the program offers the following mental health services to assist in promoting mental wellness in children, families, and staff:

- Classroom and individual observations/recommendations
- An on-site mental health consultant
- Group and individual education on mental health issues
- Provide special help for children with atypical behavior/development
- Utilization of other community mental health services as needed
- Mental Health services to parents/guardians and household members of enrolled children

Nutrition

Good nutrition in the first few years of life plays a vital role in a child's abilities to learn and to do well in school. It is also a basis for lifelong nutrition habits. At Head Start we follow the USDA Child Nutrition Program Guidelines and the Head Start Policies on nutrition.

This means providing:

- Two (2) nutritious meals- Breakfast and Lunch
- Afternoon snack
- Nutritional activities in the classroom
- Formula or breast milk as chosen by the parent

All food served in the Head Start Program must be prepared at the center or be commercially prepared. Our performance standards require that the food served must be USDA approved, which means high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. Therefore, we will not be providing candy and other 'junk food' at the centers. **Please do not send any food to the center or to your child's classroom. We will not be able to accept it due to USDA regulations.**

Disabilities

The Okaloosa County Head Start Program serves children who meet the State of Florida eligibility requirements for Exceptional Student Education and the Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services-Early Intervention. Services are provided to meet the special needs of children with disabilities at the Head Start Center when possible. Services are provided by licensed, certified professionals as required by law. For infants and toddlers, Head Start contracts with Sacred Heart Development, Education & Intervention (DEI) Program to provide early intervention therapies and services. Parents need to provide the Head Start Disability Department with copies of any evaluations/medical reports related to the child(ren)'s disability or sign the Release of Information form so we can request the necessary information. Parents are provided copies of all Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.), Individualized Family Services Plan (I.F.S.P.) and related paperwork on their child.

Transportation

(Provided for Head Start (3-5 year olds) ONLY!)

The transportation component provides safe and effective transportation for children and their families for field trips, medical/dental appointments, special services, and limited services to and from school. Transportation to/from school is dependent on the child's center and is subject to change at the discretion of Head Start governing bodies. If your child's center does provide transportation to and from Head Start allow for a 10 minute window for bus pickup and drop off times.

Our goal is to keep our children safe while traveling to and from school. We need your help in this important task. When you transport your children to and from school, please ensure that your child is in the proper child restraint seat in accordance with Florida State law.

Transportation Safety Rules

1. Please have your child ready to board the bus upon its arrival. **ALWAYS** escort your child to the bus for boarding.
2. An adult must accompany a child when crossing the street at all times. Parents/guardians must use proper street crossing procedures: **Stop and look both ways before crossing the street to ensure there are no vehicles coming.**
3. All children must be seated immediately in their seat belts and remain in their seat at all times.
4. Please contact your child's center if your child does not need to be picked up.
5. Families must provide prior notification to their child's center if someone other than the individuals listed on the child's emergency card is to pick-up the child from the bus. Proper identification will be required before the child is released to someone other than the parent/guardian.
6. Know the Danger Zones of the bus. They are as follows: both sides & front/back of the bus and within ten feet around the bus. Never walk behind or beside a school bus. These are blind zones and the driver will not be able to see you nor your child.
7. Food, toys, backpacks, animals, and glass containers are not allowed at anytime on Okaloosa County Head Start school buses.

On-Bus Safety Rules

1. Wear bright clothes so the bus driver can easily see you.
2. Line up quietly at the bus stop without pushing or yelling.
3. Stay away from the curb or road until the bus driver stops and signals it's safe to get on.
4. Stay out of the school bus danger zone - the area 10 feet around the bus on all sides.
5. Use handrails to get on and off the bus.
6. Obey the bus driver and stay quietly in your seat; no fighting or shouting.
7. Keep aisles clear. Put belongings in your lap or under the seat.
8. Never throw anything in the bus or out the windows.
9. Don't stick your head, hands, or legs out the window.
10. If you need to cross the street, do so in front of the bus -never behind it- and wait until the bus driver sees you.

Attendance & Absence Policy

The following reasons are considered to be excused absences:

1. Illness
2. Temporary family situations
3. Medical / Dental and clinic appointments (including immunizations)

It is the responsibility of you to notify your child's teacher and/or Family Services Specialist, when you know in advance, that your child will be absent/late or as soon as you're aware the absence/tardy is going to occur. When your child is absent three (3) consecutive days without notification, family contact will be made by the Family Services Specialist. **Continuous excessive absences (excused or unexcused) may result in the child being terminated from the program.** It is essential that you understand the importance of your child attending school on a regular basis so that he/she will become familiar with the daily routines and learn the responsibility of attending class on a regular basis.

Head Start is mandated by the Federal Government to meet a required 85% average daily attendance while school is in session. Having your child in attendance daily and on time is critical to your child's education. If you have an uncontrollable situation and cannot bring your child to their center follow protocol and inform your child's teacher and/or Family Services Specialist prior to the absence or soon as possible.

VPK hours are Monday through Friday from 2-5 PM. We hope that you will support our program by allowing your child to be here during the entire three hour period. VPK attendance is very important, extended or excessive absence from the program may result in the loss of the child's VPK slot. VPK follows the same policies and procedures regarding attendance as Head Start and Early Head Start (see above).

Persons Authorized to Pick-up Child

Children will only be released to adults 18 years and older that are listed on the emergency card. Photo identification will be required before the child is released. No phone calls will be allowed for authorizing pick-up for anyone not on emergency card. It is your responsibility to update your emergency card for the following reasons:

- Address
- Telephone number
- Place of employment
- Legal custody of the child
- Daytime emergency contact person and telephone number
- Additional persons for pick up
- **All updates must be done in person, no phone calls or letters**

Withdrawal Procedures

In the event you wish to withdraw your child from Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start/VPK, please be sure to let us know you are no longer in need of our services. Notify both the classroom teacher and your Family Service Specialist so we may formally withdraw your child. This allows us to immediately fill the vacancy with a child from our waiting list.

Visitor Policy

Visitors are welcomed! Okaloosa County Head Start is committed to making your visit a safe, secure, and healthy one for you and others in the program. We encourage parents/guardians/family members to participate in our program activities and all staff will make it a welcoming experience. **It takes the efforts of program staff, parents/guardians, and visitors working together to make our facilities safe, secure, and a healthy environment.** We require all visitors to Okaloosa County Head Start/Early Head Start to abide by the following safety rules while you are at our centers:

- Parents/guardians/family members and other visitors are required to sign in/out at each center and have identification available.
- All visitors must abide by Head Starts policies and procedures. Visitors who fail to follow these policies may have their visiting privileges revoked and be asked to leave the premises. The program shall not be responsible for injuries as a result of violating these rules.
- In-kind, time volunteered, is an essential means to continuing our program. Be sure to complete an in-kind form while volunteering, teaching staff and Family Services have the forms available for you.

Emergency Procedures

If a serious injury occurs, the following steps will be taken:

1. A staff member will call 911.
2. First aid will be given until emergency personnel arrive.
3. Staff will contact the child's parent/guardian and document times of contact/attempts.
4. Child will be made as comfortable as possible.
5. Staff will notify the Health Services Manager/Center Manager of the incident. Should they be unavailable, the Director's designee will be notified of the incident.
6. The child will be assessed by emergency personnel and taken to the nearest hospital if so indicated.
7. Parent/guardian has the right to remove the child to transport to the hospital or seek other medical treatment.
8. A staff member with the child's health and medical information will accompany the child if the parent/guardian is not present.
9. Proper documentation (to include an accident report) should be turned into the Center Manager.

**** PARENTS/GUARDIANS**:**

****It is important to notify us immediately when you move, change your telephone number, or change jobs!!** In case of an emergency we need the most up-to-date information.**

Non-Emergency Procedures

If a non-emergency occurs, the following steps will be taken:

1. Staff will contact the parent/guardian listed on the emergency card within ten (10) minutes of the incident, documenting times of contact/attempts.
2. Staff will notify the Health Services Manager/Center Manager of the incident. Should they be unavailable, the Director's designee will be notified of the incident.
3. The child will be made as comfortable as possible until the parent/guardian arrives.
4. Parent/guardian has the right to remove the child should the situation warrant.
5. Proper documentation, to include the incident report, should be completed by the attending staff member(s) and signed by the parent/guardian. The signed report will then be turned into the Center Manager/Health Services Manager.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) mandates that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline of the Department of Children and Families. Failure to report child abuse to DCF will be now a third degree felony. The Florida Abuse Hotline accepts reports 24 hours a day and 7 days a week of known or suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment and reports of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult. To make a report you can:

- report online at <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us/>
- call 1-800-962-2873
- use 711 for Florida Relay Services
- fax your report to 1-800-914-0004

Training in the prevention of child abuse and neglect is provided during the year for parents and staff. If you suspect or know of a child or vulnerable adult in immediate danger, call 911.

Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force as a form of discipline. This includes, but is not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, jerking, pulling hair, etc. Isolation refers to separating the child from normal association with classroom activities. Isolation in which the child is left totally unattended is forbidden. The use of corporal punishment and/or total isolation of any child **will not be tolerated** in Head Start by staff or parents.

Head Start is a **No Spanking Zone** and parental discipline should be handled in your own home. Parents/guardians are asked to refrain from using harsh words with their child to include cursing while on Head Start property.

Children under the age of eight (8) should not be left unattended in your vehicle. All Head Start employees are mandated reporters who are required to report these occurrences (including spanking on Head Start premises) to the proper authorities.

Child Discipline

Early Head Start/Head Start/VPK Staff will:

1. Set understandable and developmentally appropriate classroom rules.
2. Incorporate classroom rules and expectations into the daily lesson plans.
3. Discuss the consequences if classroom rules and expectations are broken.
4. Provide positive reinforcement for children following the rules.
5. Discipline will not be associated with food, rest, or toileting.
6. Child will not be denied outdoor play as discipline.
7. Explain the use of 1, 2, 3 Magic to the children and parents.
8. Ask questions of the parent or guardian to identify behavior indicators.
9. Make an appointment with the Mental Health/Disabilities Specialists or Early Childhood Education Manager to observe in the classroom.
10. Keep the child's parent up to date on behavior and techniques that are working.
11. Obtain parents written permission for an individualized observation by contracted service provider.
12. Refer child to proper service providers based on information determined at the Multi-disciplinary Committee Meeting.
13. Children and parents who present themselves as a threat to the other children and families in the center may be dismissed from the program by the determination of the Okaloosa County Head Start Management Team.
14. The program is responsible for the overall safety of all children, parents and family members.

Dress Code Policy

For children

Parents/guardians, please dress your child in clothing that is appropriate for school activities. All children will participate in outdoor activities on a daily basis unless it is raining. Also, we ask that you **not** dress your child in opened-toe sandals or flip-flops. **THIS IS A SAFETY HAZARD!** We have a lot of sand and playground equipment that can trip-up little toes. **Please dress them in tennis shoes or shoes that cover their entire foot.**

For parents

Parents/guardians, we ask that you remember that Head Start is a place of business and that you dress appropriately (i.e. no pajamas, sagging, clothing with obscenities or making reference to drugs/alcohol, clothing that is of a revealing nature) when dropping-off and picking-up your child, as well as during any other visit to our centers.

Inclement Weather Policy

Okaloosa County Head Start follows the Okaloosa County School District when deciding to close school due to severe weather or unforeseen circumstances. Listen to local radio stations, WEARTV, or look at School District website to find out if Okaloosa County Head Start will be closed; **if Okaloosa County schools are closed so is Okaloosa County Head Start.** The following procedures will be followed when these situations occur:

- ❖ Announcement to the media will be made
- ❖ Parents/guardians will be contacted via their daytime phone number on the child's emergency card
- ❖ Children receiving bus service will be loaded on the bus after the announcement of closing and start their route

Communication System

Communication between you and Head Start staff is very important. In order for us to ensure you are informed about activities for your children and families we will do the following:

- ❖ Children will bring home a monthly newsletter.
- ❖ Children will bring home notes and permission forms to be signed and returned.
- ❖ All parents/guardians are invited to attend various monthly meetings and training opportunities.
- ❖ **Contact your Family Services Specialist immediately if you have a change of phone number and/or address so that we can contact you in times of an emergency.**
- ❖ Teachers conduct two home visits and three parents/guardian - staff conferences per school year with all enrolled children.
- ❖ Family Services Specialists will schedule monthly contacts with each child's parent/guardian to ensure Head Start provides the necessary services/resources to families. These contacts can occur in the staff's office, child's home, or via telephone, whichever is most convenient.
- ❖ Parents/guardians are welcome to visit and volunteer at their child's center daily at anytime.

Chain of Command

As a parent/guardian, if you are ever faced with a concern that you feel is not being met, please use the following "chain of command." The Head Start/Early Head Start Program believes in working with families and staff to address any concerns a parent/guardian may have with the program in a timely manner. **Please document all concerns in writing so that they can be handled properly; submit the document to proper staff member following the guidelines below:**

Communicate your concern in the following order:

Step 1 - Speak to the teacher about your concern when she/he is available & not supervising children, or speak to your Family Service Specialist.

Step 2 - If you are not satisfied with the solution, speak to the Center Supervisor.

Step 3 – Still not satisfied with the solution, speak to Early Childhood Education Manager or other Manager the concern is pertaining to.

Step 4 - Again, if you are not satisfied, speak to the Human Resource Manager.

Step 5 - Finally, if you are still not satisfied feel free to speak to the Head Start Executive Director.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule should provide consistency in a balanced program of child initiated and adult-directed activities, including individual and small group activities, routines and transitions. The daily schedule will be posted in every classroom so that staff, parents/guardian and volunteers are of the days' sequence and structure. The schedule is to be followed consistently; children develop a sense of security from knowing how the day's events will be ordered. The schedule may be flexible to accommodate special activities such as visitors to the centers or special events. The schedule may be revised during the year as the children grow, develop and expand their skills.

Daily Classroom Schedule

8:00am-9:00am Arrival/Hand washing/Breakfast/Teeth brushing/Bathroom

9:00am-9:15am Circle Time/Planning

9:15am-10:15am Learning Centers/Small group activities

10:15am-10:25am Clean up/Bathroom/Recall

10:25am-11:25am Outside Activities

11:25am-11:30am Hand washing/Prepare for lunch

11:30am-12:00pm Lunch

12:00pm-12:30pm Clean up/Teeth brushing/Bathroom/Prepare for rest time

12:30pm-1:30pm Rest time

1:30pm-2:00pm Hand washing/Bathroom/Snack/Prepare for dismissal

Helpful Hints for Parents

- ❖ Make sure your child is at school every day unless he or she is ill or there is a family emergency situation.
- ❖ Dress your child in play clothes. Children will be required to be in closed toe shoes at all times.
- ❖ Spend time at your child's center. **VOLUNTEER!**
- ❖ Attend and be active at your Parent/Guardian Center Committee meetings and activities.
- ❖ Do not let your child bring toys, money, etc., unless the teacher has a show-and-tell activity.
- ❖ Do not let your child bring dangerous items to school such as: Guns (including toy ones), sharp objects, lighters, nail clippers, knives, fingernail files, etc.

Rights and Responsibilities of Head Start Parents/Guardians

1. Participate in the process of making decisions about the nature and operation of the program.
 - A. Attend monthly Parent/Guardian Committee meetings during your child's enrollment.
 - B. Be kept informed of current activities / events in the program.
 - C. Be a member on the Policy Council, Health Services Advisory Committee, School Readiness Advisory Committee, etc.
2. Participate in the classroom as a **VOLUNTEER!**
 - A. Visit the center at any time. (See Parent/Guardian Engagement Section)
 - B. Help plan and assist in activities with the children.
3. Assist in developing and implementing family activities that will be beneficial to the center families and their community.
4. Work with your children at home and in cooperation with Head Start staff.
 - A. Welcome and participate in home visits and conferences with the Head Start staff to share information and ideas.
 - B. Discuss what ideas you have for the center.
5. You have the right to be treated with respect from Head Start staff. You have the responsibility to respect Head Start staff. Parents/Guardians and staff should respect the health, safety, and emotional well-being of children at all times. Disorderly conduct and/or verbal abuse from either party will not be tolerated.
6. If you have a concern/issue with the classroom activities you need to:
 - A. Request a parent/teacher conference.
 - B. If issue is not resolved to mutual satisfaction, you can request a conference to include a Manager.
7. If you have a concern/issue with the Head Start Program you may need to:
 - A. Schedule a conference with the appropriate staff involved.
 - B. If the issue is not resolved to mutual satisfaction, you can request a conference to include a Manager.
8. If after completing 6 & 7 you feel that you have not been treated fairly, you have a right to file a parent complaint. (Please ask for form from the Family Services Specialist).
9. Parents/guardians have a right to appeal any decision(s) to the Executive Director. The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the expectation of Okaloosa County Head Start families that:

- * Adults will not leave children unattended in the building or in vehicles.
- * Visitors will not play loud music in the parking lot or create loud disturbances.
- * All visitors will respect the building, parking lot, grounds, supplies and equipment and will clean up after themselves and their children while on site.
- * All adults will treat ALL others with whom they come into contact with respect and dignity. They will refrain from loud talking or shouting, cursing, name-calling, quarrelling, verbal or physical fighting, making displays of anger or making rude remarks to staff, children, or other visitors/parents.
- * All visitors are to dress appropriately while at school whether visiting, volunteering in the classroom, or dropping off their children (e.g. no pajamas, sagging, clothing with obscenities or making reference to drugs/alcohol, clothing that is of a revealing nature)
- * Visitors will not smoke or bring alcohol or other drugs onto the property including in the parking lot.
- * Visitors will refrain from inappropriate or excessive displays of physical affection with others.
- * All parents and authorized adults will make themselves aware of Okaloosa County Head Start guidelines and regulations.
- * All adults conduct themselves in a way that provides the best possible model and example for the children in our care.
- * All parents or community members with complaints are to follow the appropriate complaint procedure as explained in the Communication System/Chain of Command sections of this handbook.
- * All adults will exhibit patience and self-control in managing any complaints or grievances.
- * All adults will follow the directions of Okaloosa County Head Start Staff, including administrators, teachers, custodial and kitchen staff and bus drivers and aides.
- * All parents and staff will drive at a maximum safe speed of 5 mph while in the Head Start parking lot.
- * For the safety and well-being of all our children and families, all parents and staff will refrain from using the Bus Lane for parking, using available parking in the lot.
- * All parents, whenever possible, will establish a “hold hand” policy with their children when walking between the parking lot and the building and maximizing safety.
- * All parents are expected to sign this agreement each school year.
- * Parents will refrain from yelling at or spanking their children while on Head Start property.
- * Parents will be supportive of the goals of the classroom and the school in assisting their child.

Parent/Guardian Engagement

The Foundation of Head Start Volunteering in Head Start: We Need You! Parents are encouraged to volunteer for Head Start in any way they feel comfortable. There are a variety of volunteer opportunities, all valuable and all necessary for the program to run effectively. Volunteering in the program is a good way to gain skills and knowledge that may give you the experience you need for future employment.

Volunteering is also a great way to be part of a supportive community that serves children. Here are just some of the possibilities for how you can volunteer in Head Start:

- Classroom volunteers can lead or support activities with children, read books with children, participate in curriculum meetings; provide additional classroom support so that each child gets more individual attention.
- Parents are always invited to share a meal with their child and spend time in the classroom.
- Field trip: accompany a group on a field trip.
- Clerical work: help file, type, and answers phones, send mailings, and complete other projects in the Head Start offices.
- Newsletter: Write an article for the program newsletter.
- Participation in Parent Committees or Policy Council, attend Head Start Parent Committee or Policy Council meetings.
- Share your experiences or opinions to help make our program better!
- Legislature: attend legislative events to advocate for pertinent issues.

In-Kind

If your child attends Head Start you will hear the word in-kind. What is INKIND? The best way to explain it is: volunteer time, good, services, or other donations given to the program. By volunteering the classroom, going on field trips, helping with events, taking home projects from the teacher, donating classroom supplies, attending various parent trainings and meetings, etc. counts as INKIND.

The federal government requires Okaloosa County Head Start program to match the funding received from them by 20%. If we do not obtain our in-kind match that is required we must return 4 times that amount back to the government. This would affect all areas and we may not be able to provide many extra things, for instance field trips, parent involvement activities, transportation, and other services we offer.

If you have any questions of how you can contribute to our program ask any Okaloosa County Head Start/ Early Head Start Staff personnel, for we all are responsible for reaching our In-Kind.

Policy Council

The Policy Council is the governing body of the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Parents are encouraged to serve on the Policy Council. Each family places a vote at the beginning of the year to elect parent representatives. The Council meets October -September. Policy Council members learn leadership skills and make suggestions to improve the Head Start/Early Head Start program.

All parents are invited to attend Policy Council meetings. Each Parent Committee President will receive Policy Council minutes to report at the monthly meetings. If you are interested in being a Parent Committee officer or a Policy Council representative, see your child's teacher or family services staff

Parent Committee

All parents/guardians who have children enrolled in Head Start are automatically members of each center's Parent Committee. The purpose of this committee is to share information with the parents via reports by the director, Family Services Specialist, Education, and Health Services. Parents/guardians are to use this time to discuss and give input into educational activities/curriculum planning and menu planning. Parents/guardians also use this time to arrange projects and plan activities to help their children and families.

In the fall, the Parent Committee members meet with the assistance of Family Services. The committee elects officers; a chairperson, co-chairperson, and secretary. The chairperson runs the meeting, the secretary records the minutes. The co-chairperson fills in for the chairperson when they are unavailable to attend the meeting. An agenda is developed by the chairperson and distributed to all parents in the program. After each meeting, the minutes are posted by the secretary for all parents/guardians in the program to view. Family Services shall be available to assist the officers and members.

Health Advisory Committee

Health, Nutrition and Safety policies and procedures are developed utilizing federal, state and county guidelines with the assistance of medical and dental providers and community representatives. This is accomplished through the meetings of the Health Advisory Committee. If you are interested in becoming a parent representative on the Health Advisory Committee, see your child's teacher, family advocate, school nurse, or family services assistant.

School Readiness Leadership Team

Parents are invited to become integrally involved in the development of our program's curriculum, goals, and approach to child development and education.

Parents are integral partners in the processes of planning and implementing curriculum, as they can share knowledge about their children, and crucial in reviewing the effectiveness of the curriculum. Parents are involved in this committee by reviewing the curriculum on a regular basis, and participating on program self-assessment committees assigned to review how the curriculum is working and assisting in development and implementation of the curricula.

Parent Activity Fund

Okaloosa County Comprehensive Head Start Child Development, Inc. has monies available for parents/guardians to participate in an activity. This fund is for parent/guardian use only. Parents will be notified how much money is in the parent activity fund at the beginning of each school year. The amount may vary from year to year. Each centers Parent Committee can vote to use the monies collectively (all Centers' monies in one account) or separately (each individual Center's monies in separate individual Center's account).

Parents will provide input/suggestions on the use of the parent activity fund at the beginning of the school year and submit to the Family Services Department. The results of the suggestions will be reported immediately to the parents after the Family and Community Partnership Managers compiles all of the suggestions.

Guidelines for the funds are:

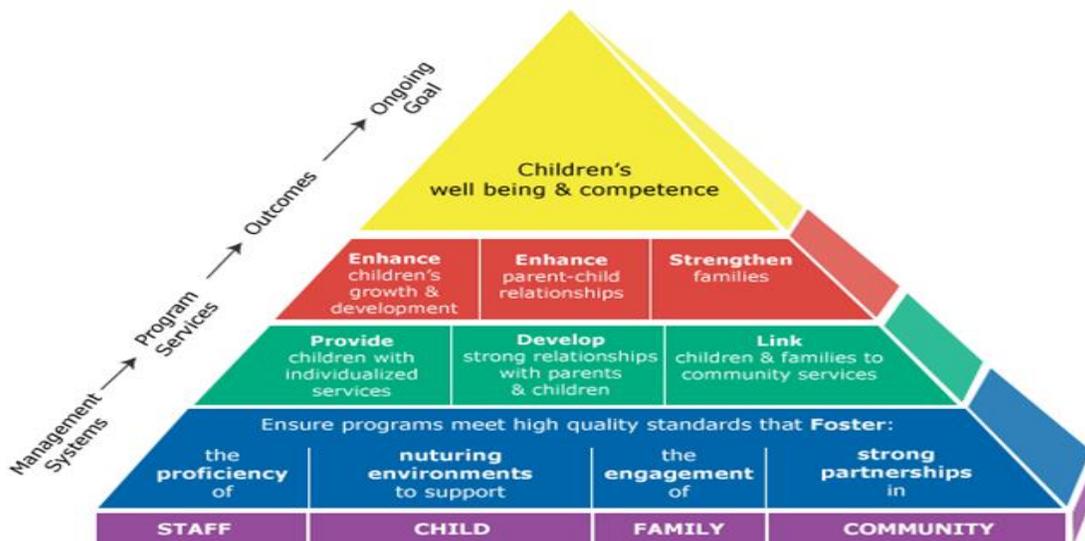
1. This fund is for parents/guardians use only.
2. The parent activity must be educational based.
3. Speakers, training, seminars, conferences, banquets (cost of food and/or travel could be covered).
4. Trips to museums, or the like, to provide parents with ideas or information for parent/child activities.

PFCE + School Readiness = Sustaining Learning Gains Through The 3rd grade

What is PFCE? Parent **F**amily & **C**ommunity **E**ngagement ...is building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships and ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike. It refers to the beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and activities of families that support their children's positive development from early childhood through young adulthood. Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood program, school and community, and is a shared responsibility with all those who support children's learning.



What is School Readiness? School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. For parents and families, school readiness means they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teachers and advocates.





**OKALOOSA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE HEAD START
CHILD DEVELOPMENT, INC.**

2014 – 2015 School Year Calendar

Teacher Planning	Monday-Friday	August 11-15, 2014
First Day of School for Students	Monday	August 18, 2014
Labor Day Holiday	Monday	September 1, 2014
Early Release Day	Thursday	September 4, 2014
Early Release Day	Thursday	October 2, 2014
Teacher Work Day/Student Holiday	Monday	October 20, 2014
Early Release Day	Thursday	November 6, 2014
Veterans Day Holiday	Tuesday	November 11, 2014
Thanksgiving Holidays	Monday – Friday	November 24-28, 2014
Early Release Day	Thursday	December 4, 2014
Winter Break Holidays	Friday-Friday	December 19, 2014 – January 2, 2015
Early Release Day	Thursday	January 8, 2015
Teacher Work Day/Student Holiday	Friday	January 16, 2015
Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	Monday	January 19, 2015
Early Release Day	Thursday	February 5, 2015
Washington’s Birthday Holiday	Monday	February 16, 2015
Early Release Day	Thursday	March 5, 2015
Teacher Work Day/Student Holiday	Friday	March 20, 2015
Spring Break Holidays	Monday-Friday	March 23-27, 2015
Early Release Day	Thursday	April 2, 2014
Early Release Day	Thursday	May 7, 2014
Memorial Day Holiday	Monday	May 25, 2015
Last Day for Head Start/VPK Students	Thursday	June 4, 2015
Last Day for Head Start/VPK Teachers	Monday	June 8, 2015

Early Head Start is year round

Thank you for taking the time to read your Parent/Guardian Handbook, if you have any further questions feel free to contact your Family Services Specialist.

Sincerely,

Christy Shaw, M.S.

Family & Community Partnership Manager

My Early Head Start/Head Start Team

(To be completed by parent/guardian)

My Child's Teachers:

Center Site Supervisor:

Education Manager:

My Family Services Specialist (FSS):

Family & Community Partnership Manager (FSS Manager):

Human Resources & Executive Director are located at Administrative Office
2018 Lewis Turner Blvd., Suite B, Fort Walton Beach or (850) 651-0645

Website: <http://okaloosaheadstart.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Okaloosa-County-Head-Start/459531960859567>

