



Head Start

Mid Florida Community Services

Early Head Start

Educating Children, Empowering Families, Changing Communities

Parent Handbook



A National Head Start Association
Program of Excellence



Mid Florida Community Services, Inc.
Head Start/Early Head Start

A National Head Start Association
“Program of Excellence”

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome and thank you for choosing Mid Florida Community Services, Inc. (MFCS) Head Start/Early Head Start. We are pleased and excited about having your family in our program!

This Parent Handbook has been created to provide you with information about our program and is a tool to help guide you through a successful school year. If you need additional information please contact the Head Start administrative office in Hernando or Sumter counties at (352)754-2464 or in Volusia County at (386)736-1325 or feel free to use our toll free number 1-888-227-0010 and someone will gladly assist you.

Head Start/Early Head Start is a comprehensive child development program designed to help children develop school readiness and social competency. Our staff recognizes that you are your child’s first and most important teacher. As your partner, we will work with you to help your child develop socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. You are encouraged, at all times, to participate as an essential member of the Head Start team. You may do this by volunteering in your child’s classroom, attending and participating in parent meetings, and welcoming staff into your home for visits. Additionally, we urge you to take a leadership role in the program by participating as a member of your center’s Parent Committee, obtaining a position on the Policy Council and/or serving on our Health Services Advisory Committee or School Readiness Committee.

We look forward to working with you and your child this year. Again, welcome to Head Start/Early Head Start!

Sincerely,



Heidi L. Rand
Director of Early Learning Programs

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The information contained in this book is important to its owner. If found please return to the person(s) listed below.

You may return it to any Head Start location in Hernando, Sumter or Volusia counties or please call 1-888-227-0010:

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

This book belongs to: _____

My child's center: _____

My child's classroom number: _____

My classroom telephone number: _____

My Teacher's name: _____

My Family Advocate's name: _____

My Family Advocate's phone number: _____

My Child Development Specialist (CDS) or Site Supervisor: _____

My Child Development Specialist's phone number: _____

My child's arrival time: _____

My child's pick up time: _____

My child's evacuation location: _____



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HISTORY OF HEAD START

Head Start was launched in 1965 as an eight-week summer program by the Office of Economic Opportunity.



Over the years, Head Start became a ten to twelve month program and was enthusiastically received by educators, child development specialists, community leaders and parents across the nation. The Early Head Start program was designed in 1994, by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, to serve children under the age of 3 over a twelve month period.

Head Start serves over one million children and their families each year. Through both programs, Head Start has served more than 32 million children, birth to age 5 and their families.

The major program areas of Head Start/Early Head Start are:

1. **Early Childhood Development and Health Services** - including child medical and oral health, child development and education approaches, safety issues, nutrition and meal services, mental health services, and services for children with disabilities.
2. **Parent, Family and Community Engagement** - including parent engagement, family goal setting, accessing community resources, and community partnerships to enhance services for Head Start children and families.
3. **Program Design & Management** - including program operations, monitoring, fiscal management, planning, evaluating, personnel resources, training, facilities, materials, and equipment.

MISSION STATEMENT

Provide comprehensive early childhood services that enhance the lives of children and families to collaboratively foster school readiness and self-sufficiency.

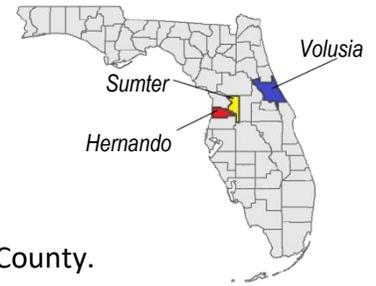
PHILOSOPHY

Head Start/Early Head Start (HS/EHS) understands that children develop at their own individual rate and learn through hands-on active play and by interacting with peers, adults, and their environment. Our staff provides a safe and caring environment so children can develop to their full potential based on classroom experiences that promote a positive self-concept. HS/EHS accepts and embraces each child's individuality, developmental level and family background. Therefore, we provide an inclusive environment in all of our classrooms, where typically developing children and those with special needs are provided a positive learning environment. HS/EHS recognizes the important role parents play as their child's first teacher and encourages families to participate at all levels of the learning experience with their child in our program.



SERVICE AREA

Mid Florida Community Services, Inc. (MFCS) is the community action agency granted the opportunity by the federal government to operate the Head Start program in Hernando, Sumter and Volusia counties, serving 977 preschool children and the Early Head Start program in Hernando and Volusia counties, serving 112 infants and toddlers. The home office is located in Brooksville, Florida in Hernando County.



HOURS OF INSTRUCTION

All centers are open Monday - Friday

Volusia County:

- **Head Start** 8:00AM - 2:00PM

Volusia County Head Start classrooms will follow Volusia County Schools' schedule and have early release most Wednesdays, when children are dismissed at 1:00PM. Please see the school calendar for dates.

- **Early Head Start** 8:00AM - 4:00PM

No early release days are recognized for Early Head Start.

Sumter County:

- **Head Start** 8:00AM - 2:00PM

Hernando County:

- **Head Start** 8:30AM - 2:30PM

Hernando County sites follow Hernando County Schools' schedule and have early release one Wednesday per month, when children are dismissed at 1:00PM. Please see the school calendar for dates.

- **Early Head Start** services from 8:30AM - 4:30PM

No early release days are recognized for Early Head Start.



EXTENDED HOURS OF SERVICE

Extended hours are available at specific centers. This is NOT a HS/EHS service, so additional paperwork must be completed to enroll in the extended day program. A separate handbook is available with program guidelines for extended day. Please ask your Family Advocate if these services are available at your site.

EMERGENCIES AND WEATHER RELATED CENTER CLOSINGS

MFCS has established guidelines for school closures. These guidelines are often different than our local school districts. If all county government offices in your community close due to bad weather, our centers will also close. Please pay close attention to the radio or television for government office closings in your county. There may be times when an individual center is forced to evacuate due to bad weather, facility issues, etc. In this event, every effort will be made to contact each family directly using the most recent contact information we have on record. Our best method for mass communication is through our Facebook page and website.

LOCKDOWN POLICY



Although we do not anticipate this to take place, we want all parents to be informed of the following practice. In the unlikely event that an active threat of violence is suspected to exist within or near our center, posing a threat to staff and children, our building will be placed in a “lockdown” mode. The staff will lock the doors and place children in the safest place possible in their classrooms or the nearest safe room that can be locked. Please be advised that for the safety of children during a lockdown, no one will be permitted to enter or exit the building. The building will only be reopened upon direction from appropriate authorities.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES

- Children are to be brought to and picked up from the classroom and **must** be signed in and out, with a signature and time.
- Each child will also be given a picture ID that has a bar code. Children 3 years of age and older will learn to scan themselves in and out of their classroom to electronically document their attendance.
- Individual(s) picking children up from school are required to have picture identification for verification purposes. Any individual picking up a child must be at least **14 years of age**.
- Children will **only** be released to those listed on the Child Care Application for Enrollment form.
- For the safety of your child, parents are asked to provide, in writing, any changes to the emergency contacts listed on the Child Care Application for Enrollment form.



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Your child's attendance and timely arrival at school plays a vital role in his/her School Readiness success. It is important your child attends school regularly, arrives on time, and, in Head Start, stays until the end of the school day. A consistent morning routine is the best way to ensure a timely arrival.

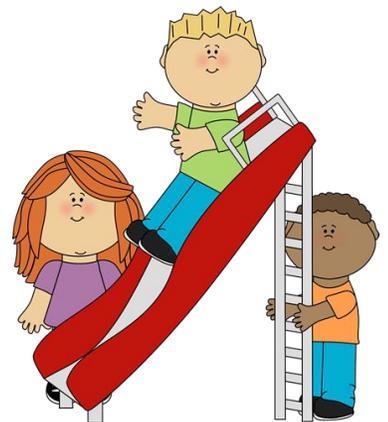
- Your child is expected to attend daily for the full program day. We want your child to benefit from the full learning experience! A monthly attendance rate of 85% is required by Head Start Performance Standards.
- Please call your child's classroom by 8:00AM to report an absence or tardiness in Sumter & Volusia counties and by 8:30AM in Hernando County. Head Start Standards require your Family Advocate to make attempts to contact and/or visit you if your child is absent and you have not made contact.
- If your child has irregular attendance, your Family Advocate will contact you to determine if assistance is needed to ensure your child consistently comes to school.
- Excessive absences from school, not including emergencies or illnesses, that cannot be resolved, may mean your child cannot benefit fully from the program. At that time your child's enrollment in the program **could be** at risk.
- Our teaching staff have commitments for trainings and meetings after the school day ends. Please make sure your child is picked up on time.



CHILD AND PERSONAL SAFETY

MFCS Head Start/Early Head Start requests the cooperation of staff, parents, and the community to safely operate and maintain security at all centers. All visitors are required to follow these safety guidelines:

- Please sign in when volunteering at the centers. You will be provided with a visitor sticker.
- Only children enrolled in our program, and under direct supervision of a staff member, are allowed access to the playground area.
- Please reduce speed in the parking lots and only park in designated parking areas. **Never** leave a child unattended in a car or leave your car running in any parking lot.
- Please hold your child's hand while in center parking lots and use the designated walkways where marked.



DRUG AND WEAPON FREE CENTERS

MFCS, with cooperation from local police and sheriff departments, strives to keep our centers drug and weapon free. Federal and state statutes prohibit the possession, distribution, or manufacturing of drugs within 1,000 feet of our centers and prohibit possessing or discharging weapons or firearms at a school-sponsored event or on school property.



SMOKE FREE ENVIRONMENT

The health and well-being of your child is **very** important to us, which is why all our centers are smoke-free. Smoking is **prohibited** in all indoor and outdoor spaces utilized by the program. Please refrain from smoking within sight of children and all parking lots. This policy will be strongly enforced.



VIDEO CAMERAS

Please be advised that all classrooms in our centers are equipped with at least one video camera. In addition, some centers may also have cameras on the exterior of the buildings.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Within Head Start, confidential information will only be shared with employees who have a “need to know” in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. MFCS strives to protect everyone’s right of privacy so confidential and sensitive information about staff, other parents, or children will not be shared with parents. Please be aware that parents do not have the right to know anything about other children, other parents or personal information about staff.



Parents are asked to limit any photography at the centers to only include their own child. Due to confidentiality concerns, any social media photos must be done through MFCS after confirming a media release has been signed. Parents are asked to refrain from posting any information about other children and families in the program on the internet without prior written authorization. For further clarification please see your Family Advocate.



Please  our **Facebook** page at **Mid Florida Community Services Head Start** or go to our website at www.midfloridaheadstart.com.

FEES AND FUNDRAISING

There are no fees for children to attend Head Start/Early Head Start. All events and activities are provided free of charge to the children and families in the program. Program policy states no staff member, volunteer

or parent, can request money or donations from other staff members, volunteers, or parents. If you are interested in asking for any type of donation from the community:



- Share the idea with a staff member
- Staff member will request approval from the Director
- Staff member will notify you if your request is approved and provide you with further guidance

- All donations must be reported to the staff so a formal acknowledgement may be made.

CHILD CLOTHING AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS

When choosing clothes for your Head Start child to wear to the program, please consider the following:

- Clothing should allow for freedom of movement and be free of hard-to-open snaps, belt buckles, or several small buttons.
- Clothing should be easy to wash due to creative activities using supplies such as water, sand, paint, glue, shaving cream, etc.
- Clothing should change with the weather.
- Shoes must be closed toe and rubber soled to avoid injuries. Sneakers are **highly recommended**. Sandals, Crocs, boots, and high heeled shoes may limit your child's play experiences.
- Jewelry and beads should be worn at a minimum.
- Due to safety risks, no drawstrings are permitted on clothing.

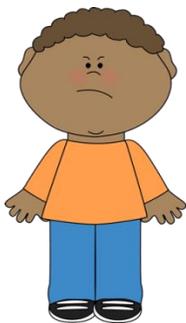


Children enrolled in Early Head Start should also adhere to these additional requirements:

- For non-mobile infants, socks/booties or other shoe coverings are required.
- For mobile/walking toddlers, shoes are required.
- Infants and toddlers are messy! Please ensure at least your child has at least 2 changes of clothing.

All personal items and clothing such as sweaters, jackets, backpacks, etc. should be marked with your child's name. Staff members are not responsible for any items that are lost or broken.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM



Head Start/Early Head Start has provided training for our staff to help them foster positive behavior in children. In our program we use positive guidance techniques:

Positive Environment: Our teachers provide the children with choices of activities and act as role models. They set reasonable and fair limits and reinforce positive behavior.

Natural and Logical Consequences: Children are not punished. Rather, there are consequences that naturally or logically follow. For example, if a child is throwing blocks he is

showing that he is not able to play with them appropriately. The teacher will remind him that blocks are for building. If the action continues, the child will be removed from the blocks area for a period of time.

Redirection: Staff will help/allow children to choose a different activity and redirect their behavior.

Separation: If a child is very upset over a situation, he/she may need time and help in calming himself/herself. The teacher can sit with a child, often with a book or quiet activity. "Time-out" is **not** used.

Safety Intervention: Staff will help children to remain safe by taking action when the child's behavior is a danger to themselves or others.

We encourage parents to provide these same behavior support techniques at home. By working together to provide consistency, your child has the increased potential for school readiness success.

DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

The Department of Children and Families requires that parents are notified of the disciplinary practices used by any child care facility. The practices are listed below for your reference.

Staff, Consultants, Contractors or Volunteers are not allowed to:

- A. Use corporal punishment;
- B. Use isolation to discipline a child;
- C. Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
- D. Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
- E. Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
- F. Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, isolating or corrupting a child;
- G. Abuse or maltreat a child;
- H. Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks in front of a child, or about the child or child's family; or,
- I. Withhold active play, physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward;
- J. Place a child in a crib/portable crib for a time out for disciplinary reasons

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM EXPULSION

Mid Florida Community Services will not expel or unenroll a child from the Head Start/Early Head Start Program because of a child's behavior, consistent with section 1302.17(b) of the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

MFCS requires the parents of enrolled children at all times, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of our program is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters a center. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on the agency property, which will ultimately require their child be dis-enrolled from the program.

1. Swearing/Cursing: No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on agency property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward Head Start staff.
2. Threatening of Employees, Children, Other Parents or Adults Associated with Head Start: Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats shall be reported to appropriate authorities. **Parents must be responsible for and in control of their behavior at all times.**
3. Physical/Verbal Punishment of your Child or Other Children in Head Start: When providing behavioral guidance to their child(ren) at a Head Start function or in a Head Start facility, parents will use positive methods. The use of corporal punishment (i.e., physically striking a child or inflicting physical punishment) or verbal humiliation is prohibited.
4. Confrontational Interactions with Employees, Other Parents, or Associates of Head Start/Early Head Start: While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of Head Start/Early Head Start or the parents of other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner and never in the presence of children.
5. Under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol: Should staff suspect that a parent/guardian is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, staff will take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the child(ren) involved.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Our program recognizes and supports the Office of Head Start's (OHS) emphasis of school readiness for all children. School readiness for us means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start/Early Head Start believe children learn in an active learning environment where intentional experiences are provided. Our program follows the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) as the developmental building blocks that are most important for a child's school and long term success.

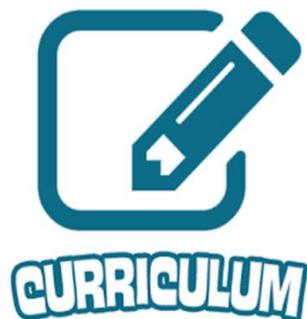


These building blocks are play experiences that focus on five essential domains of child development and learning including, (1) language and literacy development, (2) cognition and general knowledge, (3) approaches to learning, (4) physical well-being and motor development, and (5) social and emotional development.

Curriculum

Our program uses several curricula to guide your child's education.

Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Two's supports caregivers and teachers in creating responsive daily routines and meaningful experiences for young learners. A rich collection of resources is provided that help teachers put knowledge into practice and help them foster children's learning and growth.

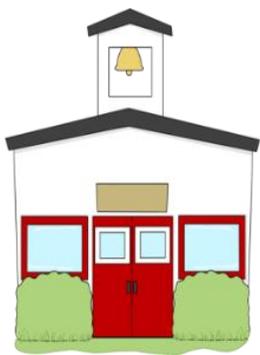


Galileo is based on scope and sequence, development and learning theory, interest areas and room preparation. The curriculum is linked directly to Galileo's reliable and valid assessment tool. Theme based lesson plans provide activities for hands-on active learning environments in our classrooms.

Houghton Mifflin PRE-K is a hands-on, mind-on curriculum that is based on scientific research and aligns with key Pre-K learning goals. Filled with colorful images and rich literature, the program provides children with foundational skills needed to succeed as lifelong learners.

The Second Step Social-Emotional Skills for Early Learning teaches social-emotional learning and self-regulation skills that help children manage their feelings, make friends, and solve problems. Our teachers model and practice classroom rules, proper interaction with others, and conflict resolution. Since family involvement is essential to children's emotional learning, a family component is also used.

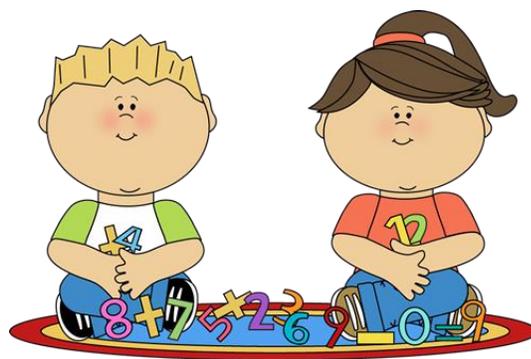
The Role of the Child Development Specialist (CDS) or Site Supervisor



The CDS or Site Supervisor provides oversight for each center for which they are responsible. They are the immediate supervisors of all teaching staff and assist other staff members assigned to their sites. The CDS or Site Supervisor ensures the education of your child meets all Head Start standards and the site follows all local, state and federal guidelines. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's education or center staff, the CDS or Site Supervisor is the first person to talk to. You should have the name of that person and their contact number written in the front of this handbook.

Developmental Screening Process

Your child's developmental and school readiness skills are screened within the first forty-five (45) days of entry into the program. Results of the screening are shared with parents during a parent/teacher conference or home visit. If screening results identify a possible concern or risk factor, staff may request consent from the parent for classroom intervention and/or further evaluation. This process is not intended to alarm you. Instead, it helps us recognize a need for early intervention if such a need exists. Although we make every effort to make the process as child-friendly as possible, children tend to perform better **after** they have become familiar with their teacher, new friends and the classroom.



Disability Services

All our classrooms are filled with children who have a wide range of abilities, and our teachers create an environment in which all children – those with or without disabilities – thrive. Our learning environments are designed to build upon children's strengths and weaknesses, and help all of them, special needs or not, develop school readiness skills. By providing this quality learning environment, children with and without disabilities develop a greater appreciation of each other and of individual differences.



Developmental Assessment Process

An ongoing assessment is conducted on your child throughout the year. This information gives teachers the ability to determine your child's skill level and provides strategies to assist your child in the learning process. This information is shared with parents during home visits and parent conferences. Parents receive login and password information to access and use the assessment tool. Throughout the year, parents are encouraged to access results of their child's developmental progress and home learning activities. Please feel free to discuss your child's progress at any time with your child's teacher.

Home Visits and Parent Conferences

Home visits are conducted at least twice a year. The first home visit allows the teacher to become familiar with your child in his/her home environment. During both



home visits, teachers will discuss your child's needs, strengths and goals. Any other concerns you may have at the time of the visit can also be discussed. Parent conferences are scheduled twice each year. This is an opportunity for you to review your child's progress. Teachers work together with parents to identify convenient times for parent conferences to take place. Family Advocates may also make home visits on an "as needed" basis.

Transition Services

A transition means that something is changing in the life of a child. Children experience many transitions, including from home to an early care and education setting, between age groups or program settings, and from preschool to kindergarten. Our program staff supports all families and their children in planning the transition to the next program or setting. A smooth transition will benefit both you and your child. For children transitioning from Early Head Start to Head Start, this transition will begin six months before your child's 3rd birthday. For Head Start children transitioning to kindergarten, planning and activities typically begin when children return after winter break.



HEALTH SERVICES

The Health Services team recognizes the need for children to be healthy in order to thrive and develop to their fullest potential. Head Start provides a comprehensive health program to assist your child's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. Staff review children's health records, conduct screenings, provide follow-up on concerns, and provide training and consultation as necessary. Not all children in care may have a current immunization/physical record.

Medical Health Services

Physical and Immunizations

All children must have a current well baby check/physical exam and immunization record in their file. As a courtesy, your Family Advocate may send a notice home reminding you of any upcoming expiration dates. However, it is your responsibility to maintain all required documents whether you have been provided advanced notification or not.

Health Screenings

In many instances your child has received some screenings as part of their well baby check/physical exam. Head Start ensures all children entering the program receive health services according to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (**EPSDT**) guidelines and Head Start requirements. All children entering Head Start are required to have the following screenings:

- Blood Pressure
- Dental Exam
- Hearing & Vision
- Height & Weight
- Lead & Hemoglobin
- Social & Emotional



Medication

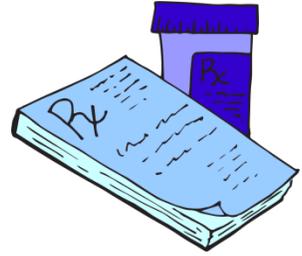
Any child with a medical condition requiring medication in the classroom or special instruction for the child to participate in Head Start/Early Head Start must have an **Individual Medical Care Plan (IMCP)**. The IMCP needs to be completed by their medical provider **prior** to entering the classroom. If the IMCP requires medication, the child cannot be in class until the medication is in the classroom and the Authorization for Medication form has been completed.



Medication Administration

For a child to receive any type of medication (prescription or over-the-counter) during the day, the following requirements must be met:

- An IMCP completed by the child's pediatrician indicating the medication is required to be given in the classroom. HS/EHS staff will not give the first dose of a new medication to a child.
- **Medication must be in its original container and not expired.**
- **Authorization for Medication form must be completed.**



Arrival and Dismissal Health Checks

As each child enters and leaves the classroom each day, teaching staff are required to conduct a daily health check of each child. This process usually takes less than a minute and is a head to toe check for any signs or symptoms of illness. The parent and/or guardian is required to observe and assist the health check to be completed. If your child is found to be ill, he/she will not be accepted into the classroom. Children are also observed throughout the day for illness.

Illness

If a child becomes ill while in school, the parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up their child. Until the parent/guardian arrives, the child will rest in a quiet area under the care of a staff member. Signs and symptoms of an illness include the following:

- Severe Coughing, causing a child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Stiff neck
- Diarrhea (more than 1 loose stool within 24 hours)
- Temperature of 101°F or higher in conjunction with any other signs of illness (Any infant younger than 2 months of age with fever should get immediate medical attention)
- Pink eye or red eye with discharge
- Exposed, open skin lesions
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Any other unusual sign or symptoms of illness



Your child's teacher will complete our Temporary Exclusion of a Sick Child form. The teacher will indicate on the form whether your child may return when signs and symptoms are no longer present or if your child will require a note from the doctor stating they may return to the classroom

If a parent/guardian is not available to pick up their ill child, others on the emergency pick up list will be contacted. Should an ill child not be picked up, staff will make the best decision for the child to include calling 9-1-1 or contacting the Department of Children and Families.

Returning to the Classroom

Once a child has been sent home for an illness, the child may not return without a doctor's note **or** until the signs and symptoms are no longer present. This will be noted on the Temporary Exclusion of a Sick Child form. If a child has been hospitalized or received treatment in an Emergency Room, the parent must have a doctor's note stating the child is able to return to the classroom with or without restrictions.

Certificate to return to work or school	
Mr. _____	Date _____
Mrs. _____	
Ms. _____	
was under my care from _____ to _____	
and will return to work/school on _____	
Remarks _____	

Dr. _____	Phone _____
Address: _____	

Accidents/Incidents during the Head Start/Early Head Start Day



Your child's safety and well-being is always our first priority. If your child has an accident/incident during school, the staff will follow agency policies and procedures and you will be notified as soon as possible

For serious illness and/or injury, when immediate medical treatment is required, staff will contact 911 and parents will be contacted immediately following. An Accident/Incident form will be completed by a member. This document must be signed by the person picking up the child.

Oral Health Services

Good oral health is important to a child's overall growth and development, including the development of speech, language and behavior. We ensure the following:

Oral Hygiene

- Children over two years of age are provided with their own toothbrushes and toothpaste for classroom use. Children under two will be assisted in age appropriate tooth brushing.
- Children brush their teeth after eating.
- Parents are encouraged to help children continue good dental habits at home.



Dental Exams and Treatment



- A dental exam is required for every child within 90 days of entry to the program.
- The Family Advocate and/or Oral Health Services Coordinator may also provide assistance in making appointments, transportation and translation services, if needed.

Nutrition Services

For our Head Start children breakfast and lunch are provided for each child. An afternoon snack is provided during extended hours five days a week.

For our Early Head Start infants and toddlers, meals are provided based upon the developmental level of the children. For example, infants who are on formula or breastmilk are fed on demand. The formula served will be the same as the infant is fed at home and will be provided.

For infants who are breastfed, we will have designated breastfeeding areas and also have storage space for expressed milk. Baby food will also be provided by our program. For toddlers who eat solid foods, our menus will be adapted for the ages of the children served. Menus are developed and approved by a Registered Dietician using the USDA MyPlate guidelines. They are provided monthly and are posted at centers. For more information on MyPlate visit www.choosemyplate.gov.



Food Allergies and Substitutions



Menu substitutions are made to meet a child's dietary needs. If your child has food allergies or intolerances, a Medical Statement for Special Dietary Conditions form needs to be completed by their doctor before entering the classroom.

Menu substitutions can also be made based on religious or personal beliefs. Under certain special circumstances a parent/caretaker may be allowed to provide their child's meals with approval from the Nutrition Services Coordinator.

Outside Foods

Due to potential allergic reactions, outside foods/beverages are **NOT** permitted to be brought to the classrooms/sites for child consumption. USDA and Head Start food preparation guidelines require foods to be purchased from a licensed food vendor or approved caterer. When necessary, this will be done by staff members.

Family Style Meals

Choose

Head Start classrooms implement family style dining. During family style dining, the food is placed in serving bowls on the table.

Healthy

Teachers sit with the children and food is passed from child to child with help. Family-style dining helps create an enjoyable meal time, while still being a part of the instructional day. Parents are encouraged to continue family style dining at home with their child.

Options

Often &

Start

Young

In our Early Head Start classrooms, infants are always held when being fed a bottle. Baby food will be fed to the babies while being held or while infant is seated in a chair with a tray. For children eating table food, food will be put on plates before being served to the toddlers and all EHS children should be fed on demand.



I Am Moving, I Am Learning (IMIL)

Our Head Start classrooms implement the *"I am Moving, I am Learning"* (IMIL) initiative. The main goal of the initiative is to create awareness regarding childhood obesity and provide strategies and activities to be implemented in all levels of the program. IMIL seeks to increase daily moderate to vigorous physical activity, improve the quality of movement activities intentionally planned and facilitated by adults, and promote healthy food choices every day. IMIL uses the character Choosy to help the children identify with the program. Look and see what his name stands for!

Classroom Nutrition Activities

Children will be involved with hands-on food activities in our Head Start classrooms and our oldest Early Head Start classrooms that provide opportunities to try nutritious and diverse foods. Oftentimes these foods may be from their school gardens. Staff will be responsible for assuring individual children's needs are met and foods served meet all safety and nutritional requirements.

Birthdays/Holidays

A child's birthday is a wonderful time to recognize them as special. The teachers will be creative in acknowledging this special day in the classroom. However, for the health and safety of the children, bringing food of any kind to the classroom/site to celebrate a birthday and/or another holiday is **not permitted**.



Mental Health Services

Parents have access to mental health services for their children through our Behavior Specialists and/or our Mental Health Consultant, who work together with teachers and parents, identifying any problems that may interfere with a child's social or emotional growth. They are also available for parents and families should you need help dealing with any social/emotional issues affecting the home. Behavior Specialists are available Monday - Friday from 8:00AM - 5:00PM to meet with you. Additional hours are available to meet each family's needs. Our Mental Health Consultant will be available on an appointment basis only. Please contact your Family Advocate for further information.

Child Abuse and Neglect – Mandated Reporting

Head Start / Early Head Start staff are mandated to report any suspicion of child abuse, neglect (including medical and dental), or abandonment to the Florida Department of Children and Families, per Chapter 39 of the Florida State Statutes. If you have any reason to suspect that your child or another child may have been abused, neglected, or abandoned **call the Florida Abuse Hotline at:**

**1-800-96-ABUSE
(1-800-962-2873)**



PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

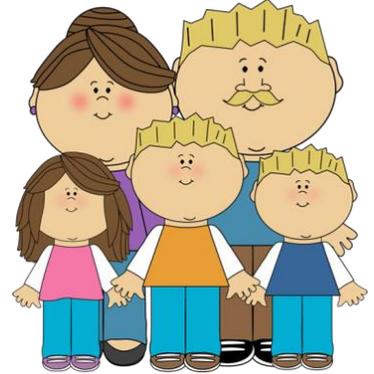
Family Services

The Family Services area represents an organized system of:

1. Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, Eligibility and Attendance (ERSEA).
2. Services to build upon the individual strengths of families to meet their needs and goals.
3. Home visits, assisting parents with goal setting and assuring continuity of services offered to families.
4. Parent Family and Community Engagement

Some of the activities Family Advocates use to support families include:

- Working with community agencies, making referrals as needed
- Parent meetings
- Helping to create family partnership agreements
- Family assessment and goal setting
- Providing information about available community resources
- Recruitment and enrollment of children
- Emergency assistance and or crisis intervention
- Coordinating parent trainings



HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START'S COMMITMENT TO PARENTS

Our program will ensure that each parent will be:

- Treated with dignity and respect.
- Provided the opportunity to form a family partnership agreement, set personal and family goals, and develop plans to achieve those goals.
- Provided both home visits and parent conferences to discuss their child's overall progress towards School Readiness.
- Welcomed in the classroom and encouraged to volunteer throughout the program.
- Provided information and referrals through community resources dealing with health, education, and self-sufficiency.
- Provided opportunities to participate in program governance activities such as parent committees, **Health Services Advisory Committee** and **Policy Council**.
- Provided the opportunity to attend various trainings during the program year.



PARENTS' COMMITMENT TO HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

- Make every effort to treat other parents, Head Start / Early Head Start guests, and Head Start / Early Head Start staff with dignity and respect.
- Provide accurate up-to-date contact information during the school year.
- Partner with Head Start / Early Head Start to form a strong team to educate their child and enhance their family's opportunity to grow in parenting, relationship and leadership skills, and self-sufficiency.
- Be available for both parent-teacher conferences and home visits.
- Provide up-to-date physical and immunization records as required by both Head Start and the State of Florida.
- Support the School Readiness goals by following daily attendance requirements and daily start and ending times.
- Ensure their child is signed in/out in the classroom by an authorized individual.
- Volunteer and/or participate in their child's classroom or activities, when possible.
- Attend parent committee meetings when possible and assist in the decision making process.
- Dress appropriately at all times when on MFCS property or when at other Head Start activities. This includes not wearing pajamas or revealing clothing.



Parent/Family Engagement

Our program recognizes that parents are the most important influence in their child's education and development. Male Involvement opportunities are offered to encourage fathers and other men to participate in our program. We encourage parents to get involved in their child's classroom, center activities, attend parent meetings, home activities, and to serve on committees. Every parent has something to offer.

Parent Participation

We urge you to share your talents, knowledge, time, and energy with us by volunteering.

Some examples of parent volunteer activities include:

- Volunteering in your child's classroom.
- Attending parent committee meetings.
- Serving as an officer of the parent committee.
- Serving as a center representative at the Policy Council meetings.
- Assisting at center events and activities.



Classroom Volunteers

In order to ensure the safety of the children in the program, parents, family, and community members will be asked to complete a short Volunteer Application each program year. Volunteer instructions will be provided to classroom volunteers during the enrollment process and during Volunteer/Chaperone trainings.

Head Start End of the Year Celebrations

We encourage our teaching staff to recognize the achievements of children leaving the Head Start program and entering into public school and they do this in a variety of ways. They may sing songs, do finger plays, dance, and present art work at an end of the year event and parents are always encouraged to attend these activities. After the classroom celebration, parents and children can have a field day, a water play day or another type of parent/child event. We do not however, permit formal graduation ceremonies to take place. Spending time practicing for a formal ceremony can cause stress for both the children and teaching staff and limits time spent educating your child. In addition, there are costs involved in purchasing graduation caps and gowns, which we will not impose on parents. We encourage your Parent Committee to plan a fun-filled day with your children. All activities must be child-friendly, child-sensitive, meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

Participation on Parent Committees

Parent committees are organized at each center and are made up of the parents of children currently enrolled



at the center. These committees meet monthly at a date and time determined by the parents. Parents elect officers who receive training on how to conduct a meeting. Your involvement will allow you to learn about your child's progress, develop social/interpersonal skills, get to know center staff and other

parents, and share in the decision making process. You are an important part of the team.

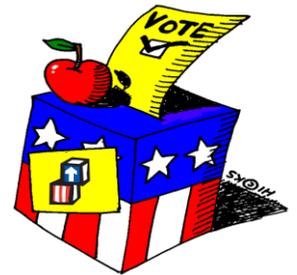
Each parent committee is responsible for the following:

- Planning, conducting and participating in activities for parents and children.
- Encouraging parent participation in classroom activities and being an active part of their child's Head Start experience.

Participation on Policy Council

The purpose of Policy Council is to provide a formal way for parents to be involved in the program planning and decision-making process of our program. The Policy Council is made up of parents and community representatives who want to support the Head Start/ / Early Head Start program, and also have an interest in children, families and the community. The Policy Council members have a vital leadership role as a representative of their Head Start center to receive information, training, and reports, which they take back to share with other parents at their monthly center parent meeting.

Policy Council training is offered to all Council members early in the school year. The training increases members' knowledge of the Head Start / Early Head Start program, enhances the parent/child relationship, and helps the parent in developing leadership skills. The Policy Council meets at least 10 times per year at a time and location determined each year. The time and location of each monthly meeting, along with a packet of information, is provided to members in advance.



Transportation is provided, if needed, to all Policy Council meetings and mileage expenses are reimbursed to Policy Council members as necessary. Childcare is also provided to ensure parents are given every opportunity to attend the meetings. We encourage you to be a part of our Policy Council and participate in major decisions affecting the program, your children, and your family.

PLEASE VISIT US ON OUR WEBSITE:

www.MidFloridaHeadStart.com



Follow us on Facebook

“Mid Florida Community Services Head Start”

PARENT AND CENTER ACTIVITIES ARE POSTED ON THE WEBSITE!

SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

The children enrolled in the MFCS Head Start program will:

Language and Literacy

- Increase their English Language communication skills while supporting the child's home language.

Social Emotional Development

- Express and manage their feelings appropriately.
- Develop and maintain positive relationships.

Cognition and General Development

- Develop and demonstrate an increased knowledge of pre-academic skills.
- Develop life skills and independence through everyday routines and interactions.

Approaches to Learning

- Show curiosity, creativity and an eagerness to learn and experience new things.

Physical Development and Health

- Demonstrate control of their large and small muscles.
- Develop and practice healthy and safe habits.

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HEAD START / EARLY HEAD START

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