



ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

Head Start Program Disabilities/Mental Health

In Head Start all children are special, including those with disabilities. Each child is unique with individual strengths and needs. An individualized program is provided for the child and the child's family. 10% of our population of children must be children who have a diagnosed special need.

All children and families participate in a comprehensive program of education, health, parent involvement and social services. In addition to those services, children with disabilities receive therapy, assistive technology and other special services to help them grow and develop to their fullest potential.

Regardless of the severity, children with disabilities who qualify are welcomed in Head Start. Disabilities include:

health impairments, emotional/behavioral disorders, speech or language impairments, mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), orthopedic impairments visual impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, and other impairments (including children who meet state guidelines).

EIC Head Start's commitment to individualization of all children includes a commitment to serve children with disabilities in an inclusive and socially integrated environment.

Opportunities for inclusion, in addition to Head Start's experience in finding and utilizing professional therapeutic and other needed services, make our Head Start Program an attractive placement option for preschool age children with disabilities.

Head Start regulations for children with disabilities and their families conform to the requirements of the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. The program includes: Child Find, recruitment screening, and professional evaluation, and development, implementation of an IEP or IFSP, placement in the most natural or least restrictive environment and transition planning for the child's next placement.

Mental Health

The Head Start program builds collaborative relationships with community agencies in order to enhance the awareness and understanding of mental wellness, and the contribution that mental health information and services can make to the children, families and staff.

Anticipating and understanding a child's behavior and development help parents and staff to respond in a manner more likely to enhance the child's development. Though all staff receives training and provides a nurturing environment for the children, there are still times when a child's behavior may prove to be a challenging experience where other resources are needed.

Mental Health Tools:

Electronic-Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (e-DECA)

The e-DECA is our screening tool for children ages 2-5-year-old which focuses on three protective factors: Attachment, Self, Control and Initiative which are closely related to social and emotional development. The assessment gives support to teachers, families and communities in their effort to minimize the impact of risk factors that hinder health, social and emotional development.

Second Step

Second Step is our Head Start social skills curriculum for our preschoolers that teach children to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. The program enhances the knowledge and skills of staff also as they promote a more positive social emotional environment for the children. The program's lesson contents are organized into three skill-building units: coping: Empathy - teaches young people to recognize and identify their own emotions and those of others; Impulse Control and Problem Solving which helps young children choose positive goals and evaluate consequences of their behavior in terms of safety, fairness and impact on others; Anger/Emotion Management which enables children to manage their emotional reactions so that they can make good decisions about their social responses.

Behavior Management Program

The Head Start Behavior Management Program includes a brief description of what is behavior Management, How to Pinpoint Behavior Problems; Antecedent; Target/Charting and Intervention of Behavior; What to do in Crisis Situations; the Mental Health Referral Process; and Behavior Management for a Diagnosed Behavioral Child. It also includes Behavior Management Strategies for Home and the Head Start Center and how to write and implement Positive Guidance Plans.

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