

Berkshire County Head Start



Parent/Guardian Handbook

2019-2020



Berkshire United Way

Welcome to Berkshire County Head Start! We are excited to get to know you and your family. Our Parent Handbook provides a comprehensive overview of our program's policies and procedures. If at any time you have a question or would like additional information, please contact your Family Advocate or call the Main Office (413-499-0137) so that we can connect you with the appropriate staff person.

Have a wonderful school year!

MISSION STATEMENT

606 CMR 7.04(17)(a) STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is our goal to work with families and assist children to develop socially, cognitively, physically, and emotionally while fostering a positive self-image and love for learning that will help them succeed in our program, in public school, and later in life.

We are dedicated to ensuring that all children and their families have an opportunity for a high quality early childhood experience by developing ongoing relationships between staff, families, and community partners. We know that outcomes for children are improved when parents and families are actively involved in their child's program.

Berkshire County Head Start recognizes YOU as your child's first teacher. We want you to feel welcome and encouraged to participate in your child's preschool experience. From the first home visit to your child's transition into kindergarten, we will provide information and opportunities to participate in your child's program to support your work in guiding the healthy development of your child. We want to build a collaborative and trusting relationship with your family by establishing a connection between your home and your child's school. We will be sending home newsletters, invitations to parent nights, and notices for community events as just a few ways to build connections between school and home.

Additionally, we will be asking for your help as we collect data to improve our programming and as part of reporting for our funders. Please see the Family and Community Services page for ways to get involved. We ask parents and families to provide input about the program through our Policy Council and our annual self-assessment process. If at any time you have a suggestion for how we can improve our work or an idea that would enrich our program, please contact your Family Advocate or the Main Office so we can have a conversation.

Home visits are a tradition in Head Start and this opportunity offers you the special advantage of one-to-one relationships with staff. Over time, home visits can help staff build a strong relationship with your family and obtain a deeper understanding of your goals and needs. Home visits can be held for many different reasons. Visits may be made to exchange information, to recognize and build on your family's strengths, or to address any issues facing your family, or just to say hello. Thank you for welcoming us into your home!

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Berkshire County Head Start Program is an affirmative action agency that does not discriminate in its selection policies with regard to race, color, cultural heritage, religion, disability, sex, age, national origin, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or toilet training status.

A PROGRAM OF QUALITY

The Department of Early Education and Care is the licensing authority for all of our sites. This includes a comprehensive application and renewal process every two years. A licensor also makes drop-in health and safety inspections periodically. For additional information, parents can contact the Department of Early Education and Care at (413) 788-8401 or visit their website at www.mass.gov/eec.

Berkshire County Head Start also follows the mandates, regulations, and standards of:

- Health and Human Services/Administration For Children and Families (HHS/ACF)
- Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC Licensing)
- Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

RECRUITMENT & ENROLLMENT

Children are accepted into the Berkshire County Head Start Program throughout the year. Enrollment is ongoing. Applications are available at all sites and online at www.berkhs.org. Please call the Main Office at (413) 499-0137 if you would like to have an application mailed or if you would like additional information about our program.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information you share about your child and your family is used for planning your child's learning program and developing your family's engagement goals. Berkshire County Head Start staff and volunteers are required to maintain confidentiality about information that you share. This means that information including photos will not be given to **anyone** outside the Berkshire County Head Start program unless you sign a release of information form or there is a request made during a Department of Children and Families (DCF) or police investigation.

Please also see Parents Rights and Responsibilities and the BCHS Child Record and Data Sharing Policy for additional information.

GENERAL INFORMATION

COMMON COURTESY

- Please refrain from talking on the phone and/or texting when dropping off or picking up your child at the school, at the bus stop, or during meetings. These times are important for children and your attention will support a healthy transition.
- For security reasons, please remove hats, hoods, and sunglasses when entering the building.
- All school buildings are locked. Say your first and last name clearly into the intercom for admittance. We ask that you do not hold the door for others when entering or exiting the building.

- For safety reasons you **MUST** obey the parking rules. We ask that you be thoughtful that there are young children walking to and from the building and their safety needs to be a priority.
- **Do NOT allow your car to idle while inside the building.** It can impact the air quality in our classrooms when windows are open or you are parked near an intake vent.

VISITOR POLICY

- All visitors are required to sign in and out when visiting our sites. In the event of an emergency, we need to have an exact count of the number of children and adults in our buildings at all times.
- The program will need a copy of any restraining orders, custody orders, or other legal documents that would restrict an individual's access to the program. All information is maintained in accordance with our Confidentiality and Child Records and Sharing of Program Data Policies.
- Individuals whose behavior creates a safety risk for children or staff may be placed on the Unauthorized List and access to the building would be restricted.

SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

- Smoking is strictly prohibited at all Berkshire County Head Start sites. This includes classrooms, staff offices, kitchens, restrooms, meeting rooms, hallways, outdoor play areas, and vehicles used for transporting children.
- This policy applies to all employees, parents, contractors, volunteers, and visitors.
- There will be no smoking at bus stops, on field trips, or at any other Berkshire County Head Start function where parents or children are in attendance.

ENROLLMENT & PLACEMENT

- The Enrollment Committee meets weekly to review pending applications or transfer requests. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.
- Transfer requests are reviewed weekly. A member of the Enrollment Team will speak directly with the parent/guardian about the request.
- Placement and Transfer requests will be considered in relation to the availability of slots, composition of the classroom, and learning style of the child. The Family Advocate will contact the family to set up an intake meeting and/or home visit for all newly enrolling children.

PLEASE DRESS CHILDREN FOR ACTIVE PLAY

- We ask that you dress your child in comfortable and washable clothes every day. Children participate in "messy" play that involves paint, playdough, sand, water, and more! Children learn through play and our activities are designed to be hands on explorations. Smocks are available and we help children wash their hands when they are done.
- Sneakers or sturdy shoes **must** be worn for safety. Our sites have access to gyms and playgrounds to provide gross motor activities every day. We also go for walks to learn about our neighborhood and get to know the people in our community. Please do not send children to school in open toed shoes, flip flops, or dress up shoes.

- Being outdoors is an important and healthy part of development. We take children outdoors throughout the year, weather permitting. During the winter, boots, snowsuits, hats, and mittens should be worn every day. If children feel well enough to come to school, they are well enough to participate outside. Thank you for labeling your child's clothing to help us make sure that your child goes home with the appropriate gear!
- Please send an extra change of clothes to leave at school. Spills, accidents, and messes are a regular part of the preschool day. We also have some extra clothes available through the program in the event that the unexpected occurs.
- We understand the importance of toys and special objects from home in supporting transitions to and from school. We ask for your support in reminding your child that toys and special things from home stay in your child's backpack during the school day.
- FOR THE SAFETY OF ALL CHILDREN, IT IS REQUESTED THAT YOUR CHILD DOES NOT BRING IN, WEAR TO SCHOOL, OR BRING ON THE BUS:
 - Food, drinks, or snacks
 - Toys or electronics
 - Rings, silly bands, necklaces, or dangling earrings
 - Money

IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT BACKPACKS

- To insure the best communication between school and home we encourage you to check your child's backpack daily.
- **Please try to check your child's backpack daily.** In addition to the artwork your child has, we often send important papers that need to be signed and returned. It is extremely important for many of these to come back to school right away.
- Staff check your child's backpack for notes and other items from home on a regular basis.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- At enrollment, parents and guardians **must** provide BCHS with emergency contact information in case we cannot reach the enrolling parent(s) or guardian(s). The program can only release a child to an adult that is listed on the emergency contact card.
- **If there are any changes in contact information, please contact your Family Advocate or Home Visitor. Children cannot attend school unless there is current, working emergency telephone numbers and emergency contacts on file. Please be sure your emergency contact numbers are current as well.**
- The program must have a hard copy of any court orders, restraining orders, or custody agreements. Please make sure your Family Advocate has copies of any necessary legal documents. We may request a meeting with you to discuss the situation to ensure that all parties have a common understanding of how the order will be implemented.

TELEPHONE MESSAGES

- If you need to reach your child's teacher, please call your Family Advocate or Site Director. When teachers are in the classroom, their focus is on the safety and supervision of all children. They are not able to take your phone calls during these times.
- We check messages regularly throughout the day. Please feel free to leave a message and staff will return your call as soon as they can.
- If you need to change your child's transportation to or from school we ask that you speak directly with the Family Advocate, Transportation Manager, or other administrator. Voicemail messages about changes in pick up or bus routines may not be received in time unless you speak directly with a staff member.

ATTENDANCE/ ABSENTEEISM

- Success in school begins with regular, on time attendance! The classroom environment is designed to provide children with an opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to be ready for Kindergarten and beyond. The daily schedule is organized to meet the social and academic needs of children, which includes sharing meals and working with friends on shared projects. Children who are absent or come in late can have a difficult time separating from a loved one or joining in with the activities that are underway.
- Research shows that children who attend school consistently and on-time will perform better academically.
- Attending school regularly ensures that children are gaining basic social and academic skills.
- Children learn the foundation of skills that important for later grades.
- Teaching and learning are progressive. They are built on lessons previously taught. Children who miss a lot of days suffer because the day's instructions and activities cannot be duplicated. Children in attendance are ready to move on to the next activity with their peers!
- You are helping your child develop good habits by attending school every day and by being on time.
- These early childhood experiences prepare children and families for the transition into the public school day and schedule.
- Families play a critical role in helping their children develop healthy routines so they can attend school every day. Our staff will work with you to promote good school habits that are vital for continued school success.
- If your child is sick or has an appointment we ask that you call to inform the Family Advocate or Teacher so that we know your child will be absent. Per regulation, we are required to follow up on every child's absence.
- If a child does not arrive as expected on the bus, and does not arrive at school within 30 minutes of his or her scheduled arrival time, staff will call the parent or guardian about the absence. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached after a reasonable amount of time, the emergency contact person will be contacted. We do this to ensure that children are accounted for and safe.

- If a child has **3 consecutive missed days** without a call from the parent/guardian, we will call to offer assistance to help your child attend regularly. A home visit will be made and your child's enrollment will be reviewed. If extended absences continue after you have been offered assistance, you will receive a letter from us notifying you that if your child continues to be absent from the program we will assume that you have decided to make other arrangements and your space will be given to another child on the wait list.
- Travel outside of the county and extended vacations should be discussed with your Family Advocate or Childcare Program Manager to see what impact, if any, there would be to your child's attendance rates or subsidy status.
- Please see the Childcare Program page for additional information on the childcare subsidy attendance policy. Excessive absences can impact voucher funding and jeopardize participation. Please contact the Site Director or Childcare Program Manager to discuss your individual situation.

SNOW DAYS & SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

- The primary source of information on closings and delays will be the television and Facebook.
- Local radio stations will also make announcements.
 - WUPE radio 1110 AM & 100.1 FM
 - Live 95.9 FM WBEC
- In general, the morning Head Start program follows the public school's closings and delays for the district in which they are located.
 - If the public school is delayed 1 hour, the morning program is delayed 1 hour.
 - If the public school is delayed 2 hours, the morning program (9 am – 12:30 pm) will be closed for the day unless your classroom has a 6 hour day.
 - If the public school is closed, the morning Head Start program (9 am – 12:30 pm) is closed. Childcare programming may remain open **without transportation**.
 - The program could also delay opening or close early if it is determined to be necessary for the safety of children and staff. Please watch for announcements specific to the site where your child is enrolled.
- If the Bus Company or local police indicate that bus travel is unsafe, we may close the morning program even if the public schools remain open. The Childcare Program will generally remain open with transportation provided by parents unless severe weather conditions warrant closing.
- If your center needs to close early due to an emergency, such as inclement weather, or building conditions like “no heat” or “no water,” we will call you or your designated emergency contacts to have your child picked up from school. Please make sure this information is current and up to date!

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

- Berkshire County Head Start staff is expected to do all they can to ensure the safety and well-being of children enrolled in our program. If you or someone who is responsible for picking up or dropping off your child appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, we are required to take the following steps:
 - You will be reminded of this policy.
 - You will be told that someone else on the emergency contact list needs to come and pick up your child.
 - Lack of cooperation will result in police being summoned to assist program staff.
 - A 51A (report of alleged abuse and/or neglect) will be filed with the Department of Children and Families if warranted.
 - Individuals whose behavior creates a safety risk for children or staff may be placed on the Unauthorized List and access to the building would be restricted

MANDATED REPORTING

- Berkshire County Head Start employees are mandated reporters. We are required by law to report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF). It is our goal to work together without judgment or bias and give you support during these difficult times.

CHILDCARE PROGRAMMING

Childcare Program Manager

Donna Denning

(413) 445-4153

ddenning@berkhs.org

We offer childcare services at our Pittsfield, Great Barrington, and North Adams locations for families who need a longer day of care.

- Childcare is offered before and after the Head Start morning program, on training days when the morning program is closed, during school vacations, and over the summer.
- The childcare classrooms are open from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm year round.
- Please refer to this calendar for specific information regarding closure days for the morning program and the childcare program.

The daily fee for the childcare program is:

\$41.32 – Full Day (Head Start not in session)

\$33.02 – Before & after Head Start

\$41.32 – Childcare (full day/full year rooms)

\$24.79 – Half-day (full day/full year rooms)

Rates for childcare transportation:

\$9.00/day/roundtrip

\$6.00/day/one way

PARENT FEES & PAYMENT POLICY

- A security deposit and the first week of the parent fee are due on or before the child enters the program.
- Bills for childcare services are delivered every Wednesday. Payments are due in full every Friday for the upcoming week. The first bill you receive will have a security deposit included. Please be aware that if for some reason you do not receive your bill, your weekly fee is still due, as printed on your voucher, agreement, or contract. Any payment not collected on Friday will be considered late.
- A termination notice will be issued if payments are missed on two consecutive Fridays. If there is a problem or special situation in which payment cannot be made, contact the Childcare Program Manager or Bookkeeper **before** payment is due and we will work with you to make suitable arrangements.
- Full days are charged when the Head Start morning program is closed (such as the one day per month for staff training, school vacations, holidays, and snow emergency days).
- There is a specified parent fee charged for absences, holidays, and closings. Payments may be given to the Bookkeeper or placed in the payment box. There is a \$35 fee for all returned checks. Please note that any parent fees owed to the program but not paid will result in a filing through Small Claims Court with an additional \$50 to \$60 filing fee.

CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES & ASSISTANCE

- Parents who are income eligible for Head Start may be eligible for a childcare subsidy if available. Please call the Childcare Program Director for more information regarding availability of subsidies.
- Regular attendance is encouraged, but if you have more than 30 excused absences in a six- month period or 3 consecutive unexplained absences your subsidies may be terminated.

CHILDCARE LATE PICK-UP POLICY

- If children are not picked up from the childcare program before the center closes, parents will be charged a \$1 per minute late fee for every minute of late care.
- If parents have not called to tell us there is a problem, emergency numbers will be called to pick up your child. If your child has not been picked up after the center closes and we have not been able to make contact with you, DCF may be called to assist staff.

SUBSIDIZED CHILDCARE & ABSENTEE POLICY

- For families enrolled in the childcare program, we are required to reassess your enrollment after **3 days of unexcused absences** or end funding **after 30 excused absences** in a six month period.
- Parents may only have two weeks of vacation in a one year period. Written notices must be given to Childcare Director. Parents are at risk of losing their childcare subsidy if we do not have signed excuses for these absences

EDUCATION
Program Compliance Manager
Penny Evans
(413) 445-4152
pevans@berkhs.org

EDUCATION PROGRAM

- Curriculum is designed following the Creative Curriculum model, a strength-based, interactive approach. Classroom activities and themes are tied to the interests of each unique group of children. Curriculum plans are posted outside classrooms and shared in the monthly newsletter.
- Our school readiness goals are based on the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, the Massachusetts Guideline for Preschool Learning Experiences, and the Massachusetts Common Core Standards. Our goals are reviewed with our governing boards and used to inform purchasing for classrooms and professional development for staff.
- Learning experiences include:
 - Language and vocabulary building
 - Emergent literacy (books, alphabet, songs)
 - Emergent writing activities
 - Science and math (numeracy)
 - Social and emotional skills: respect, tolerance, and understanding rules
 - Gross motor and creative movement
 - Fine motor development using manipulatives, puzzles, and play dough
 - Block building and dramatic play
 - Sand and water play

FIELD TRIPS

- Each classroom may plan local field trips depending on funding. Regulations require buses for transportation and the bus ride cannot exceed 45 minutes. Trips are planned within the community according to developmentally appropriate practice.
- Due to safety regulations, buses cannot transport volunteers or chaperones. Watch for field trip announcements and other exciting events in the monthly newsletter for your classroom!

CONFERENCES/ PROGRESS REPORTS

- The program uses the Early Screening Inventory-Revised (ESI-R) to complete a developmentally appropriate screening within 45 days of enrollment. All teachers have been trained in the screening tool as part of their ongoing professional development. The ESI-R is a “quick look” at the child’s abilities across several developmental domains including language skills, fine and gross motor skills, cognitive reasoning, and self-help skills. The ESI report is shared with the parent/guardian as the beginning of the individualized curriculum planning for the child.

- The program uses the Creative Curriculum model to guide classroom instruction and Teaching Strategies GOLD to document progress. Developmental progress reports are generated and shared with parents at least three times during the school year. For children enrolled in the summer program, a progress report will be given to parents at the end of the summer before children transition into kindergarten or before the start of the new school year in September.
- Teachers observe children and record their interactions with peers, adults, and curriculum materials. The observations are then used to develop individualized learning plans for children. Teachers review the progress reports with parents to discuss the observations from the classroom and get feedback from families about the learning goals for their child.
- Progress reports may be shared during a home visit or parent-teacher conference night. Parents can request meetings at any time to check in on their child's progress or to meet with the teachers to discuss their child's program. Please contact your Family Advocate to arrange a time that is most convenient for you and your family.

CHILD GUIDANCE

Our program places high priority on creating learning environments that are safe, respectful and nurturing. Teachers are responsible for developing expectations and rules that create safe classrooms.

- All adults in the classroom will model positive behavior and interactions.
- Teachers work with children to develop clear and consistent rules. When rules are broken, children are guided through a problem solving process to resolve conflicts and develop empathy.
- Teachers and parents will discuss positive discipline techniques and coordinate consistent rules and methods between home and school.
- Modified plans for challenging behaviors are developed at meetings with parents. Plans may include specialized instruction, referral to play therapy or wellness counseling for the child/family
- If necessary, a child may be transitioned from the program to one that may be better suited for the family's need.

BCHS Child Guidance Policy outlines the steps we take as a program to support regular, on time attendance for all children. We work in partnership with parents to address issues and concerns so that children can experience success and learn the skills they need for a positive transition to Kindergarten. Service Provider Meetings are held to promote communication and comprehensive planning for our students. A copy of the BCHS Child Guidance Policy is available upon request.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE POLICY FOR STAFF

- A. Corporal punishment will not be used
- B. No child will be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse
- C. No child will be denied food as a form of punishment
- D. No child will be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet
- E. Children will be treated with respect at all times
- F. No child will be isolated or unsupervised at any time
- G. Supportive guidance by staff will be used in situations for safety; the parent will be notified
- H. Children will be supervised by sight and by sound; no child will be confined to an area or equipment

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

- Berkshire County Head Start has memorandums of agreement with the local public schools in our communities. We work with our school departments to screen, refer and evaluate children as necessary.
- Parents must give written consent before an evaluation is performed. Specialists from the child's home district public school provide services for the children that have been identified as having special needs.
- The Education Content Area at Berkshire County Head Start focuses on assisting parents and teachers to find the best way your child can learn based on his/her strengths.
- All classrooms support an inclusive environment. Modifications or adaptations may be planned to allow children with special needs to participate with their peers to the fullest extent possible, according to their Individualized Family Service Plan and/or Individualized Education Plan.

TRANSITIONING TO KINDERGARTEN

- We begin talking to parents and children about the steps involved in transitioning to Kindergarten at the beginning of the program year.
- We encourage parents to register their children for Kindergarten at their home school as soon as the registration period begins. Being enrolled at Berkshire County Head Start does not automatically enroll your child in Kindergarten. You must register your child for the school in the district where you live.
- Original birth certificates and up-to-date immunization records from the pediatrician are required to register. Family Advocates can copy any information we have on file to assist in the registration process.
- Each school has a visiting day for parents and children to see the classroom and meet the Kindergarten teachers. Family Advocates will send out information to parents for the school districts children will later attend.
- Berkshire County Head Start partners with elementary schools to help parents get acquainted with school readiness skills and assist with registration. Please feel free to call your teachers or Family Advocate if you have any questions about this transition.

Behavioral Milestones

The preschool years are an important time for developing healthy habits for life. From 2 to 5 years old, children grow and develop in ways that affect behavior in all areas, including eating. The timing of these milestones may vary with each child.

2 YEARS

Can use a spoon and drink from a cup
Can be easily distracted
Growth slows and appetite drops
Develops likes and dislikes
Can be very messy
May suddenly refuse certain foods

3 YEARS

Makes simple either/or food choices,
Such as a choice of apple or orange slices
Pours liquid with some spills
Comfortable using fork and spoon
Can follow simple requests such as "Please use your napkin."
Starts to request favorite foods
Likes to imitate cooking
May suddenly refuse certain foods

4 YEARS

Influenced by TV, media, and peers
May dislike many mixed dishes
Rarely spills with spoon or cup
Knows what table manners are expected
Can be easily sidetracked
May suddenly refuse certain foods

5 YEARS

Has fewer demands
Will usually accept the food that's available
Dresses and eats with minor supervision

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services Supervisor

Sheila Toomey

(413) 445-4151

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Berkshire County Head Start contracts with The Brien Center for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to provide mental health services. The assigned mental health clinician works with program staff and parents on a variety of issues such as:
 - Observation of all children/classrooms at least six times a year
 - Observation of home base center socializations four times a year

- Assisting families to remain healthy through information and early referral to mental health services when necessary
- Working with teachers/staff to help understand and meet the social and emotional needs of individual children
- Offering workshops and discussion groups for parents/staff on topics such as child development, behavior management, discipline, and parenting
- Assisting in locating community resources for children and families

Berkshire County Head Start implements the “Second Step Curriculum” promoting empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. The curriculum, “Talking About Touching” is also implemented and designed to teach children safety of self and others.

HEALTH, SAFETY, & NUTRITION

**Health & Safety Manager
Lorie Harrington, RN
(413) 445-4161
lharrington@berkhs.org**

GENERAL INFORMATION

School readiness begins with health! Healthy children are ready to learn. If you have questions or concerns about your child’s health please call the Health and Safety Manager at (413) 445-4161.

The following is required for every child to begin school each year:

- A physical exam within the past 12 months
- Complete immunizations
- Screenings for lead and anemia
- Tuberculosis risk assessment

All health records must be sent to the Health and Safety Manager at the BCHS Main Office, 1 Meadow Lane, Pittsfield, MA. The fax number is (413) 499-0186. Your child’s health records will be stored in a locked file cabinet including any records regarding special needed services.

Please contact your Family Advocate or the Health and Safety Manager if you need assistance in locating a pediatrician or dentist for your child. We also can provide support and resources for families who need assistance in securing health insurance.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

- State and federal regulations require health screenings for each child. Screenings are done only with parent/guardian permission. The results are shared with the parents.
- Berkshire County Head Start staff has been trained in the following screenings:
 - Vision
 - Hearing
 - Height and Weight

- Vision is screened using the Welch-Allyn SPOT Vision Screener. This technology allows us to screen all children, including hard to screen children. It is ideal for our dual-language learners, children with language disabilities, and children younger than 3 years of age.
- Hearing is screened with the Welch-Allyn Otacoustic Emission (OAE) Hearing Screener or AUDEX. This technology precisely screens for hearing loss in preschoolers and children under the age of 3. The OAE and AUDEX rapidly screens with minimal cooperation required. Standard Massachusetts Preschool vision screening and Maico hearing and screening will be used for our home-based children.
- Height and weight are measured twice a year and the Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated. BMI report cards are done in the fall and distributed to those parents whose child is <5% or over the 85%.

ORAL HEALTH CARE

- All children are required to have a dental exam completed within 90 days of enrollment and exams every 6 months thereafter. If dental treatment is needed, the treatment must be done and records of the dental exam and treatment must be sent to Berkshire County Head Start.
- We will assist those without dental insurance by providing resources, support, and information about local dentists.
- Children brush their teeth daily in the classroom. Your child will be offered free fluoride supplements with parent's permission.
- Student nurses and local dental hygienists visit classrooms to provide education about dental health at least once per year.

WHEN SHOULD YOU KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME?

- The health and well-being of every child is important to us. Please **DO NOT SEND A SICK CHILD TO SCHOOL**. If your child has a fever at or greater than 100F, diarrhea or vomiting within 24 hours, or eye discharge he/she should not attend school.
- For any communicable disease a note from your child's doctor may be required for your child to return to school.

Our goal in giving you these guidelines is to reduce the spread of communicable disease at school and to promote a healthy environment for students attending school. They were created to help you in your decision making process as to whether to send your child to school or to keep your child at home. Your child's pediatrician can also provide advice on whether your child should be seen for an office visit.

Following is a list of common ailments a child may have. If your child is ill, you may want to discuss these problems with your child's health care provider to determine if an office visit is needed.

Fever: If your child has a temperature at or above 100 degrees without medication, they should remain at home. When accompanied by sore throat, nausea, or rash a contagious illness is suspected. He/she should remain at home until fever free for twenty-four hours without medication.

Vomiting & Diarrhea: A single episode of vomiting or diarrhea without accompanied fever may not be enough reason to miss school. However, children with watery diarrhea (loose runny stool or cannot get to the bathroom in time) should remain at home for 24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Children should remain at home 24 hours after vomiting has stopped as well. If diarrhea or vomiting is frequent or accompanied by fever, keep the child home and consult your health care provider.

Runny Nose & Coughing: A minor cold or allergy symptoms (stuffy nose with clear drainage, sneezing, and mild cough) should not be a reason to miss school. If your child's cough is persistent or productive and accompanied by thick or constant nasal drainage, he/she should be kept home.

Sore Throat with Fever: Sudden onset of a sore throat accompanied by a fever may indicate a medical visit. If the health care provider diagnoses strep throat, the child must remain home for 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun.

Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis): If your child's eyes are mildly red and watery and no other symptoms are present; this may indicate irritation or allergy. However, if your child's eyes are markedly red (including under the eyelids) and accompanied by thick, yellow or green drainage, he/she may have pink eye or conjunctivitis. This condition can be caused by a virus, bacteria, or allergies – only a health care provider can determine the cause. Bacterial conjunctivitis is contagious if a child rubs his/her eyes, and then touches another student or an object that another student uses, and that student then rubs his/her eyes. For this reason, your child should remain home until treatment has begun or the symptoms are gone.

Rashes: Rashes can be caused by many things, a few of which may be contagious. A sudden appearance of a rash over any part of the body with an unknown cause and accompanied by fever or other symptoms should be evaluated by the doctor. However, a rash caused by poison ivy/poison oak is not contagious and is not a reason to miss school.

Ringworm: Any circular scaly patch seen along the hairline or in the scalp must be evaluated by a physician as it may be ringworm of the scalp, which is highly contagious. Oral medications are usually the treatment of choice, but your doctor may also recommend a special shampoo or ointment. Your child may return to school after treatment has begun. Ringworm on the body is very difficult to spread to others, and these children may be present in school as long as the area is covered by a bandage or clothing. You can check with your health care provider or pharmacist for over the counter treatments for ringworm on the body.

Open Sores: If your child has a blister or open sore on the skin that becomes covered with a yellowish crust, it may be contagious. These open sores are often seen around the nose or mouth but could be seen anywhere on the body and need to be evaluated by your health care provider. Your health care provider will determine when your child can return to school. Any other open areas must be covered.

Lice: If your child persistently scratches his/her head or complains of an itchy scalp, check for pin-point sized grayish white eggs (nits) within ¼ inch of the scalp that will not flick off the hair shaft. The louse bug is very small and wingless and the eggs are more easily detected. They are often found behind the ears, along the nape of the neck or on the crown of the head. If you notice these eggs or a live louse, your child must be treated with special shampoo available at drug stores and grocery stores. Please follow the instructions on the container carefully. Your child must be nit free before returning to school. Please see the BCHS Head Lice Policy for additional information.

Information gathered from:

- *Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child-Care Centers, Texas DSHS Control of Communicable Diseases in Man; Abram Benenson, editor, American Public Health Association*
- *“Is your child too sick for school?” Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta Instructions for Pediatric Patients, Your Child’s Health, 1991, Barton Scmitt, M.D.*
- *Should you keep your child home from school? Putnam City Schools, Garland Independent School District, Garland, Texas*

BCHS HEAD LICE POLICY

Head Lice Information

Head lice are tiny insects that live on people's scalps and hair. Head lice are clear in color when hatched, and then quickly develop a reddish-brown color after feeding. Nits (the eggs of the head louse) are small yellowish-white, oval-shaped eggs that are "to the side of a hair shaft glued" at an angle. The major symptom of head lice is itching caused by the bite of the louse. Anyone who repeatedly scratches the head and back of the neck should be checked for lice. Often red bite marks and scratch marks can be seen on the scalp and neck. They are spread ONLY by crawling from one person to person directly or onto shared personal items such as combs, brushes, hats, and other head coverings, clothing, bedding and towels.

To prevent the spread of head lice in school children are not allowed to share personal items such as brushes, combs, or hats. Staff learn to recognize nits and do periodic head checks whenever necessary. Centers have an organized response plan to help prevent a widespread problem.

BCHS No-Nit Policy

- If nits are present after a treatment has been done, the child will need to be returned home. Further fine combing will be required until all the nits are gone. This policy will be maintained to ensure further spreading of head lice at the center.
- If a case of head lice is identified when the child arrives at school, the child is brought to the Family Advocate's office to prevent spread of lice in the classroom.
- The child's parent/authorized person is called by Family Advocate to transport child home. Please make sure the program always has an active phone number on file for your family.
- The child is referred to their health care provider or pharmacist who will determine which medicine to use. Parents should contact their pediatrician with any questions or concerns for treatment or follow-up.
- Follow the complete procedure to remove the lice from the infested person, surroundings and personal items. All household members should be examined and treated if infested. Head lice information sheets are available through your Family Advocate.
- Following treatment and fine combing to remove all nits, the parent needs to bring the child to school to meet with the Family Advocate. The bus company will be notified not to pick up the child until he/she is cleared to return. The Family Advocate will conduct a head check of the child in the office. If the child is found to be nit-free, the child may re-enter the classroom.
- If nits are still present when a treatment has been done, the child will need to be returned home. Further fine combing will be required until all the nits are gone.
- More very useful information about head lice is found at the National Pediculosis Association at www.headlice.org

ILLNESS & ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

- If a child becomes ill or needs to go home for health or other reasons, the program will first call the enrolling parent(s). In the event that the primary caregiver is not available or unreachable, the program will call the other individuals on the emergency contact list. The child must be picked up within an hour or as outlined on the child's Individual Health Care plan.
 - If an appropriate adult cannot be reached, the program may need to contact emergency services to transport the child to the hospital and/or a 51A may need to be filed with the Department of Children and Families. Please help us to make sure we always have up to date contact information for you, your family, and your emergency contacts.
- Berkshire County Head Start will inform parents immediately of any injury that requires emergency care beyond minor first aid. Parents will be informed in writing of any first aid administered to their child within 24 hours of the injury.
- In an emergency your child may be transported to the nearest hospital by ambulance. Parents will be called and informed of the emergency and asked to meet the child at the emergency room. If the parent cannot be contacted, emergency contact telephone numbers will be called.

Please remember it is required that Berkshire County Head Start has accurate emergency telephone numbers for your child at all times. You must identify those who may take your child home when we cannot reach you. Please keep these numbers up to date.

MEDICATIONS

Berkshire County Head Start encourages medication be given at home whenever possible. Circumstances may indicate a need for staff to administer medication to your child on site while he or she is attending the program. Our medication policy must be followed and the necessary forms must be completed before any medication is given in school.

- Your Family Advocate will help you gather the required forms including the written permission forms for the parent and doctor.
- The parent(s)/guardian must administer the first dose at home in case of an allergic reaction.
- All medication must be handed directly to the Teacher or Family Advocate by the parent. The medication must be in the original pharmacy labeled container. Medication must remain at Berkshire County Head Start. Medication cannot be transported on the school bus.
- All medication is stored in a locked box unless it is an emergency "rescue" medication. All unused medication will be returned to the parent when no longer needed.
- The teacher will be responsible for the administration of the medication per the Medication Consent form.
- Berkshire County Head Start will maintain a written record of every dose given including the child's name, the time and date of dose given, name and dose of the medication and the name of the staff person administering the medication.
- This complete record will become part of the child's file.

SUNSCREEN POLICY

- A. Children enrolled in the summer childcare program are required to have a signed permission slip for the application of sunscreen. Parents are required to provide and label the sunscreen with their child's name.
- B. Due to allergy concerns, Berkshire County Head Start cannot provide sunscreen for children.

SAFETY IS A PRIORITY IN OUR PROGRAM!

We take a number of steps in order to ensure the health, safety, and wellness of our children, families and staff.

- All staff are certified in First Aid and CPR.
- We practice emergency drills at all of our sites, including monthly fire drills as required by Department of Early Education and Care regulations.
- Safety checks are done in each classroom on a regular basis and playground safety checklists are completed daily.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

- Berkshire County Head Start, in cooperation with our local police and fire departments, has created procedures that support response to a range of emergency situations. These include, but are not limited to, missing children and evacuation of the site in the event of a fire, natural disaster, loss of power, heat and hot water, or other emergency situation.
- All parents and families receive a letter outlining our Emergency Preparedness Plan. In the event of an emergency situation, communication with parents will be primarily through calls made to parents/guardians and/or emergency contact numbers on file.
- Should an evacuation be necessary all students and staff will report to the evacuation site according to posted evacuation routes and attendance will be taken. Emergency personnel will advise when it is safe to return to the building or whether we will start re-unification procedures.
- **Please make sure your contact information is always up-to-date. In the event of an emergency, we need accurate information in order to be able to reach you! Your child cannot attend school if we do not have a way to reach you or your emergency contacts.**

NUTRITION

- Breakfast and lunch are provided daily for all Berkshire County Head Start children. Children enrolled in the childcare program also receive an afternoon snack.
- Berkshire County Head Start employs a registered dietician as a nutrition consultant. The dietician monitors the nutritional health and growth of every child as well as conducts staff and parent trainings on healthy meals and snacks.
- The food provided by the program follows the United States Dietary Guidelines for Americans (USDA guidelines). We provide foods that are low in sugar or salt, are high in fiber, and include fresh fruits and vegetables. Children are encouraged to try all foods but are never forced to eat. Substitutions are available for child with food allergies or based on religious beliefs.

- Our nutrition curriculum includes lessons on nutrition and healthy foods. Menus are sent home monthly for parents. Breakfast, lunch and snacks are served family-style by our classroom staff and children are encouraged to engage in conversation at meal times.
- Berkshire County Head Start collaborates with Berkshire Health System's Operation Better Start and the WIC program. We work together to ensure that every child and family has access to nutrition counseling, healthier food choices, and resources regarding lifestyle changes that make a difference.
- Holiday celebrations and birthdays are child focused and not solely centered on food themes. When planning seasonal events we focus on family traditions and activities that are developmentally appropriate. Our activities include multicultural themes that reflect the background and lifestyle of the children in the classroom. If your religious belief does not include celebrations such as birthdays or holidays please let our staff know so we may respect your wishes.
- No foods, baked goods, nuts, etc. are allowed at school that has been prepared at the child's home or commercially prepared foods unless it is part of an Individual Health Care Plan or Nutrition Plan.
- Special dietary requests for medical problems (such as food allergy, diabetes, and lactose intolerance) can be accommodated with a physician's note or Individual Health Care Plan. Parents will be notified when a child with life threatening allergies is in the classroom.
- All BCHS Sites and classrooms have been designated "Nut Safe Zones". No peanut or tree nut products are allowed.

Berkshire County Head Start Policy states that no outside food can be brought into the classroom.

PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Parent, Family & Community Engagement (PFCE) Manager
Maggie Steele
(413) 445-4162
msteele@berkhs.org

You are your child's first and most important teacher!

Beginning with your first home visit, the BCHS team will strive to partner with you to help you meet the goals you have set for our child and your family and promote the development of school readiness. Your team will:

- Provide strategies that promote a nurturing relationship between you and your child
- Be available to you when you have questions about your child's development
- Help you recognize the stressors in your life and work with you to create coping strategies
- Promote your social connections
- Provide you with support in times of need

Berkshire County Head Start families participate in all aspects of the program. They help govern, plan what children learn, and provide advice about needed services. Families and other community members also volunteer in classrooms and other parts of the program. There are many ways for you to become involved and stay engaged in the program, and in your children's education now and in the future.

Research shows that children whose parents are involved in their education do better in school!

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Our program follows the Strengthening Families Framework. The Strengthening Families framework is based on five protective factors. These characteristics of families PROTECT against risk factors and poor outcomes for both children and families and PROMOTE strong families and optimal development for children.

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Social and emotional competence of children

GETTING INVOLVED AT BCHS!

BCHS encourages parents and families to become involved in their children's education, both in and out of the classroom.

- There are many ways for parents and families to become involved and stay engaged in their children's education. Research shows that children whose parents are involved in their education do better in school. Getting involved at the preschool level will prepare you to be actively involved as your child enters elementary school, middle school, and high school. Schools need parent and family involvement to succeed just as much as your children do.

- Parents and families are encouraged to share their talents, ideas, and time. Please contact your child's teacher about opportunities to contribute to the classroom.
- The program also can share advice about how to create a learning environment at home in an effort to support classroom learning beyond the school day.
- Our Family Advocates are available to support your interests as a life-long learner and can help you explore opportunities to expand your education, find or get a better job, or tap into support groups where parents and family members encourage each other to reach the goals they have set for themselves and their families.

Some of the ways you can support your children include:

- attending parent meetings;
- attending parent trainings and workshops to support your child's development;
- communicating with teachers and other school staff about your child's education and collaborating on school readiness goals;
- serving on a BCHS committee, such as the Policy Council, Board of Directors, or Health Services Advisory Committee;
- learning how to become involved in developing an Individualized Education Plan if your child has special needs; and
- learning how to tell your personal story effectively in front of public officials, school officials, and others who can influence how education and other programs for children operate.

ADVOCACY

- Becoming an effective advocate for your children requires becoming involved in their education and their lives. Being involved in your child's life is what it takes to be a great and successful parent!
- BCHS recognizes that parents and families are the strongest advocates for their children and values the role parents play as their child's first and most important teacher. Our staff works in partnership with families as their children start school, and as they transition from BCHS to kindergarten, or another preschool program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

- Throughout the year, we ask parents to provide feedback about their experiences in order to improve our services to both you and your children. You will be invited to offer suggestions, make recommendations, and share your story as part of our ongoing evaluation of the program. Your input will help guide us in making decisions about programming and help us better understand the needs of the children and families we serve.

COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS

1. Please bring any questions, concerns or complaints to the attention of your child's Teacher, Family Advocate, Home Visitor, or Site Director.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved informally the program will offer a meeting or home visit to be able to discuss your concern in person.
3. If you are not satisfied with the response, please contact their supervisor or call the Main Office at (413) 499-0137 to be connected to the appropriate administrator.
4. If the issue is not resolved to your satisfaction, please call the Executive Director at (413) 499-0027.
5. *Please note that the program will not respond to comments made on social media. In the event that comments made on social media pose a real or perceived threat to the safety of children or staff, participation in the program may be suspended until the matter has been resolved.*

RESOURCES

Your Family Advocate or Home Visitor can direct you to agencies in the community when you need them. If you need assistance in finding any kind of resource, **DIAL 211** on your telephone and a United Way resource agent can assist you.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

POISON CONTROL	1-800-222-1222
WIC	445-9429 Pittsfield 447-3495 Pittsfield 663-3012 North Adams
BERKSHIRE COUNTY KIDS PLACE	499-2800
PARENTAL STRESS HOTLINE	1-800-632-8188
PARENTS HELPING PARENTS	1-800-882-1250
ELIZABETH FREEMAN CENTER For domestic violence/sexual assault	499-2425 Pittsfield 663-7459 North Adams 1-866-401-2425 24-hour hotline
BRIEN CENTER CRISIS TEAM	499-0412 Ask for Crisis Unit 1-800-252-0227 24-hour hotline

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Transportation Supervisor

Pamela Wittig

(413) 499-5820

pwittig@berkhs.org

All children must be secured in age-appropriate safety seats at all times while riding in approved or privately owned vehicles. Please contact your Family Advocate if you need assistance acquiring a child safety seat.

Berkshire County Head Start is required to conduct Pedestrian Safety Awareness each year to share safety information with parents and families.

All children are assigned to bus stops. Your Family Advocate will provide you with your child's pick up and drop off time and the location of your stop.

Berkshire County Head Start requests that parents assist with the following:

- Please have your child ready for the bus. Be at the bus stop 10 minutes early for pick-up and drop-off. Per regulation, children cannot be on a bus for more than 45 minutes. Please help us maintain our route schedule by being at your bus stop at the assigned time.
- Please list everyone on the permission form you wish to authorize to receive your child from bus/van.
- Authorized persons must be at least 18 years old and have a picture ID to show the bus monitor and/or driver to protect your child's safety.
- Children will not be released to unauthorized persons.
- Please notify us as soon as possible about address changes. You may have to wait up to five days for us to accommodate a bus change. Some buses are full which requires us to move several children.
- If you are not home to meet your child at drop-off, you will be asked to come and pick up your child at his/her center. If we are unable to reach you or an emergency contact to come get your child within a reasonable amount of time, DCF will be contacted.
- Parents are required to provide up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers where they and authorized persons can be reached at all times.
- Parents who must cross the street with their child are asked to cross after the school bus lights are on and to cross only in front of the bus. Use a crosswalk if one is available. We ask that you hold your child's hand while crossing the street.
- Berkshire County Head Start is not able to make last minute bus changes to different addresses.
- Drivers do not use horns to announce their arrival to families and will not wait.

Berkshire County Head Start transportation is provided by Dufour Bus Company. Parents of children riding the buses will receive a copy of the transportation plan. The transportation plan is also available upon request.

PARENTS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
606 CMR 7.08(8)(a-f) Notification To Parents

Mutual respect between staff and families is the primary goal of parent program relations. Through ongoing communication, Berkshire County Head Start will attempt to work closely with each child to provide the best possible program for children and their families.

Reports To Parents

Berkshire County Head Start will periodically, but at least every six- (6) months, prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the center's records. Berkshire County Head Start will provide a copy of each report to the parent(s) or meet with them at least two (2) times per year to discuss their child's activities and participation in the center. In addition:

- (a) For children with special needs, Berkshire County Head Start will complete a written progress report of the child's development every three (3) months, and provide it to the parent(s).
- (b) Berkshire County Head Start will bring special problems or significant developments to parent's attention as soon as they rise.

Parent Conferences

Berkshire County Head Start will make the staff available for individual conferences with parents at parental request, as well as required visits and conferences.

Confidentiality and Distribution Of Records

- Information contained in a child's record will be privileged and confidential. Berkshire County Head Start will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parent(s). Berkshire County Head Start will notify the parent(s) if a child's record is subpoenaed.
- The child's parents(s) will, upon request, have access to their child's record at reasonable times. In no event will such access be delayed more than two (2) business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent(s). Upon such request for access, the child's entire record regardless of the physical location of its parts will be made available.
- Berkshire County Head Start will establish procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of such information; and will maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating any persons to whom information contained in a child's record has been released.
- Each person releasing information contained in a child's record will enter into the child's record the following: his/her name, signature, position, date, portions of record which were released, purpose of the records which were released, purpose of such release, and signature of the person to whom the information is released. Such log shall be available only to the child's parent(s) and center personnel responsible for record maintenance.

Copy charge

Berkshire County Head Start will not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

Amending The Child's Record

- (a) A child's parent(s) will have the right to add information, comments, data or and other relevant materials to the child's record.
- (b) A child's parent(s) will have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such request will be made in accordance with the procedures described below:
 - (1) If such parent(s) is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in the child's record, he/she will have the right to have a conference with the licensee to make the objections known.
 - (2) Berkshire County Head Start will within one (1) week after the conference, render to such parent(s) a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the parent(s), he/she will immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

Transfer Of Records

Upon written request of the parent(s), Berkshire County Head Start will transfer the child's record to the parents(s), or any other person the parent(s) identifies, when the child is no longer in care.

Meeting With Parents

Berkshire County Head Start will ensure that the administrator or his/her designee will meet with the parent(s) prior to admitting a child to the center.

- (a) At the meeting, Berkshire County Head Start will provide to the parent(s) the center's written statements of purpose, services, procedures for parents conferences, visits and input to center policy; procedures for providing emergency health care.
- (b) Berkshire County Head Start will provide the opportunity for the parent(s) to visit the center classrooms at the time of the meeting or prior to the enrollment of the child.

Please contact the Main Office for a copy of the BCHS Child Records and Data Sharing Policy which outlines the procedures in place to safeguard child and family information.

*Parents are required to sign a copy of the "Parents Rights and Responsibilities" agreement, acknowledging that they are aware of and accept these terms.
A copy of this agreement will be placed in your child's file.*