

Parent Handbook

COVID-19 Edition

2020-2021 School Year

BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START



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www.berkhs.org

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Parents,

Welcome. While our world is going through a fearful time in which none of us has ever experienced before, the teachers and administration at BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START are committed to providing a quality program that is safe, educational, child-friendly, and fun!

While many things will seem different with new procedures in place for safety of all, this will still be an environment that fosters fun and learning. It is our goal to draw out and inspire the best in our students as we provide them with opportunities to create, explore, and learn.

This handbook will lay out the changes as we enter the next phase from this COVID-19 pandemic. This situation is unprecedented and is constantly evolving, so all changes included in this handbook will remain as the “new normal” until further notice. We will make sure that all changes are realistic and feasible for staff and children by following CDC (Center for Disease Control) guidelines as well as those put forth by the Office of Head Start, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and local Boards of Health. Please be sure to read, sign and return the last page of this handbook electronically.

Please feel free to contact your family advocate if you have any questions about the policies and procedures that are outlined in this Parent Handbook. They are in place to ensure that BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START is a safe and enjoyable place for your family.

BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START

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 updates 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 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.

As home visits are a tradition in Head Start and this opportunity offers you the special advantage of one-to-one relationships with staff, they are currently all being taken place virtually during the time of the pandemic. 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!

NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

Admissions to BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, age or gender.

INCLUSION POLICY

To the greatest extent possible, children with disabilities will be included in the full range of activities and services normally provided to children at our center by making necessary modifications to meet the child's special needs.

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 licenser 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)

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 classrooms are still inviting and welcoming to our children and staff and are designed for 6 foot social distancing and health and safety practices. There are an abundance of activities, projects and toys for them to explore, question and use their imagination, as well as art and messy materials. Remember, children use their senses when exploring and we welcome this at our program.
- 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 (focus is on phonemic awareness)
- 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
- Ignite by Hatch, digital learning experience that prepares children for Kindergarten

CHILD GUIDANCE

Our program places high priority on creating learning environments that are safe, respectful and nurturing especially during these unforeseen times. 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.

Extra Measures and Procedures

- Handwashing: As soon as students arrive to the classroom, they will wash their hands properly. Hands will also be washed frequently throughout the day with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer will be used when soap and water is not available.
- Sanitizing/Disinfecting:
 - You and your child will use hand sanitizer upon entering the testing area. You will sign topical lotion consent for their child to use hand sanitizer. This will stay on file.
 - All frequently touched objects and surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected after each use, as well as at the end of each day. Any toys that go into a child's mouth will be put into the disinfecting process like usual. All sensory bins, soft toys, pillows, dress-up clothes will be put away during this phase of opening.
- Mask wearing and social distancing:
 - Children are required and strongly encouraged to wear a mask whenever 6 feet of physical distancing is not possible. Children age 2 and over should be able to safely and appropriately wear, remove and handle masks with some direction from staff if needed. When children can be safely kept at least 6 feet away from others, then they do not need to be encouraged to wear a mask.
 - Masks must not be worn while children are eating/drinking or napping. Strict and consistent physical distancing must be practiced at all times during activities. Masks do not need to be worn while engaging in active outdoor play, if children are able to keep physical distance from others.
 - All children must be supervised when wearing a mask. Children should be encouraged to avoid touching their face and eyes and not to put hands under their mask.
 - You should provide your child with a sufficient supply of clean masks to allow replacing the masks as needed. You must have a plan for routine cleaning of masks, clearly mark masks with your child's name and clearly distinguish which side of the mask should be worn facing outwards so they are worn properly.
 - BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEADSTART will supply up to two masks per child to you as needed during the school year. Cloth masks must be routinely washed (at least daily

and any time the mask is used or becomes soiled) depending on frequency of use. When possible, masks must be machine washed in hot water and dried fully before being used again. If machine washing is unavailable, masks must be washed with soap and hot water and allowed to dry fully before being used again.

- You must wear a mask when on the premises and at all times during drop off and pick up

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.

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 for Kindergarten. 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. (This will depend on current Covid-19 guidelines.)
- 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.

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
 - Working with teachers/staff to help understand and meet the social and emotional needs of individual children
 - Assisting in locating community resources for children and families

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-** 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** - 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** - 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%.
- **Virtual Classrooms**- a checklist will be used for parents to complete, if there are concerns children will be referred back to their Primary Care Provider for further evaluation.

ADMISSION/EXCLUSION DUE TO SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

- Children who are obviously ill with fever, cough, diarrhea, vomiting, congestion, runny nose; symptoms of COVID, 19 will not be admitted to the program. It is a danger to other children and staff members at our facility. If you have any doubts about your child's health, please call us at 413-499-0137 to be sure they may attend. If your child appears to be sick or has any of the above while at school, we will notify the parent or guardian immediately, and it is necessary that the child be picked up within 1/2 hour of notification. We will perform regular monitoring though out the day.
- If a child is showing COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) OR if you've been in close contact with a person or child testing positive for COVID- 19, we ask you to keep your child home and call your child's Primary Care Provider. Your child will not be able to return without a note from the PCP. We will also be in contact with our local board of health for further guidance.
- We ask that all parents let us know of any potential exposure immediately. A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID- 19 for at least 15 minutes. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 in a child or an adult who has been present in the childcare center, we will inform employees and families about the exposure but maintain confidentiality, local Board of Health, EEC licenser, Health Care Consultant, and OSHA.

HEALTH GUIDELINES

In addition to our current pandemic, we also follow these health issue guidelines. 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.

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.

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

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 with the child.
- 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/HAND SANITIZER 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.
- C. Along with this policy is the use of hand sanitizer throughout the day such as entering and exiting the building. Parent permission is required for children to use hand sanitizer in our program.

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.
- All of our staff members follow the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Reopening Minimum Requirements for Health and Safety Guidelines

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, lunch and snack are provided daily for all Berkshire County Head Start children.
- 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. Due to COVID-19 restrictions meals currently are not served

family style. Each child has their own individual portion and is properly distanced to maintain safety. 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.

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

Beginning with your first virtual 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!

POLICY COUNCIL

Policy Council cannot happen without you!! Your commitment and dedication to Berkshire County Head Start will improve your child's preschool experience and your engagement will ensure that our Head Start program runs smoothly.

You are the decision makers! You offer so much based on your own personal experiences. Please consider joining us on a Zoom meeting on the 2nd Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM.

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

The staff in your child's classroom will be reaching out to share a video of the classroom. They will also schedule a zoom call to walk you through our new process, update any required paperwork and answers any questions you may have. We believe this provides both you and the staff the opportunity to clearly convey their expectations of BERKSHIRE COUNTY HEAD START and go through our enrollment package one-on-one. It would be wonderful if your child was available to participate in the Zoom call.

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.

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.

FEE AND PAYMENT POLICY

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 8:00 am to 4:30 pm year round.
- Please refer to this calendar for specific information regarding closure days for the morning program and the childcare program.

Children with a subsidized slot:

- EEC is modifying policies to accommodate families and the providers who serve them through the initial recovery period.
- EEC will continue waiving parent fees through fall of 2020 during the phased reopening process.

Children and parents paying privately:

- You will receive a weekly statement. Payments need to be mailed to the Finance Office. Payments must be made by check or money order. You will receive a receipt, by mail, attached to the new statement.
- Per EEC regulations, parents must have their account in good standing in order continue with the childcare services. We will not provide services for children whose accounts are more than one week behind.

The daily fee for the childcare program is:

- \$43.20 – Full Day (Head Start not in session)
- \$34.74 – Before & after Head Start
- \$43.20 – Childcare (full day/full year rooms)
- \$25.92 – Half-day (full day/full year rooms)

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 unexplained absences. You must notify your Site Director or Family Advocate EACH DAY that your child is absent. If your child is absent three days in a row without contact, you will be issued a written notice of the policy violation.

Due to Covid, EEC has temporarily waived their limit on excused absences and you will be notified when that policy is reinstated. However, it is expected that your child attend our program on a regular basis.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

While in this phase of operation, children may not bring in any personal belongings aside from what is approved. No toys or personal items from home will be permitted at this time except for a blanket for nap time.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Our facility is operational from 8:00am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday. While operating in this phase, drop-off times will be staggered. You will be given a time between 8 - 9am to drop off and between 3:30 -4:30 pm to pick up. All children must be dropped off by 9:00am-9:30am depending on the site. Please check with your family advocate. If your child is going to be late please contact your family advocate. Please only come at your designated drop-off or pick-up time to keep everyone safe. If you see another family being checked in, please be patient during this time and remain socially distant.

DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

You are required to complete a health screening check at home before coming to the program. The same checklist that we use to screen your child you can use at home. You are required to bring a signed form with you to check in. If you answer “yes” to any of the

questions you should not bring your child to our program and should contact your family advocate. Please keep in mind when answering the checklist at home, the questions refer to **ALL MEMBERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD**. If anyone in your home or the child has symptoms of COVID-19 that are on the checklist they should stay home. Call your child's Primary Care Provider for further evaluation.

Parents should wash their hands and their child's hands at home before coming to the program.

Staff and children will enter through a single-point of entry at each site. Upon arrival to the program, you will walk your children to the check in station and start the screening process.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES

- Parents will wash or sanitize their hands before driving to school to pick up their child
- Parents will call the school upon arrival for pick up, specific sites have given out child pick up ID numbers to use.
- Children will wash their hands before they leave their classroom
- Children will be escorted by staff to the door to meet their parent.

If parents are unable to call, they will go to door with buzzer to let staff know they are here, specific sites have given child ID numbers to use. The child will then be escorted by staff to meet the parent at the door. For the child's safety, please meet the HS staff member 6 ft from the door when your child arrives. This will prevent the children from running in the parking lot.

VISITORS

Visitors will not be permitted at this time.

FIELD TRIPS/SPECIAL EVENTS

There will be no field trips or special events/gatherings at this time. Family Advocates will be reaching out to schedule virtual parent meetings and to share virtual opportunities at museums, libraries and community agencies.

FOOD

Breakfast, lunch and snack will be provided daily. Children will have the meal or snack prepped and placed on the table by staff. Each child will receive his/her own portion. We will not be serving family style.

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 to discuss your concern.
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

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 virtually 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 virtual individual conferences with parents at parental request.

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)/guardian 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)/guardian. 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)/guardian 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)/guardian 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)/guardian 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)/guardian 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)/guardian, or any other person the parent(s)/guardian identifies, when the child is no longer in care. (Please allow 1-2 weeks for records)

Berkshire County Head Start

Parent or Guardian COVID-19 Handbook Receipt Form

Parent or Guardian,

Please thoroughly review the Parent Handbook "COVID-19" edition for the 2020- 2021 school year, which contains the policies and procedures for Berkshire County Head Start while in the process of reopening.

This Handbook does not include the complete list of changes. We will continue to monitor the reports issued by the CDC (Center for Disease Control), Office of Head Start, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, and local Boards of Health. This Handbook may change as the information we receive is updated.

After reading the handbook, please complete this form and return it to the school via email or drop off as soon as possible. This form will be kept in your child's file for the duration of the school year.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Maggie Steele
Family and Community Services Manager
Berkshire County Head Start
msteele@berkhs.org

I, _____ (print your name), the parent/guardian of

_____ (print child's name), hereby

acknowledge receipt of Berkshire County Head Start's Parent Handbook COVID-19 edition.

I have read and agree to adhere to all the policies and regulations set forth in this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____