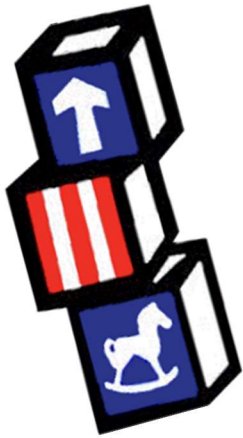


Early Head Start ~ Head Start ~ Pre-K Counts

Parent Manual

2025–2026



SERVING ARMSTRONG, BEAVER, BUTLER, INDIANA, &
LAWRENCE COUNTIES



**PRE-K
COUNTS**

"The mission of Early Learning Connections is to provide a variety of high-quality early learning programs that foster a safe and positive culture through kindness and respect to meet the comprehensive needs of families."

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Welcome to Early Learning Connections. We are delighted to have you as one of our families and hope that your time with us is a positive experience for you and your child.

Early Learning Connections is a private non-profit United Way Agency, as well as an academic school that has been providing a variety of children's programs since 1973. The Agency is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors composed of community members. Our Agency is the grantee agency for Early Head Start and Head Start programs in both Armstrong and Butler Counties, as well as the Pre-K Counts program, Infant Toddler Childcare Slots (ITCS), and the Early Learning Resource Center in Butler County.

History, Vision, and Mission Statement

“The mission of Early Learning Connections is to provide a variety of high-quality early learning programs that foster a safe and positive culture through kindness and respect to meet the comprehensive needs of families.”

The Vision of the Agency is to be the leading provider of children's programs and quality services for families. The agency's founders recognized that a childcare setting which did not meet children's physical, academic, emotional, and social needs would adversely affect their development. Therefore, all the Agency's services offer an approach which promotes healthy growth while preparing children for future success in school, the workplace, and the community.

Early Learning Connections has always acknowledged the importance of retaining qualified teaching staff, providing ongoing teacher training, maintaining a high ratio of adults to children, and developing and implementing written curricula.

Each year, Early Learning Connections assess the childcare needs of the community. We provide direct childcare programs, such as an infant/toddler program, Early Head Start, Head Start, and a before/after childcare program to meet the changing needs of families.

The Agency also provides workshops and training for parents on many topics including, but not limited to, child development, adult learning, nutrition, budgeting, and fire safety in the home.

Child Care Programs

We offer childcare at our Bon Aire location for children birth through age 5. The hours of operation are 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Our childcare program strictly adheres to all licensing regulations required by the state of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services.

The Agency has a strong commitment to providing quality care to Early Learning Connections children and families.

- ❖ We are a Keystone STARS – Star Four (4) Child Care Provider
- ❖ We provide Infant/Toddler Contracted Slots for ages 6 weeks up to 3 years old. This is a no-cost childcare program for families determined eligible by ELRC.

Early Head Start/Head Start

We provide comprehensive family services to low-income families living 130% below the Federal Poverty Guidelines. (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services)

- ❖ Early Head Start Home-Based – serves pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 years, with a home visiting model in Armstrong, Butler, & Indiana Counties.
- ❖ Early Head Start Center-Based – serves families with children 6 weeks to 3 years in both our Bon Aire and Ford City locations.
- ❖ Head Start Home-Based – serves families with children 3 years through entry age for kindergarten in a home visiting model in Butler County.
- ❖ Head Start Center-Based – serves families with children 3 years through entry age for kindergarten in several locations throughout Armstrong, Butler, & Indiana Counties..
- ❖ Head Start Supplemental – serves additional children in Head Start with State funds in Armstrong, Butler, & Indiana Counties.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts is a state funded program established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to provide a preschool education, for two years, to children who are between the ages of 3 and entry to Kindergarten and families that are earning up to 300% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. We have Pre-K Counts Classrooms in collaboration with Butler Area School District, Freeport Area School District, Homer Center Area School District, Karns City School District, Moniteau School District, and Seneca Valley School District. Our current locations are Bon Aire, East Brady Community Center, Dassa McKinney Elementary, Homer City South Buffalo Elementary, Glade Run.

ELRC (Early Learning Resource Center)

ELRC provides childcare funding and information to Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Indiana, and Lawrence County families. ELRCs provide a single point-of-contact for families, early learning services providers, and communities to gain information and access services that support high-quality child care and early learning programs. Through the ELRCs, childcare professionals can obtain support in building quality outcomes for children by working with quality coaches to achieve Keystones STARS 3 and 4 status.

CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)

Early Learning Connections participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This program, which is part of the PA Department of Education, provides reimbursement for meals served to children in all our programs. In order to receive reimbursement, we must adhere to regulations, provide annual training for staff, monitor meals at our sites, and submit a monthly claim.

Locations & Contact Information

Administration Office

139 Rieger Road
Butler, PA 16001
724.287.2761 or 1.800.348.667

Armstrong Locations:

Apollo Head Start

401 North 6th Street
Apollo, PA 15613
724.287.2761 ext 473

Ford City Early Head Start/Head Start/EHS Home-Base

1012 6th Avenue
Ford City, PA 16226
724.287.2761
Head Start Room 1, ext. 432
Head Start Room 2, ext. 435
EHS Room 1, ext. 165
EHS Room 2, ext. 431
EHS HB, ext 471 & 472

Freeport Head Start

608 High Street
Freeport, PA 16220
724.287.2761 ext 115

Kittanning Head Start

201 North Jefferson St.
Kittanning, PA 16201
724.287.2761
Room 1, ext. 461
Room 2, ext. 463
Room 3, 724.421.9405

Shannock Head Start

Shannock Elementary School
210 Cowanshannock Ave.
Rural Valley, PA 16249
724.287.2761 ext 117

Butler Locations:

Bon Aire Child Care/ITCS/EHS/Head Start/Pre-K Counts

131 Homewood Drive
Butler, PA 16001
724.287.2761

Dassa Pre-K Counts/Head Start

Dassa McKinney Elementary
391 Hooker Road
West Sunbury, PA 16061
PreK – 724.637.0189
HS – 724.637.2200

East Brady Pre-K Counts

502 Ferry Street
East Brady, PA 16028
724.287.2761 ext 153

Knoch Head Start

Knoch Primary School
328 Knoch Road
Saxonburg, PA 16056
724.352.1700 ext 1112

Mt. Chestnut Administration Office/Early Head Start Home Based/Head Start

139 Rieger Road
Butler, PA 16001
MTC 1 – 724.287.2761 ext 113
Home Based – 724.287.2761

North Street Head Start

234 East North Street
Butler, PA 16001
Room 1 - 724.256.9525

Oakland Head Start

545 Chicora Road
Butler, PA 16001
Room 1 – 724.256.5676
Room 2 – 724.256.9216

South Buffalo Pre-K Counts

562 Freeport Road
Freeport, PA 16229
724.295.9510 ext 3008

Zelienople Pre-K Counts/Head Start

425 West Beaver Street
Zelienople, PA 16063
724.287.2761
PreK – ext 129
HS – ext 100

Indiana Locations:

Cherry Hill Head Start

184 Spaulding Road
Penn Run, PA 15765
(Phone #)

Home City Head Start/PreK

30 West Elm Street
Homer City, PA 15784
(Phone #)

Indiana EHS Home Base

528 Gomper Ave
Indiana, PA 15701
(Phone #)

Indiana Area Head Start

155 Clymer Ave
Indiana, PA 15701
(Phone #)

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

All admissions and services to the families and children of Early Learning Connections shall be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age or sex.

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible disabled persons through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aids, and use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any employee, family, or individual who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination internally with Early Learning Connections or any of the following:

BUREAU OF CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE FIELD OFFICE

701 State Office Building
300 Liberty Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

BUREAU OF CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE HEADQUARTERS

Room 412, Health and Welfare Building
P.O. Box 2675
Harrisburg, PA 17105

PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

101 South Second Street, Suite 300
Harrisburg, PA 17105

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Offices for Civil Rights, Region III
P.O. Box 13716
Philadelphia, PA 19101



IMPORTANT PROGRAM POLICES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

It is the primary responsibility of the staff of Early Learning Connections to ensure the safety of the children in our care. In addition to safety procedures, policies regarding the well-being of your family are also in place. Please review these policies and procedures.

Confidentiality is an important part of our program. Staff will not share any information about you or your child with anyone outside the program without your written consent. This also means that we request that parents/guardians cannot share anything discussed within our program, and information about other children and families, with anyone outside the program. These principles help to create an atmosphere of safety, trust, and openness.

Photographs: Your child's teacher will provide you with photos from time to time. You are welcome to take photos of your **own child** at family events. We kindly ask that if other children are nearby, that you inform the parents that you will be taking a photo. That way, the parent can decide whether to have their child in the photo or not.

- Privacy is important and we do ask that you use your best judgment when placing your photos on the internet.
- Staff of Early Learning Connections will get written permission to post photos on social media and our website.
- Please do not place any photos of non-family children or staff members on the internet.

Protecting Children is important to us. At Early Learning Connections, we strongly believe that children should grow up in a community where adults care about them and keep them safe. According to Pennsylvania State law, all staff have a legal responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

Raising children can be both fun and frustrating at times. If you find that you may need some parenting help, consider calling your Family Service Worker, Parent Educator, or Teacher. These agencies can offer help too:

- Children and Youth Agency: A-724.548.3466 B-724.724-284-5156 – Provides assistance to children and families in an abusive situation.
- HAVIN – Armstrong: 724.543.1180 – Provides domestic violence assistance.
- VOICe - Butler: 724-283-8700 – Provides domestic violence assistance.
- Warmline: 1-800-641-4546 – A helpline for parents
- Center for Community Resources: 724-431-0095 or 1-800-292-3866 – Provides mental health services in the community.

Need HELP? Call 211



FAMILY CODE OF CONDUCT

Early Learning Connections strives to provide an environment for our students and families that is safe, kind, and respectful for all members of our community. Families of enrolled students are expected to behave in a manner which is consistent with those expectations when on agency property or at any agency sponsored event. Below is a list of behaviors that are prohibited while on agency property or while meeting with any staff members of the agency.

- **SWEARING/CURSING:** No one is permitted to use curse words or other inappropriate language on agency property or during agency events. Such language is considered offensive and is not respectful to the other members of our community. If a parent/guardian or other adult is unhappy or angry with a situation, they can make a complaint with a member of staff. **At no time should inappropriate language be directed towards any member of staff.**
- **THREATENING EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN, OTHER PARENTS, OR ADULTS ASSOCIATED WITH EARLY LEARNING CONNECTIONS:** Any direct or indirect threat towards staff members, students, other families, or anyone that is associated with Early Learning Connections will not be tolerated. **ALL** threats will be reported to the proper authorities for investigation.
- **PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN AT EARLY LEARNING CONNECTIONS:** No adult, including family members, are ever permitted to physically punish any child, including their own, while on agency property or during any agency event. If there is concern regarding a child's behavior, it is appropriate for that student's parent/guardian to discuss these concerns with the classroom teacher or family service worker to seek advice on appropriate ways to address the behavior.

Parents/guardians are prohibited from addressing the behavior of a child that is not their own, either verbally or physically. If a parent/guardian should witness behavior that they feel is inappropriate or they are concerned with, it is appropriate for them to direct their concerns to the classroom teacher and/or the Program Manager.

Parents/guardians may not seek out other parents/guardians to discuss their child's classroom behaviors.

All employees of Early Learning Connections are bound by our Confidentiality Policy and are not permitted to discuss anything regarding students or families with any other student or family in the program.

- **CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES, OTHER PARENTS, OR ASSOCIATES OF EARLY LEARNING CONNECTIONS:** It is expected that all disagreements be handled in a respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are strictly prohibited.
- **DRUG, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND WEAPONS:** All tobacco products, vaping products, drugs, drug paraphernalia, and alcohol are prohibited at all agency facilities. This includes all Early Head Start, Head Start, or PreK Counts locations, on or near agency vehicles, or at any agency function. Additionally, weapons, firearms and ammunition are prohibited at all agency buildings and functions.

This policy is reviewed with all families during the intake process. Parents/guardians are required to sign off on the policy, acknowledging that they have received and understand it.

Anyone found to be in violation of this policy will be banned from agency property and prohibited from attending agency events.

POLICY FOR RELEASING CHILDREN TO ADULTS OF DIMINISHED CAPACITY

If an employee determines that the adult responsible for picking up a child from any Early Learning Connections program is showing behavior which indicates diminished capacity (i.e. slurred speech, unsteady walk, confused thinking, impaired reflexes, erratic behavior, altered moods, or drowsiness). The staff member will contact another authorized adult on the release list. The impaired adult should be calmly encouraged to wait for the alternate release person and not drive.

If problems arise, the teaching staff may contact the office staff for support or request police assistance through 911. Under no circumstances will the staff endanger the other children in their care.



CHILD RELEASE POLICY

Prior to the time of entry into Head Start, Early Head Start, or Pre-K Counts, parents will fill out a ***Child Release and Emergency Treatment Form*** which authorizes other adults pick up their child(ren). In situations where an adult on the release form attempts to pick up a child and the staff does not recognize them, the staff must ID the individual and log the pickup on the ***Alternate Adult Pick-Up of Children***.

1. Parents may change the names or status on the release form by sending a note to the teaching staff, verbally telling the teaching staff of changes, or calling and updating the list with the family service worker or intake specialist. The child will be released to any adult on the release form as long as they have the appropriate identification. (Photo I.D. or two forms if no photo identification is available).
2. A child will be released to an adult not on the release list if, in an emergency, the parent calls in a new release person and the parent can be identified over the phone.
3. Parents must list an additional contact in case we are not able to reach the parent/guardian.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Early Learning Connections follows the snow and inclement weather closing schedule of the school district in which the center is located. For Home-Based and Early Head Start center days and playgroups, they follow either Apollo School District or Butler Area School District delays and cancellations.

Policy For When School Is Delayed or Cancelled

1. When the school district that the site is located in cancels class, Early Head Start, Head Start and Pre-K Counts will be cancelled.
2. When the school district that the site is located in delays, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K Counts will delay by 2 hours from the classroom start time.

Armstrong	
Location	School District
Apollo	Apollo
Ford City	Armstrong
Freeport	Freeport
Kittanning	Armstrong
Shannock	Armstrong
South Buffalo	Freeport
Indiana	
Location	School District
Cherry Hill	Penns Manor
Homer City	Homer Center
Indiana Area	Indiana

Butler	
Location	School District
Bon Aire	Butler
Dassa	Moniteau
East Brady	Karns City
Knoch	Knoch
Mt. Chestnut	Butler
North Street	Butler
Oakland	Butler
Zelienople	Seneca Valley

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Pre-K Counts

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning expects children enrolled in the Pre-K Counts program to attend on a regular basis. Parents should strive to have their child attend at least 85% of the classroom days available in the month. Children with unexcused absences of more than ten days or five consecutive unexcused absences could be dropped from the program.

To monitor attendance and aid families who are having difficulty maintaining their child's attendance level, the following procedure has been established:

1. Parents are asked to notify their teacher when their child is going to be absent.
2. Parents are asked to send an excuse with the child when he/she returns. The excuse should indicate the date and reason for absence.
3. Legitimate excuses could include illness, medical appointments, death in the family, and family emergencies. You may ask your teacher for help writing an excuse if you are not sure how to complete one.
4. If a child is absent three days in a row and the teacher has not been notified of a reason, he/she will call the parent to determine the reason.
5. The teacher will remind the parent to send an excuse and that in the future a phone call to the classroom would be beneficial.
6. If by the 5th unexcused day, the child's parent cannot be reached, the teacher will send a letter home requesting the child return to school. If there is no response, the parent, the child will be dropped from the program and a final letter of termination of service will be sent home. Stopping service to our Pre-K Counts families is a last resort, and we will attempt to assist all families who are working with us to correct the attendance difficulties.
7. Children with sporadic attendance are not benefiting from the Pre-K Counts program and the Teacher will attempt to determine the reason for their irregular attendance and offer assistance to help the family achieve regular attendance. When sporadic attendance continues despite our attempts to help the family, the child will be dropped from the program.

Head Start and Early Head Start Center Based

Your decision to enroll your child in Head Start comes with a big commitment on your part. This commitment means that you agree to send your child to school every day that class is in session and that you keep your child home from school only when your child is ill or unable to attend due to unusual family circumstances.

What happens if your child does need to miss school?

- Call or message on the classroom app at least one hour before school starts to tell us your child will be absent. You may leave a message.
- If we do not know why your child is absent, you will receive a text message or phone call by 10:30 a.m. that morning stating your child is absent.
- Your child's teacher will call you at the end of the Head Start day.
- Sometimes you may need some help in getting your child to attend Head Start on a daily basis. Your Family Service Worker will contact you and set up a home visit to help develop a "Success Plan".

- If after 4 days we are unable to contact you to find out why your child is absent, you will receive a letter in the mail asking you to contact us.
- If we do not hear from you after an extended period of absence, your child may temporarily be placed on a waiting list so that another family can be enrolled.
- We will help to make attendance successful and will only withdraw your child from the program when you are unable to participate.

Establishing regular attendance is important!

- Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves.
- Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college and at work.
- We will award a book and certificate to your child for excellent attendance!
- **“You Count Every Day”** is our motto.

Home-Based Program

The Early Head Start Program will provide a minimum of 46 home visits per program year. The Head Start Program will provide a minimum of 32 home visits per program year.

If you or your child is unable to participate in a home visit:

- Call your Parent Educator’s work cell phone or at 724-287-2761
- Tell them why you or your child will be unable to participate.
- Ask about scheduling a make-up visit later in the week.

Participation in the program becomes a concern when...

- There are frequently canceled home visits.
- There is a pattern of missed visits.
- Families continually do not cancel in advance for visits they will not be able to attend.

After the second consecutive cancellation or parent absence, the Parent Educator will contact you to discuss the missed visits.

If the Parent Educator (PE) cannot reach you by phone, she/he will send a letter requesting you to contact the PE.

If after five working days there is no response by the family, the Parent Educator will send a second letter informing the family that if they do not respond within five working days the Home-Based services will be stopped.

If there is still no response by the family, a final termination of service letter will be issued making the family aware that services have stopped.

Your Parent Educator wants to continue your enrollment in the Home-Based Program; please keep your Parent Educator informed about any changes in your family’s health, location, and vacations.



CURRICULUM

Head Start/Pre-K Counts

Program Standards require each program to implement an Early Childhood Education Curriculum that guides the teaching and practices of its preschool classrooms.

The Creative Curriculum for Preschool is a developmentally appropriate Early Childhood Curriculum our program uses to ensure we are offering research based, high quality early learning experiences to each child. This curriculum is aligned with the PA Early Learning Standards that support the development of children from birth to 3rd grade. The Creative Curriculum includes developmentally appropriate goals and objectives for children as they grow and progress and are modified to meet the level of the individual child.

The Creative Curriculum has 38 learning objectives that provide the road map our teachers use to plan our educational program. The objectives are organized into nine areas of development and learning. The first four major areas include:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Social-Emotional | 3. Language |
| 2. Physical | 4. Cognitive |

The remaining five areas are content areas that are often described as outcomes for early learning standards. The content areas include:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 5. Literacy | 8. Social Studies |
| 6. Mathematics | 9. The Arts |
| 7. Science and Technology | |

The tenth area, English Language Acquisition, provides objectives specific to children who are learning to understand and use the English Language.

PATHS Curriculum (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)

The PATHS Preschool/Kindergarten curriculum is a comprehensive, developmentally based curriculum. It is intended to promote social and emotional competence and prevent or reduce behavior and emotional problems in young children through the development and integration of essential skills in emotional literacy, behavioral self-control and problem solving, as well as to improve the social and academic climate of our preschool programs.

Heggerty

All ELC preschool classrooms implement the Heggerty Curriculum to teach phonemic and phonological awareness to increase early literacy skills. Children in their last year of preschool before kindergarten are taught using the Pre-K Lessons and the children in their first year of preschool are taught using the Early Pre-K Lessons. When children participate in the Heggerty lessons on a regular basis and learn to hear and identify the sounds in words, they are better prepared to learn to read, spell, and write. Many of the local school districts use the Heggerty Curriculum. By participating in the lessons in preschool, children enter kindergarten with skills to be successful learners.

Home-Based Program

The chosen and approved curriculum for the Home-Based Program is called Parents as Teachers. This nationally known curriculum promotes the following concepts:

- children are born learners
- children learn most from people they love: their parents
- parents are the experts on their own child
- all parents deserve support in their parenting role
- diversity and cultural difference are valued
- all families have strengths
- all parents want to be good parents

Program Goals:

1. Increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices
2. Promote a strong parent- child relationship
3. Provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues
4. Develop a true partnership between parents and school
5. Increase children's school readiness and school success

Parents as Teachers has four basic components of the program. These are:

1. Personal home visits
2. Group Socializations
3. Developmental Screenings
4. Resource Networking

The Creative Curriculum®

Parents as Teachers

PATHS®
PROGRAM

Heggerty

INFANT/TODDLER SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

Central Domains					
Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Literacy	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development
School Readiness Goals	-Children will form relationships with familiar adults and learn basic emotional cues. -Children will seek help from familiar adults to learn how to appropriately handle difficult emotions.	-Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults. -Children will recognize and interpret emotions of others, including expressing care and concern for others, with support of familiar adults.	-Children will attend to, understand, respond and learn communication and language from others. -Children will understand and use an increasing number of words for communication, including expressing wants and needs, and engage in conversations with others. -Children will attend to, repeat and use rhymes and refrain from stories and songs.	-Children will use a variety of strategies to solve problems, including reasoning and planning ahead. -Children will recognize past experiences/information and connect it to new experiences and new information	-Children will develop and demonstrate the use of large muscles for movement, exploration of the environment and self-help. -Children will develop and demonstrate control of small muscles for exploration, play and daily routines
Preschool	Teaching Strategies GOLD 1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors 2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships 8. Listens to and understands increasingly complex language 11. Demonstrates positive approaches to learning Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-ATL 1 IT-SE-1 PA Early Learning Standards 16.1 16.2 1.5 AL.4	Teaching Strategies GOLD 2a: Forms relationships with adults 2a: Forms relationships with adults 2b: Responds to emotional cues Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-SE 1 IT-SE 8 PA Early Learning Standards 16.1.A 16.2.A 16.2.D	Teaching Strategies GOLD 8a: Comprehends language 8b: Follows directions 9a: Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary 9b: Speaks clearly 9c: Uses conventional grammar 10a: Engages in conversations 12a: Recognizes and recalls 12b: Make connections Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-LC 1 IT-LC 7 IT-LC 8 IT-SE3 IT-LC 9 PA Early Learning Standards 1.2.J 1.3.J 1.5.C AL.2.B 1.2.C	Teaching Strategies GOLD 11e: Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking 12a: Recognizes and recalls Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-C 1 IT-C 6 IT-C-5 PA Early Learning Standards AL 1.A AL.2 AL.4	Teaching Strategies GOLD 4: Demonstrates traveling skills 5: Demonstrates balancing skills 6: Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills 7a: Uses fingers and hands 7b: Uses writing and drawing tools Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-PMP 3 IT-PMP 4 IT-PMP 7 PA Early Learning Standards 10.4.A 10.4.B 10.5.A 10.5.B 10.5.C

PRESCHOOL SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

Central Domains					
Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Literacy	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development
School Readiness Goals	-Children will respond appropriately to a variety of emotional cues from both peers and adults in the classroom. -Children will use social skills to form friendships with other students in the classroom and engage appropriately with them, including managing intense emotions over classroom situations.	-Children will engage in positive interactions through secure relationships with consistent, responsive adults. -Children will recognize and interpret emotions of others, including expressing care and concern for others, with support of familiar adults.	-Children will express themselves in increasingly long, detailed and sophisticated ways that are clear and understandable. -Children will identify and segment the sounds within words as separate from the word itself including rhyming and matching beginning sounds.	-Children will use a variety of strategies to solve problems, including reasoning and planning ahead. -Children will recognize past experiences/information and connect it to new experiences and new information	-Children will demonstrate increasing control of large muscles for movement, navigation and balance. -Children will demonstrate use of small muscles for the purpose such as self-care, writing, manipulation of tools, and cutting with scissors.
Preschool	Teaching Strategies GOLD Regulates own emotions and behaviors Establishes and sustains positive relationships Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework P-ATL 5 P-ATL 10 PA Early Learning Standards AL.1 15.2	Teaching Strategies GOLD Forms relationships with adults 2a Responds to emotional cues 2b Interacts with peers 2c Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework IT-SE 1 IT-SE 8 PA Early Learning Standards 16.1.A 16.2.A 16.2.D AL.1.C	Teaching Strategies GOLD 9b: Speaks clearly 9c: Uses conventional grammar Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework P-LC 5 P-LIT 1 PA Early Learning Standards	Teaching Strategies GOLD Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking Recognizes and recalls Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework P-MATH 3 P-MATH 5 P-MATH 6 P-SCI 6 PA Early Learning Standards	Teaching Strategies GOLD 4: Demonstrates traveling skills 5: Demonstrates balancing skills 7a: Uses fingers and hands 7b: Uses writing and drawing tools Head Start Early Learning Outcome Framework P-PMP 1 P-PMP 3 PA Early Learning Standards 10.4 PK.A 10.5 PK.C

SCREENING & ASSESSMENT

Program Standards require screening for each child to determine the need for further, in-depth evaluation. Screening will be done within 45 days of a child's entry into the program and will include developmental, behavioral, and sensory (vision and hearing) screenings. Screenings are administered to determine if there is a need for a formal, in-depth evaluation, which would be completed by a specialist.

Each child's level of development and progress over time are observed and documented so that strengths and needs are identified. The Teacher/Parent Educator develops individualized goals and objectives. Teachers/Parent Educators will discuss this with parents at least three times each year to gain input and jointly plan the child's educational program.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Early Learning Connections embraces a vision of mental wellness for children and families.

The Agency has Mental Health Consultants who are available to support the development of children's social emotional skills and behavior in the classroom. The consultants will observe classrooms and work together with the teachers to promote positive classroom environments. The Mental Health Consultants are also available to meet with families about any concerns they may have about their child's behavior and development of social emotional skills.

DISABILITIES SERVICES

As an inclusive program, all children, including children with disabilities or special health care needs, are welcomed into all programs. Reasonable accommodations are made to ensure that each child has the opportunity to participate in the full range of the program.

All programs require the following forms to be completed, if applicable, BEFORE situations/circumstances a child is able to start:

- Policy: HS-02-105 Medication Policy
- Appendix HS-E1 Authorization For Medication Form
- Policy: HS-02-115 Health Service and Tracking Procedure for Center Based Early Head Start, Head Start, and Home-Based Head Start;
- Appendix HS-01 Asthma Special Care Plan Form
- HS-02 Allergy Care Plan Form
- HS-03 Care Plan for Children with Special Needs Form
- Seizure Action Plan
- Medical Plan of Care for CACFP SFSP

Together, staff and parents use the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE) to determine each child's current developmental levels in gross and fine motor, speech and language, cognition, and social skills.

When screening results identify evidence of developmental concerns, or when children enroll with identified disabilities, our program works closely with parents, ARIN IU 28, and the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV Early Intervention Program to ensure that children are evaluated and/or receive all necessary services.

Children with an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) are eligible for additional services to support their development. Early Learning Connections collaborates with the IU IV and IU 28 Preschool Early Intervention Programs and Center for Community Resources to provide services for children who are eligible for special education programs.

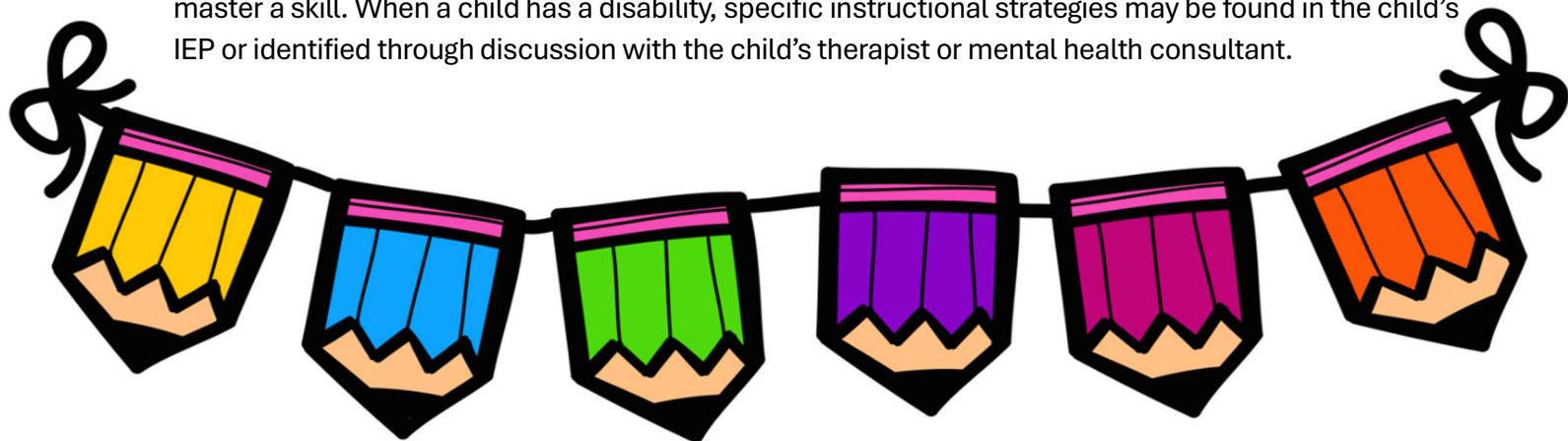
The staff and parents work together to provide a learning environment that meets the individual needs of all children. Please feel free to talk to your Teacher/Parent Educator about any concerns you may have with your child's development.

ADAPTING CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OR OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

All interventions for children with disabilities and other special needs will occur in a manner that recognizes that children with disabilities follow the same developmental spectrum as their more typically developing peers and that interventions work best when they are integrated into the daily content of the preschool environment.

Within the context of the Creative Curriculum, the following methods will be used to support the development of children with disabilities and other special needs:

1. **High quality early childhood program** (Creative Curriculum)
2. **Curriculum modification and adaptations**- Teachers and other team members make modifications, adaptations and accommodations to classroom activities, routines and learning areas to include and enhance the participation of children with disabilities and other special needs. A curriculum modification is a change made to the ongoing classroom activity or materials in order to achieve or maximize the child's participation.
3. **Embedded learning activities**- Through purposeful planning, teachers identify daily opportunities for practicing a child's learning objectives within the context of the daily routine. The teacher plans what they will say or do to encourage the development of a child's skills while following a typical daily routine. Ideas for embedded learning opportunities may be found in the child's IEP or through discussion with the child's therapist or mental health consultant.
4. **Explicit, Child-Focused Instructional Strategies**- Some children need specific instruction in order to master a skill. When a child has a disability, specific instructional strategies may be found in the child's IEP or identified through discussion with the child's therapist or mental health consultant.



POSITIVE BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE POLICY

At Early Learning Connections, we believe that social-emotional learning during the early years of a child's life sets a positive foundation for their future growth and learning. To achieve this, we use the Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. The Pyramid Model provides a framework of evidence-based, developmentally, and culturally appropriate practices to promote young children's social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes from birth-five years old. Pyramid Model Practices are embedded throughout the daily activities of the classroom.

Our program is dedicated to nurturing each child's unique cultural identity while fostering a deep respect for others. We recognize that families play a crucial role as the most significant adults in a child's life and are their first and most important teachers. Daily communication between families and our staff is highly encouraged, and our doors are always open to welcome and engage with families. If a child needs additional support in learning social-emotional skills or addressing challenging behavior, we will collaborate with the family to develop strategies and interventions.

The Pyramid Model includes practices for building nurturing and responsive relationships with children and positive relationships with families as the foundation. We believe this is essential for promoting children's learning. The Pyramid Model also provides practices to establish a predictable environment, a balanced schedule of child-directed and teacher directed activities, and strategies for supervising and guiding children to promote their engagement in learning. At ELC, we have three program-wide behavior expectations that are taught to children and expected of all adults.

These **expectations** are:

- Be Safe
- Be Kind
- Be Respectful

Teachers in our classrooms establish a few rules aligned with these expectations and are appropriate for the needs of the children in their classrooms. These rules help children know how to meet the program-wide expectations by clearly defining what children should do (versus telling children what not to do) within activities and routines. Our goal is for children to learn emotional regulation skills as they engage in behaviors that meet these expectations. Rules that align with the expectations are:

- We Walk
- We Talk
- We Listen
- We Clean Up

We know that young children might engage in behavior that challenges adults. These behaviors are a form of communication. The behavior might communicate a variety of messages, such as wanting an object or attention or wanting to avoid an activity or interaction. Children often engage in challenging behavior when they don't know how to communicate complex emotions like frustration or anger. We can understand and address their needs when we identify what children communicate through their behavior. In the use of the Pyramid Model, our teachers implement practices to prevent challenging behavior and promote social-emotional development with all children. Teachers commonly respond to children's difficult behavior by redirecting them to more appropriate behavior, guiding them to express their needs, or helping them use social-emotional skills to regulate or cope with their strong emotions. Preschool Teachers also use the PATHS Curriculum to teach social and emotional skills in the classroom.

CELEBRATION POLICY

The goal is to offer pleasant and meaningful classroom celebrations. The practices we follow are:

1. Seasonal Celebrations (Fall, Winter, Spring) are part of the Head Start experience for children. We choose to celebrate seasons instead of specific holidays to be sensitive to all of our families.
2. Teachers will schedule these events and plan the activities and food for the celebration. Ideas from parents are welcome!
3. Classrooms will have a sign-up sheet for families who would like to contribute to a celebration. There will be enough celebrations so that each parent needs only to sign up once a year.
4. Due to the potential for allergies that children/staff might have, we are not able to have families and friends bring homemade food for the classroom. We require families to bring nutritional, store-bought food items in the original packaging for these activities that are low in sugar, salt and fat. All food served in the classroom must be commercially prepared. It is suggested that teachers develop and offer parents a nutritious snack list. Ingredients must be listed.
5. We always want children to feel safe. For this reason, we do not allow costumes or masks, as these can be scary to young children. Neither adults nor children are permitted to enter the classrooms in costumes.
6. We are fortunate to have families in our program from many different places, cultures, and belief systems. We support the heritage and culture of each child and family, as well as responding to the majority culture of the classroom. We invite parents and grandparents to tell stories, show off clothes and artifacts, teach simple crafts, show children how to prepare some of their foods, and tell how they celebrate their heritage at home.
7. When a classroom is located in the School District buildings, we will follow the district's guidelines in regard to celebrations. They will follow the districts policy when it comes to parents visiting in the room during celebrations.



DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

All of our programs are equipped to support children and families who are dual language learners. From enrollment to home visits to daily classroom attendance it is our goal to help you and your child feel comfortable using your home language along-side English. Play materials, stories, games, and everyday items can be customized to include your home language along-side those who may speak another language. It is very important to help your child to feel comfortable and to learn both languages while in our classrooms.

TRANSITIONS

Transition to Kindergarten

Kindergarten readiness and social competency are the primary goals of the Agency. When a child is of kindergarten age, the Teacher/Parent Educator/Family Service Worker will provide parents with registration dates and times from the various school districts, along with other necessary information a parent will need when enrolling their child for school.

Additional information and materials will be sent home to parents regarding the transition to kindergarten experience. Training will also be available for parents of kindergarten bound children to address any questions and discuss ways parents can advocate for their child upon entering the school system.

Lastly, children's educational records will be forwarded to the school district of residence, with parental consent, in an effort to help schools plan for future programming.

Transition from Early Head Start to Head Start

Six months before your child turns 3 years old, you and your Parent Educator will begin to discuss and plan for the next step/transition of your child.

This includes:

- Your interest in where your child attends programming- child care, Head Start, Home Based Head Start
- Coordinating Special Services as needed (IFSP/IEP)
- A visit to the classroom
- A review of your family's income eligibility (2-3 months before 3 years old)

If your child turns 3 after your School District's Kindergarten cutoff date, he/she may remain in Early Head Start for additional months until he/she can transition into Head Start.

MEGAN'S LAW

Once a family completes the Emergency Release form with the Family Service Worker, the Family Service Worker will then look up each individual on the Megan's Law website (www.meganslaw.psp.pa.gov). If anyone is found listed on the Emergency Release form, the Family Service Worker will reach out to the enrolling parent and go over the Megan's Law Policy with them, and have the family sign off that it was discussed.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS/CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

Parents are required to provide documentation of current age-appropriate Well Child Visit / Immunizations and dental examination, as well as Special Care Plans.

Special Care Plans include:

- Asthma: Appendix HS-O1 Asthma Care Plan
- Allergy [Non-Food]: HS-O2 Allergy Care Plan
- Care Plan for Children with Special Needs Form: Appendix HS-O3
- Seizure Action Care Plan
- Food Allergies and or Intolerance: Medical Plan of Care for Child Nutrition Programs (CACFP and SFSP) – *require Health Care Provider Signature*
- Immunization Waiver

If a child is unable to eat any of the food that is provided for religious reasons, parents should notify the staff. Parents must present a written statement from their family doctor or clergyman in order for a child to be given a meal different than the planned menu.



EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

Injuries or Illness Requiring Medical or Dental Care

- 1) The caregiver who is with the child and who has had pediatric first aid training will provide first aid.
- 2) When immediate medical help is required, staff will call 9-1-1. Staff will contact a parent or legal guardian. If the parent or legal guardian cannot be reached, the alternate emergency contact person. The emergency facility used by the program is the closest medical facility.
- 3) A staff member will accompany and remain with the child until the parent or legal guardian assumes responsibility for the child.
- 4) Staff will complete a **Child Injury Report** as soon after the incident as possible. The form will be signed by the parent or legal guardian.
- 5) Dental emergencies: Dental injuries will be given first aid as in #1 above. If emergency dental care is required, a staff member will accompany and remain with the child until the parent or legal guardian assumes responsibility for the child.

REPORTING CHILD INJURY

A **Child Injury Report Form** will be completed for:

- An incident that results in an injury or a visible mark on a child (bites, cuts, bruises, swollen body parts, etc.).
- A medical emergency due to a child's ongoing health condition (asthma attack, convulsions, seizure, etc.).
- Any incident that involves the child's head even if there are no visible marks or signs of a concussion. The parent must be contacted as soon as possible after the incident.

ADMISSION AND EXCLUSION

Children will be excluded from Center Based Early Learning Programs or sent home from Center Based Early Learning Programs if:

The child exhibits signs of an illness listed below. (According to the Academy of Pediatrics)

1. FEVER: 100.4 degrees F. for all children
2. UNUSUAL LETHARGY: irritability, persistent crying, and difficult breathing.
3. UNCONTROLLED DIARRHEA: Three episodes with increased stool water that is not contained by the diaper or toilet use.
4. VOMITING: two or more times
5. MOUTH SORES: with drooling
6. UNIDENTIFIABLE RASH accompanied with a fever or change in behavior.

Parents/Guardians will be given a courtesy call or message if their child exhibits signs of illness that could lead up to the child being sent home. This form of communication will serve as a way to communicate our concerns for the child and prepare the adults for a possible pick up.

*****CHILDREN WILL ALSO BE EXCLUDED IF THEY CANNOT PARTICIPATE IN ALL DAILY ACTIVITIES AND EXHIBIT SIGNS OF ILLNESS*****

If your child is excluded with a high fever, excessive vomiting, or uncontrollable diarrhea he/she must be symptom free, without the use of medication, a full 24 hours (equals one full day), in order to return. If you bring your child and symptoms re-occur, your child will be excluded again and you will be contacted to pick up your child.

WHEN SIGNS OF A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE AND/OR ILLNESS ARE EVIDENT, THE FOLLOWING WILL TAKE PLACE:

1. For the child's comfort and to prevent the spread of infection, the teacher/site staff will call and ask the parent or the emergency contact person to take the child home.
2. If signs of a contagious disease are evident, staff may request doctor's written clearance for child to return. If parent does not get clearance, the child can not return until all signs of suspected contagious illness are no longer present.
3. If a child is diagnosed with a contagious disease, a note will be sent to all other parents informing them that their child has been exposed to a specific disease with a listing of the symptoms that they should look for. (No children's names will be disclosed.)

***** No exposure notice will be sent home without medial documentation that a child was diagnosed with Communicable Disease**

4. Teachers can refuse a child's admittance if a child displays symptoms of a communicable disease or appears to be too sick to attend class.
5. When children are ill we request that parents keep the child at home. If diagnosed with a communicable disease, refer to following guidelines as to when children may return:

CHILDREN MUST BE KEPT OUT OF THE PROGRAM WHEN DIAGNOSED WITH A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE FOR THE INDICATED PERIOD OF TIME:

Communicable Disease List

Communicable Disease “CD” code is used only if the child has been diagnosed with one of the following:	When The Child Can Return
Chicken Pox**	When all blisters have scabbed (usually 6 – 10 days)
COVID-19	<u>For Children who test Positive:</u> Children returning to School (or socialization): • Children are required to stay out 3 Full Days if they test positive. They can return if on <u>Day 4</u> if they are: ○ 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medication ○ 24 hours free of diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting ○ Other symptoms have improved [productive cough and green/yellow nasal discharge] ○ Day 0 is the day of your positive test and Day 1 is the first full day after your positive test [start counting from Day 1]. ***Children assigned to Childcare Programs are regulated by OCDEL to return with a written letter from a medical provider stating that they are healthy enough to return.
Diphtheria**	48 hours from the time the child is taking antibiotics, or until there are two negative culture tests. Child needs to have a medical letter to return [the letter should state they have been on antibiotics 48hrs, and they have had two negative cultures and or the child is healthy enough to return to classroom].
Fifth Disease	Must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication and having no respiratory systems; child could still have a rash they are not likely to be contagious. Child will need a medical note to return stating they are healthy enough to come into the classroom.
Flu (Influenza)	Must be fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. Child will need a medical note to return to the classroom.
Giardiasis	24 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Must be cleared by medical provider for re-admittance. (symptoms can last up to 6 weeks or longer). The letter needs to state they are healthy enough to return to classroom.
Haemophilus Influenza Type B (HIB)**	24 hours after the initiation of antibiotic therapy. Child must have written clearance from a health professional or local health department stating that they are healthy enough to return to classroom.
Hand, Foot, and Mouth	When a child is fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications, can contain drool, and all draining sores are covered.

Hepatitis A**	Two weeks after the onset of illness and after immune globulin has been given. Child should have no fever; jaundice has resolved, and appetite has returned. Child needs to have a letter stating they are healthy enough to return and documentation of immune globulin should be provided in letter.
Infectious Diarrhea	Child's diarrhea has stopped for a full 24 hours and has clearance letter from health care professional and/or negative lab test result. Documentation must be given to staff members before child can reenter school.
Impetigo	24 hours after doctor prescribed treatment has begun and all sores are scabbed over without drainage; Child must have letter stating they are healthy enough to return to school.
Lice	To re-enter into the classroom, the child must be free of live lice- Appendix HS-C and Appendix HS-D are given to parents.
Measles**	4 days after the rash began. Child must have a letter to return to school; letter must state they are healthy enough to return to school.
Meningitis	Child must have written clearance from a health care professional stating child is healthy enough to return to school. (symptoms normally last 7-10 days)
Mononucleosis	Child will need a doctor's written permission to be re-admitted. Documentation must be given to staff members before child can return.
MRSA	Child must have a doctor's written clearance to return, and sores must not have drainage or have pus. Sores must be covered.
Mumps**	5 days after the onset of swelling, documentation must be given to a staff member that child is healthy enough to return to classroom; this can be in the form of a letter from health care professional.
Norovirus	48 hours after resolution of symptoms [diarrhea/vomiting]. stool must be able to be contained in diapers/toilet trained children do not have accidents.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough) **	5 days from the time the child begins taking antibiotics; documentation is needed for when antibiotics are started. A note is required for the child to return stating that child is healthy enough to return to classroom.
Pink Eye (acute bacterial contagious conjunctivitis)	Must return with documentation from a health care provider and after taking antibiotics for a full 24 hours.
Pinworms	24 hours after the doctor prescribed treatment has begun; documentation is needed when medication is started.
Ringworm	24 hours after beginning medication; documentation is needed when medication is started.
Respiratory Streptococcal Infections	(Scarlet Fever, Bronchitis, Strep Throat, etc.) Child may return after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment; documentation is needed when medication was started and a note stating that child is healthy enough to return to the classroom.
Roseola	Child may return after fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medication.

Rotavirus**	Child may return after a full 48 hours of ALL symptoms free without the use of fever reducing medication.
Rubella**	7 days after rash onset. With outbreaks, exclude unimmunized individuals until they are immunized.
Salmonella	Must be a full 24 hour clear of diarrhea and must have written clearance from a health care professional stating child is healthy enough to return to the classroom.
Scabies	24 hours after treatment, must have written clearance from health care professional. Documentation must be given to staff members before the child can start.
Shigella	After treatment is complete and two stool cultures taken 24 hours apart are negative. Child need a letter stating they are healthy enough to come to school and documentation of stool cultures; must be given to staff member.
Tonsillitis	24 hours from the time the child begins taking antibiotics and is fever free without the use of fever reducing medication.
Trachoma	24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment. Child needs a letter stating they are healthy enough to come to school.
Tuberculosis (TB)	As soon as effective therapy has been started and adherence to medication is documented – will require updates or changes to treatment plan via documentation from health professional. Documentation of the treatment plan must be given to staff member.

****Child should have vaccination against – if parent determines they do not want their child to be vaccinated, then they must complete Appendix HS-D1Immunization Waiver**

Notice letters for Communicable Diseases can be found at Appendix HS-C2

Re-Admission After Medical Treatment

If any child has been to a hospital, urgent care, emergency room, doctor's office (other than a well visit), or has had any surgeries/treatments, the parent must provide written documentation allowing the child to attend the program, with or without restrictions. Documentation must be provided from a health professional and presented to staff before the child can return.



ADMINISTERING MEDICATION POLICY

Medication administration is limited to prescription, or non-prescription (over the counter) medications ordered by a health care professional for a specific child and accompanied by written consent of the parent/legal guardian.

Early Learning Connections will provide parents with an **Authorization for Medication Form** (Appendix: HS-E1). The parent must take this form to the child's physician who completes the top section of the form (if the parent does not have this form when they go to the physician, a written order from the physician that contains the information listed below will be accepted and stapled to the form). The written order of the health professional must specify:

- The medical reason for the medication
- Name of the medication
- Dose
- Route
- When (time of the day)
- For how long (number of days)
- Any reactions or side effects that may occur

The documentation is brought to the facility with the required medication. The parent completes the middle section and the staff person completes the bottom section of the form.

Medication must be in the original container (pharmacy or manufacturer supplied) with a label that includes the child's name, date the prescription was issued, and when it expires.

The label must also include the prescriber's name, dose instructions, pharmacy name and phone number, and relevant warnings.

Preventive and over-the-counter medications (OTC) may be used when parents or legal guardians provide a written note, giving ELC staff permission to use on their child.

Examples would be diapering rash cream, sunscreen, ChapStick body lotion.

This would not include items like Tums, Tylenol or Allergy medications.

All preventive and OTC Medications must be in their original containers. ELC staff will follow manufacturer instructions for the use of Medication or application, unless a medical note provided from a licensed provider dictates differently.

Once a medication is discontinued, if there is any remaining, it will be given to the parent or legal guardian when they pick up their child. They will be required to sign the bottom of **Medication Log (Appendix HS-E2)**. Three attempts will be made to return unused medication before medication will be disposed of appropriately. The bottom part of **Medication Log (Appendix HS-E2)** will be completed at this time; the location and date of where unused medication was dropped off will be recorded, along with staff members' name / signature.

NUTRITION PROGRAM

Early Learning Connections provides nutritious meals which follow the USDA Guidelines for the Child and Adult Food Care Program.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email: program.intake@usda.gov





Children and Adults with Disabilities and Special Dietary Needs

Operators of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) are required to make reasonable modifications to Program meals or the meal service to accommodate children or adults (Program participants) with disabilities that restrict the diet.

1. Licensed Medical Authority's Statement for Participants with Disabilities U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations at [7 CFR Part 15b](#) require substitutions or modifications in Program meals for participants whose disabilities restrict their diets. Sponsors, centers, and day care homes must provide modifications for participants on a case-by-case basis when requests are supported by a written statement from a state licensed medical authority.

The third page of this document ("Medical Plan of Care for Child Nutrition Programs") may be used to obtain the required information from the licensed medical authority. For this purpose, a *state licensed medical authority* in Pennsylvania includes a:

- Physician,
- Physician assistant,
- Certified registered nurse practitioner, or
- Dentist.

The written medical statement must include:

- An explanation of how the participant's physical or mental impairment restricts the diet;
- An explanation of what must be done to accommodate the participant; and
- The food or foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives, if appropriate.

2. Other Special Dietary Needs

Program operators may make food substitutions for individual participants who do not have a medical statement on file. Such determinations are made on a case-by-case basis and all accommodations must be made according to USDA's meal pattern requirements. Program operators are encouraged, but not required, to have documentation on file when making menu modifications within the meal pattern.

Special dietary needs and requests such as those related to general health concerns and personal preferences are not disabilities and are optional for Program operators to accommodate. Meal modifications for non-disability reasons are reimbursable provided that these meals adhere to Program regulations.

3. Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act

Under Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990* and the *ADA Amendments Act of 2008*, a person with a disability means any person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or major bodily functions, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. A physical or mental impairment does not need to be life threatening in order to constitute a disability. If it limits a major life activity, it is considered a disability.

Major life activities include, but are not limited to: caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working. A major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to: functions of the immune system; normal cell growth; and digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

Children and Adults with Disabilities and Special Dietary Needs

4. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Preschool children, infants, and toddlers with disabilities have additional rights under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). Questions regarding the IDEA's requirements should be directed to the U.S. Department of Education, which is the federal agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of the IDEA.

Child Nutrition Program (CACFP/SFSP) Contact

For more information about requesting accommodations to Program meals and the meal service for participants with disabilities, contact:

Click here to enter local contact name and information.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-05080002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Medical Plan of Care for Child Nutrition Programs (CACFP and SFSP)

Please read pages 1 and 2 before completing this form.

Participant's Name	Date of Birth	Age/Classroom
Name of Center/Program/Site		
Name of Parent/Guardian or Participant's Representative	Phone Number of Parent/Guardian/Representative	
Signature of Parent/Guardian or Participant's Representative	Date	
1. Provide an explanation below of how the participant's physical or mental impairment restricts the participant's diet:		
2. Describe the specific diet or necessary modifications prescribed by the state licensed medical authority to accommodate the participant's needs:		
3. List the food or foods to be omitted (please be specific) and recommend alternatives, if appropriate. <u>Foods to be omitted:</u>		
<u>Suggested substitutions:</u>		
4. Indicate texture modifications, if applicable: ☐ Chopped/Cut into bite-sized pieces ☐ Diced/Finely Ground ☐ Pureed ☐ Other:		
5. List any required special adaptive equipment:		
Name of Physician/Medical Authority & Title (Please Print)		Provider Phone Number
Signature of Physician/Medical Authority		Date

Signing the following section is optional but may prevent delays by allowing the Program to speak with the physician/medical authority.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act Waiver

In accordance with the provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, I hereby authorize _____ (*medical authority*) to release such protected health information of the participant as is necessary for the specific purpose of Special Diet information to _____ (*center/program/site*) and I consent to allow the physician/medical authority to freely exchange the information listed on this form and in their records concerning the participant with the childcare/adult care/summer food program as necessary. I understand that I may refuse to sign this authorization without impact on the eligibility of my request for a special diet for the participant. I understand that permission to release this information may be rescinded at any time except when the information has already been released. My permission to release this information will expire on _____ (*date*). This information is to be released for the specific purpose of Special Diet information.

The undersigned certifies that he/she is (***circle one***): **Parent** **Guardian** **Adult participant** or **Representative of participant** listed on this document and has the legal authority to sign on behalf of that person.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Procedure for Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Civil Rights Complaints

Pennsylvania Department of Education Division of Food and Nutrition

- 1) Sponsor receives a Civil Rights complaint from the complainant (i.e., parent).
 - a) Sponsor must inform complainant of Federal Civil Rights rules and regulations that have been established for protected classes. (A protected class is any person or group of people who are protected from discrimination based on):
 1. Race
 2. Color
 3. National Origin
 4. Age
 5. Sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation)
 6. Disability
 - b) Sponsor must provide complainant the necessary information to file a complaint, which is:
 1. Mailing address of the USDA:
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400
Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
 2. USDA's Contact Information:
Telephone: (866) 632-9992 or (202) 260-1026

Local or Federal relay: (800) 877-8339

Spanish Relay: (800) 845-6136

Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442

Email: program.intake@usda.gov
 3. Electronic link to file a civil rights complaint (How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint):
<https://www.usda.gov/oascr/complaint-resolution>

Note: If the sponsor is unsure if the complaint falls under a protected class, sponsor should provide complainant the federal complaint information.

- c) **After providing the complainant with the information on how to file a Civil Rights complaint directly at the Federal level**, the sponsor may attempt to resolve the complaint if it is a matter that can be resolved quickly. Resolving complaints in real-time at the lowest possible level is encouraged. (***Note:** This is not an investigation as neither the sponsor nor the State Agency has the authority to conduct complaint investigations. This is simply trying to resolve the situation if it was potentially caused by a miscommunication.) If the complainant refuses to discuss the matter any further with the sponsor or if the matter cannot be resolved quickly, then the sponsor should:
 1. Reiterate the complaint filing procedures in 1) b),
 2. Document the complaint and actions taken (i.e. referral to Federal complaint procedures) in a Civil Rights complaint log that is separate from any other complaint log, (***Note:** A separate Civil Rights complaint log is necessary due to confidentiality and privacy laws. See complaint log requirements in d) below.), and
 3. Notify the State Agency of the discussion. (***Note:** it is important for the sponsor to notify the State Agency

because regular communication between the sponsor and State Agency is key to operating the program successfully.)

If the complainant is willing to try to resolve the issue with the sponsor and a satisfactory resolution is achieved, then the sponsor should still remind the complainant (using the information in 1) b)) of his/her right to file at the Federal level if necessary. (*Note: Complainants retain the right to file at the Federal level even if a resolution seems to have been reached at the sponsor level.) The sponsor needs to document the complaint and actions taken (i.e. how resolution was achieved) in a log that is separate from any other complaint log, and notify the State Agency of the resolution.

d) Regardless if the complainant wishes to file at the Federal level, the sponsor should document as much information as possible in their Civil Rights complaint log including, but not limited to, the following:

- Date Complaint Received
- Complainant's Name
- Complainant's Address
- Complainant's Telephone Number
- Complainant's Email Address
- Allegation of Discrimination/Issue (i.e. FNS program involved, protected class(es) involved, etc.)
- Date of Alleged Discriminatory Action

1. The sponsor **must forward** the information, **within 5 days of receipt of complaint** from complainant, to the State Agency Civil Rights Coordinator (process depicted below):

State Agency Civil Rights Coordinator → State Agency Director* → FNS Regional Office Civil Rights Contact → FNS Headquarters Civil Rights Office → Complainant

2. *State Agency level **must forward** complaint information, **within 5 days of receipt of complaint** from sponsor, to the FNS regional office.

3. FNS team conducts complaint review and investigation, which includes contact with the complainant, State Agency, sponsor, etc.

2) Additional Information:

a) Complainants must file within 180 days of the alleged action

b) Confidentiality is extremely important

c) USDA complaint form:

- English version:

http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/Complain_combined_6_8_12.pdf

- Spanish version:

http://www.ocio.usda.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2012/Spanish_Form_508_Compliant_6_8_12_0.pdf

d) Email the State Agency Civil Rights Coordinator for all Civil Rights complaints, including disability related complaints:

- Child and Adult Care Food Program: RA-CACFP@pa.gov
- National School Lunch Program: RA-NSLP@pa.gov
- Summer Food Service Program: RA-SFSP@pa.gov

PROBLEM RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

The Purpose of this Procedure: Sometimes parents have a concern or problem, and this process will help make sure parents can be heard and concerns can be resolved.

1. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CONCERNS

- a) If parents have a concern or question about a classroom activity or the education program, they are encouraged to speak directly to the Classroom Teacher.
- b) If the parent feels that the problem has not been solved, or if a parent is unable to discuss the problem with the teacher, he/she should contact the Program Manager. Program Manager's phone numbers can be obtained by calling the Administration Office at 724-287-2761.
- c) If the problem cannot be solved at this level within a one (1) week period, he/she should contact the Program Director.
- d) If the problem has not been resolved at this point, a written statement should be given to the Problem Resolution Committee. Please address to: Problem Resolution Committee, Early Learning Connections, 139 Rieger Road, Butler, PA 16001.

2. NON-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CONCERNS

- a) The parent should first discuss the matter with the Family Service Worker. The parent and Family Service Worker should try to solve the problem.
- b) If the parent feels that the problem has not been solved, he/she may present the problem to the Program Manager.
- c) If the problem cannot be solved at this level within a one (1) week period, it should be presented to the Family Engagement Director.
- d) If the problem has not been resolved at this point, a written statement should be given to the Problem Resolution Committee, addressed to Problem Resolution Committee, Early Learning Connections, 139 Rieger Road, Butler, PA 16001.

3. HOME-BASED PROGRAM

- a) If parents have a concern or question about the Home-Based activities, communication, or weekly scheduled home visits, they are encouraged to speak directly to their Parent Educator.
- b) If the parent feels that the problem has not been solved, or if a parent is unable to discuss the problem with the Parent Educator, he/she should contact the Home-Based Program Manager. The Home-Based Program Manager's phone numbers can be obtained by calling the Administration Office at 724-287-2761.
- c) If the problem cannot be solved at this level within a one (1) week period, he/she should contact the Program Director.
- d) If the problem has not been resolved at this point, a written statement should be given to the Problem Resolution Committee. Please address to: Problem Resolution Committee, Early Learning Connections, 139 Rieger Road, Butler, PA 16001.

If a parent feels that he/she cannot discuss the matter with certain individuals, because of their personal involvement, he/she may go directly to the person on the next higher step in the Problem Resolution Procedure.

The Problem Resolution Committee will investigate the issues and attempt to resolve the problem. If specific action seems necessary, the Problem Resolution Committee will make recommendations to Policy Council.

Armstrong Community Resources

Child Abuse:	State Childline	800.932.0313
	Children & Youth Agency	724.548.3466
	(weekends and after 4:30 pm call 911)	
Domestic Violence:	HAVIN	724.543.1180
	VOICe 24 hour Hotline	800.841.8551
Housing or Food:	Salvation Army	724.543.6622
	Catholic Charities	724.548.1009
Medical:	Armstrong County Memorial Hospital	724.543.8500
	Ambulance	9-1-1
	Poison Control Center (Pgh)	800.222.1222
Armstrong County Community Action		724.548.5754
Early Learning Resource Center – Region 3		724.285.9431
Resource & Referrals for Child Care		724.287.1044
Mental Health Crisis		877.333.2470
Language Line		https://www.languageline.com

Butler Community Resources

Child Abuse:	State Childline	800.932.0313
	Children & Youth Agency	724.284.5156
	(weekends and after 4:30 pm call 911)	
Domestic Violence:	VOICe	724.283.8700
	VOICe 24 hour Hotline	800.841.8551
Housing or Food:	Salvation Army	724.287.5532
	Catholic Charities	724.287.4011
Medical:	Butler Memorial Hospital	724.283.6666
	Ambulance	9-1-1
	Poison Control Center (Pgh)	800.222.1222
Center for Community Resources		724.431.0095
Early Learning Resource Center – Region 3		724.285.9431
Resource & Referrals for Child Care		724.287.1044
Mental Health Crisis		800.292.3866
Language Line		https://www.languageline.com

Indiana Community Resources

Child Abuse:	State Childline	800.932.0313
	Children & Youth Agency	724.548.3466
	(weekends and after 4:30 pm call 911)	
Domestic Violence:	Alice Paul House	724.349.4444
	VOICe 24 hour Hotline	800.841.8551
Housing or Food:	Salvation Army	724.543.6622
	Family Promise of Indiana County	724.464.5220
Medical:	Indiana Regional Medical Center	724.357.7000
	Ambulance	9-1-1
	Poison Control Center (Pgh)	800.222.1222
Indiana County Community Action Program (ICCAP)		724.465.2657
Early Learning Resource Center – Region 3		724.285.9431
Resource & Referrals for Child Care		724.287.1044
Mental Health Crisis		877.333.2470
Language Line		https://www.languageline.com



PARENT TRAININGS

Parents whose children are enrolled in all programs are invited to participate in Early Learning Connections Parent Trainings. The trainings will be offered throughout the year, and will address a wide variety of topics that are of interest to parents of preschool age children. Your child's teacher will send informational flyers home to you in your child's backpack. The flyers will include dates, times, locations, and registration information.

Dual Language Families: We will support and provide you with materials and/or interpreters in your home language for the parent training as well as any other family events, meetings and home visits as requested.

VOLUNTEERING IN HEAD START

There are 4 ways you can provide In-Kind hours to the Head Start program

1. Attend Parent Meetings and Policy Council Meetings

Policy Council is a committee that is made of up parents/guardians of Early Head Start and Head Start children, as well as community members. It is an opportunity to give your input to the budgets, hiring of employees, program plans, child outcomes and school readiness goals. You will also report on your local Parent Meetings and Family Events. Snacks are provided. You can become a member by talking with your Family Service Worker to get signed up.

The Parent Meetings are held 4 times a year with your Family Service Worker.

2. Volunteer in the Classroom

Parents are always welcome in the classroom. Come as a volunteer, share your talents, and learn more about working with preschoolers. The children enjoy it and, with extra help, teachers can plan activities they wouldn't be able to otherwise. Volunteers are required to have clearances. Staff will help you obtain them.

When volunteering in the classroom, please do not use your cell phone unless it is an emergency.

3. At-Home Activities Calendar

At-home activities are fun ways for you and your child to spend time together and learn!

You will be provided with monthly activities. These ideas coordinate with what is going on in the classroom or home, and with the curriculum that we use. During home visits and parent/teacher conferences, we also receive ideas from you as to what you want your child to learn.

Some possible at-home activities might include:

- Count the number of circles in your home.
- Read together.
- Mak a creation with shapes (circle, squares and triangles).
- Gather a collection of leaves. Look for similarities and differences.

Parents can earn up to 50 hours of in-kind a month for the program.

Please be sure to indicate your hours and sign the “At Home Activities Form” so that we can count your time as in-kind. THANK YOU!

In-Kind is a term you will hear often in Head Start and Early Head Start. Because our program is funded by a grant awarded by the Federal Government, we are required to provide 25% of local matching funds. The time that you volunteer in the program will be converted into a dollar amount so that our program meets its in-kind amount.

4. Health Advisory Committee

“The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) purpose is to support Children's healthy development. The HSAC is an advisory group usually composed of local health providers who represent a wide variety of local social service agencies along with Head Start staff and parents. Effective partnerships are key to success of the approach. HSACs help to make decisions about health services and strengthen the communities where Head Start families live”.

This group allows parents, staff and community professionals to work together to formulate health policies when needed, develop and approve program work plans, participate in program evaluations, expand education and knowledge, and occasionally sponsor health-related events.

5. Positive Behavior Support Core Leadership Team

The PBIS Core Leadership Team leads the program through planning and implementation of the pyramid model practices promoting positive behavior in our program and prevent challenging behaviors. Committees members will review policies, procedures, and data to set goals and develop action plans to create safe and productive learning environments for all children.

6. Enrollment/Recruitment Committee

The Enrollment/Recruitment Committee is made up of parents, community members, and staff who work together to plan and discuss our current enrollment and recruitment ideas and events. This committee meets three times a year via TEAMS.



HOME AND SCHOOL CONNECTIONS FOR CENTER BASED HEAD START

- **“Home to School Connection Folder”** Each day your child will bring home this folder in his/her backpack. Please check the folder daily for valuable information. We will also send home creative artwork that your child has made. You can use this folder to communicate with us. Send notes and any other information that you want to share with the teachers.
- **Home Visits** are a very important part of our partnerships with parents/guardians. Your Family Service Worker will visit you at least 2 times a year and together you will talk about things that are important to you and your family. Your child’s teacher will also visit your home 2 times a year. During this time, you will discuss your child’s development/learning path with your child’s teacher.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences** are held 2 times a year in the classroom setting when children are not present. Like home visits, these two meetings are also a time to discuss your child’s growth and development, as well as his/her goals.
- **Classroom Times** will be sent home weekly. Look over it to find out what books will be read and what special events and study units will be occurring (Pets!, Buildings!, Trees!, Recycling!, etc.)
- **In-Kind Activity Calendar** will be sent home monthly. Activities that are listed are full of ideas for learning together with your child. These activities correspond with the study that your child is learning in the classroom. Returning them to the teacher at the end of the month is valuable for you and our programs.





HOME VISITS IN THE HOME-BASED PROGRAM

Whether you are new to the Home-Based Program or are the parent of several children who have been in a program for years, *you are your child's first teacher.*

Your Home as a Learning Center

Your child learns about himself or herself, other people, and the surrounding world every day. Your home is filled with interesting things to see and do for your infant, toddler, or preschooler. For your child, everyday moments like getting dressed, preparing a meal, setting the table, taking a walk, taking a bath or reading a book are learning moments. They are filled with interesting things to see, touch, smell, hear, taste, explore, and do.

Weekly Home Visits

To further support you as your child's first teacher, the programs consists of weekly home visits with your Parent Educator. By observing and interacting with your child, you and your Parent Educator will work together to establish goals based on the child's development. These home visits provide opportunities for you to strengthen your relationship with your child and help them develop and enhance skills they already have. The Parent Educator will also work with you to establish family goals, provide community resource referrals as needed, and will share information about program activities and training opportunities that are available.

Home visits are scheduled for a minimum of an hour and a half at the parent's home. As the parent, you are encouraged to help plan the home visits and will participate in the planned activities with your child/children.

Home Visiting Schedule

When you enroll in the Program, you and the Parent Educator work together to set a visit day and time for weekly visits. Establishing a set visit schedule benefits parents, children and home visiting staff.

- Families will be expected to participate in visits on this day/time weekly and notify the Parent Educator as soon as possible if they are unable to participate in a visit (appointment, travel, illness, etc.)
- If a family is unable to attend their scheduled visit on their regular day and time the Parent Educator will attempt to schedule a "make-up" visit as soon as possible.
- If the Parent Educator is unable to attend the scheduled visit, he/she will notify you in advance and will schedule a "make-up" visit as soon as possible.
- Home visits are scheduled to last a minimum of an hour and a half.

PARENT PARTNERSHIPS IN PRE-K COUNTS

At the start of each program year the Teacher visits the home for the purpose of building home/school connections. In addition, Teachers share child progress and gain input through Parent Conferences.

THE PARENT TO DO LIST

- Provide a small light weight back pack that you and the teacher can use to send things back and forth between home and school.
- Check your child's backpack each day for information from the teacher.
- Dress your child in casual, comfortable clothing, keeping in mind that classroom activities can at times be a little messy (painting, playing outdoors etc.)
- Send a complete change of clothes to be left in the classroom in case of accidents. Include tops and bottoms as well as underwear and socks.

When your child has to change into an item of extra clothing, the clothing that has been soiled will be sent home to you in your child's backpack. Use this as a reminder to send in a replacement item to add to your child's extra clothes.

- Label your child's belongings with a permanent marker. Put your child's first and last name on coats, hats, sweaters boots, mittens etc.
- If you self-transport, please walk your child to the teacher and pick your child up from the teacher.

Specific procedures for drop off and pick up will be determined by each classroom, and will be based on the safest and efficient system for each classroom's location.

- Each day that your child is absent or tardy, call the classroom to let the teacher know that your child will not be in or will be late and arriving at a certain time.
- On the day your child returns to school after an absence, send in a written excuse that tells why the child was not in school.

Keep the lines of communication with your child's teacher open. Your questions, comments, and concerns are welcome and contribute to continuous quality improvement.

