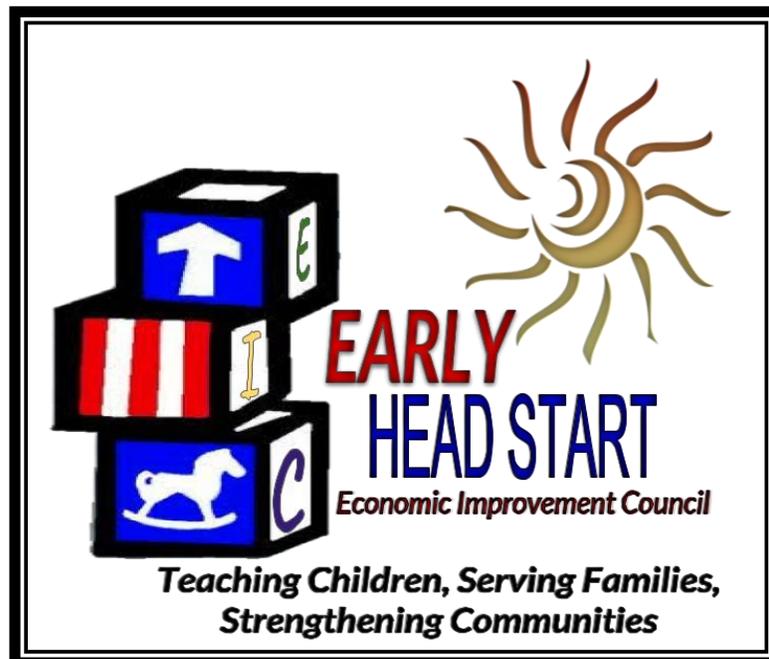


Economic Improvement Council

Early Head Start
Parent Handbook

“Elevating Excellence”



Program Option:
Center - Based Services

Economic Improvement Council

712 Virginia Rd.

Edenton, N.C. 27932

(252) 482-4495

Executive Director: Dr. Landon Mason

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EIC Early Head Start

Dear Parent(s) and Guardians:

Welcome to Early Head Start and we are excited and delighted that you have been selected to receive Early Head Start services for your child. Early Head Start serves pregnant women and children from birth through age three providing comprehensive, individualized early education experiences to enhance a child's social, emotional, physical, cognitive development, and school readiness. Pre-natal support and education is also provided. The program strives to enable parents to be better caregivers and teachers for their children, as well as assist parents to meet their own goals, including economic independence.

EIC Early Head Start serves children and families in Beaufort, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Martin, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell and Washington Counties. In addition, the Early Head Start program serves pregnant and parenting teens that qualify based upon income guidelines, families that are homeless and children with disabilities. Because the program is in partnership with the school district, EHS follows all district rules to ensure compliance with school mandates. The Early Head Start child development centers are licensed childcare centers and must meet the North Carolina childcare standards as well as the Federal Head Start Performance Standards.

Lastly, this Parent Handbook will serve as a guide to assist you with programmatic operations as well as contact information for EIC Leadership. If you have any concerns, comments or compliments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Landon B. Mason

Dr. Landon Mason Sr. NCRT, CCAP
Executive Director

Zantra Best

Mrs. Zantra Best
EHS/HS Director

For Parents



What is Early Head Start:

- A federally funded program for pregnant women and children birth through age three
- A collaborative partnership between 13 counties including: Beaufort, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Martin, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrrell and Washington Counties.
- A family development program focused on a high quality childcare program, preparing children for school readiness

Why Early Head Start:

Evidence Based Research tells us that the period from birth to age three is critical to healthy growth and development and to later success in school and life. All children need and deserve early childhood experiences that provide love, warmth and positive learning in a safe environment.

What is the purpose of Early Head Start:

- to promote school readiness with goals that focus on children's physical, social-emotional, cognitive and language development
- to support parents as their children's first and most important teacher to promote positive parent-child relationships
- to promote family well-being, including health, safety and increased financial security

What services can you expect from Early Head Start:

- Quality early education in and out of the home, including home visits
- Ongoing child development screening
- Family support - especially for families with newborns, infants and toddlers, as well as pregnant and parenting teens
- Parent education, including parent-child activities
- Comprehensive health services, including services to women before, during and after pregnancy, assistance with well-baby and well-child check-ups; immunization tracking; dental screening
- Nutrition education
- Mental health services and referrals
- Ongoing support for parents through partnership development focusing on family and individual goals, referral to agencies in the community to meet specific needs and peer support groups

Program Procedures



Enrollment

Enrollment in the Early Head Start program is limited to:

- ➔ Families that meet federal Early Head Start eligibility requirements
- ➔ Availability of the age appropriate classroom slot

Parents will be notified in writing of changes to eligibility and enrollment criteria.

Hours of Operation:

Regular center hours will be 8:00 AM to 2:30 PM, Monday-Friday. Any care provided beyond the stated hours of operation may be offered with our private care providers.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures:

- ➔ Sign-in sheets will be located in each classroom or in the EHS Office. When dropping off your child in the mornings, please sign your child in. Daily sheets for parent/teacher communication are located in the classroom. The parent portion needs to be filled in completely. This includes who will pick up your child and what time.
- ➔ When picking up your child, be sure to sign your child out.
- ➔ Your child will be released only to the parents or a person (18 years of age or older)
- ➔ designated by the parent on Enrollment Card.

If it is necessary for a child to be picked by someone other than those designated, the parents must call the center giving permission. A photo ID will be required. Whenever possible, we will ask you to notify us in writing by fax or email if someone else picks up your child.

- ➔ Once your child is signed out of the Center and left the classroom, the parent or person picking the child up assumes responsibility for the child.

Transportation:

Early Head Start does not provide transportation services.



Field Trips:

Field trips are not planned for infants and toddlers in our care.



Safety and Security

The safety and security of your child is very important to you and to us. To keep your child safe, the sign-in and sign-out procedure must be followed.

- ➔ Sign-in sheets are located in each classroom or the EHS office. When you bring your child each morning, you need to sign your full name on the sheet (Also list by name who will pick up your child in the afternoon and the time that the pick-up will occur.)
- ➔ The Parent portion of the Daily Sheet in your child's classroom should be completely filled out.
- ➔ At the end of your child's day, be sure to sign the sign-out sheet.
- ➔ Your child may only be released to a parent or a person (18 years or older) that is listed on the child's enrollment card.
- ➔ If someone other than a parent or the person listed on the enrollment card is coming for the child, the parent must call the center to give permission. The person will be required to provide photo identification. If possible, EHS requests that the parent send permission in writing for another person to come for the child.
- ➔ The parent is responsible for the child when the child is signed-out and has left the classroom.

Schedules: Respect & Routines

- ➔ Remember you are always welcome in your child's classroom. You do not need to ask permission to visit.
- ➔ Whenever possible, let your child's teacher know if you plan to visit the classroom and the time of your visit.
- ➔ Respect your child's need for consistent, predictable routines to feel safe and develop trust with his/her teacher. You can help by bringing and picking up your child every day.
- ➔ Help limit the number of strangers visiting the classroom by not bringing friends to see your baby during the day or at drop off/pickup times. Siblings must remain at the door and not enter the classroom during drop off and pick up times.
- ➔ As children become older a more detailed activity schedule is followed. These are posted in your child's classroom.

Early Head Start Provides:

- Wipes
- Diapers
- Meals/snacks
- Materials and supplies for classroom activities

Parents are encouraged to provide:

- Change of clothes for the child in case an accident or spill occurs
- Advocacy and program support for their child

Attendance

1. If your child will be absent for the day, please call the Early Head Start office.
2. Four consecutive unexplained absences will result in a referral to our Family Advocate, who will contact you to see why your child is absent.
3. A pattern of unexplained absences can result in losing your placement in the center program or EHS.
4. Extended absences must be requested in writing and approved in advance. If a child is out 30 days he/she will be withdrawn from the program.

Weather

In case of bad weather, the center will follow the closing policy of the local school district.

Holidays

The center will follow the local school calendar. A copy will be provided. Children will not attend school on holidays or on days where the center is closed for Professional Development Days/Teacher Workdays.

Meals

Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack are provided daily. No outside food may be brought into the Early Head Start classrooms. All feeding utensils are provided.

Curriculum

Early Head Start will provide your child with an individualized educational program based upon research-based curricula. The curriculum used by EIC Early Head Start is “The Creative Curriculum”. A lesson plan will be developed for your child on a weekly basis. Your child’s teacher will ask you for input into the developmental goals and activities for your child. Our curriculum is based on the philosophy that every interaction and activity is a learning opportunity.

This means that your child’s needs will be met in a responsive manner by his/her primary teacher. Toddlers learn through play and exploring their environment. Your child’s teacher will provide activities and materials that encourage your child’s development. Toddlers develop at very different rates and development occurs very quickly. Activities for children in the room will vary according to their own needs.

Your child’s teacher will provide a daily report about your child’s day. A minimum of two parent conferences and two home visits will be scheduled during the year to discuss your child’s progress. However, your child’s teacher is available to meet with you at any time if you have a question or concern.

Early Head Start (EHS) staff provide an initial developmental, vision and hearing screening for your child. This screening is conducted within the first 30 days of enrollment into Early Head Start. You will be notified of the date and time so you can participate. You will be given the results of all screenings.

THE TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY IS TO:

- Interact with your child.
- Develop a relationship with your child
- Consistently respond to your child’s needs
- Know your child’s individual schedule
- Know your child’s moods and best way to comfort.
- Work with you to ensure that your child’s needs are met.
- Ensure that you and your child are happy and comfortable our program

YOUR CHILD NEEDS:

- To build close trusting relationships
- To explore a room that is safe and inviting.
- To engage in stimulating age appropriate activities.

Infants and Toddlers with Special Needs

- Children with disabilities make up at least 10% or more of those enrolled in Early Head Start.
- All infants and toddlers are provided developmental and health screenings upon enrollment in EHS. The developmental screenings include vision and hearing screenings, parent interview and play based activities.
- Teachers complete on-going developmental and social/emotional assessments and provide parents with on-going information about their child's developmental progress.
- Identification, referral, and evaluation for disabilities are provided when needed through referral to Early Childhood Intervention through our local CDSA.
- The program coordinates with Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) for services for children with disabilities.
- Training on serving children with disabilities is provided to staff and parents. Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes and strategies are incorporated into the EHS individualized lesson plans.
- Modifications are provided for children with disabilities if needed.
- Parents and staff participate with CDSA in the development and review of the IFSP.
- Program classrooms and playgrounds are evaluated for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), DCDEE, and Health & Sanitation.



Behavioral Guidelines and Discipline

The following rules apply to parents, staff, volunteers or anyone who comes in contact with the children.

- ➔ Discipline is individualized for each child. It is directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
- ➔ Infants and toddlers are redirected to positive activities. Quiet/calming time one on one with the child's teacher may be used.
- ➔ A positive classroom management approach will be used. Teachers focus on teaching social skills, appropriate interactions and natural consequences.
- ➔ No child is left alone or unsupervised.
- ➔ Spanking, hitting, slapping, shaking, threatening or yanking a child is never allowed. Time out is not used.
- ➔ No one will be allowed to yell at, put down, or call a child an inappropriate name.
- ➔ Food or drink is never withheld from a child as a form of punishment or used as a reward. Children are never denied their basic needs.



Child Abuse and Neglect

North Carolina law requires that school teachers, social workers, health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement and other professionals report suspected child abuse or neglect to the N.C. Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or law enforcement.

Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith.

- ➔ Child abuse and neglect are against the law in N.C., and so is failure to report it.
- ➔ If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to report it to the N.C. Department of Family and Protective Services or to a law enforcement agency.
- ➔ You are required to make a report within 24 hours of the time you suspected the child has been or may be abused or neglected.
- ➔ EIC/Early Head Start is committed to preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children, including:
 - Annual training for all Head Start/Early Head Start staff
 - Increase of employee and parent awareness of issues regarding abuse and neglect including warning signs that a child may be a victim. This occurs through staff development and/or parent education activities
 - Staff development and/or parent education activities that focus on awareness of child abuse prevention techniquesTraining and support for parents about actions they should take to obtain assistance and intervention if their child is a victim of abuse or neglect.



Confidentiality of HS/EHS Records

All information in the child's HS/EHS files is considered to be confidential. School officials and Head Start/Early Head Start staff may access children's information. Written parent permission and informed consent must be obtained for other agencies or organizations to access the child's information.

Parents must give written permission/releases for *the following*:

- ➔ Early Head Start staff to request services from other agencies.
- ➔ Use your child's photograph i.e classroom newsletter, newspaper articles, classroom videotaping, internet, and school yearbook.
- ➔ Participation in sand and water play
- ➔ Consents for Head Start/Early Head Start required screenings such as:
 - Vision and hearing
 - Height and weight
 - Developmental/social/emotional screening
 - Dental
 - Classroom behavior observation
 - Anemia
 - Speech/Language

Rights of Parents

By law, both parents, whether married, separated, or divorced, have access to the records of a child who is a minor or a dependent for tax purposes. A parent whose rights have been legally terminated will be denied access to the records if EHS is given a copy of the court order terminating these rights.

Parents have the right to:

- ➔ Review their children's records and contest inaccurate information
- ➔ Know about and attend meetings concerning their children
- ➔ Give permission for the release of records
- ➔ Discuss concerns with Early Head Start staff
- ➔ Expect a timely response for your concern
- ➔ Know that your child's and family's records are kept in locked, restricted file cabinets, and will be kept for 5 years from the end of the time that the child is in Early Head Start. After that, they will be destroyed. Notice about the destruction of records will be published in the local newspaper once a year.

Know that some of your child's records are maintained on a secure electronic data base.

Complaint Procedure

Introduction

We hope that no family enrolled in Early Head Start (EHS) ever has a reason to be unhappy with our services, but sometimes people have different opinions about services, policies, and procedures. The following procedures are designed to encourage open, helpful communication, and more importantly protect your rights according to law.

The place to start is with your child's teacher. If you disagree about your services, or have questions and concerns, ask for more explanation. Talk things over and suggest possible solutions. Friendliness, a problem-solving approach, and working openly together will usually solve most problems. If you have tried this and are not satisfied, these are the steps you can take. Services will continue during these complaint procedures unless you decide otherwise.

Local level

- a) Talk with EHS Center Director/Lead Teacher.
- b) Call the EHS Director for your site and ask for a meeting with he or she and the personnel involved in the complaint. He or she will arrange a meeting at a time convenient to everyone involved, within 5 days of your call.
- c) The EHS Director will work with you and the other people involved to resolve the difficulties and find a solution.
- d) The EHS Director will write a summary of this meeting and give everyone involved a copy.
- e) If the situation is not resolved, the concern will be forwarded to the Executive Director at the EIC Office, located in Edenton, N.C.

Community Partnerships

Early Head Start (EHS) seeks ways through collaboration and networking within the EHS community in each of the 13 counties to meet the needs of families. The EHS Program provides information about community resources that can help you and your child. The EHS Program is able to help be a resource for your child's growth and development, by promoting confident parenting and loving relationships. EHS will support you in accomplishing your goals and together recognizing your success.

SAMPLE INFANTS AND TODDLERS CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

<u>TIME</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
8:00 – 8:30	Arrival, Greeting
8:30 – 9:00	Feeding, Breakfast (if wanted)
9:00 – 10:00	Self-Guided Center Activities/Small Group
10:00 – 11:00	Gross Motor (outdoor or indoor)
11:00 – 12:00	Feeding, Lunch Time, Dental Hygiene
12:00 - 2:30	Quiet Time, Story Time, Nap, Snack
2:30	Departure Time



Early Head Start Playground

Weather Guidelines

The Early Head Start Program encourages play in an outdoor learning environment on a daily basis, weather permitting. As a part of your child's learning experiences, sand and water table play are provided. You will be asked to provide your consent for these activities. No other water activities such as sprinkler or wading pool play are allowed. The following guidelines will be utilized in determining if the weather is conducive to outdoor activity.

Children will not engage in outdoor activity if...

- ➔ the outside temperature and/or wind chill factor is below 40°
- ➔ the temperature and/or heat index is above 100°
- ➔ the "ozone" factor is forecasted in the orange or red level
- ➔ there are severe weather warnings in effect there is lightning

Teachers will ensure that children are dressed appropriately for weather conditions when playing outside. Tennis shoes are required – no sandals or flip flops. Please make sure your child has a coat when the weather is cool. Teachers will encourage parents to apply sunscreen to their child prior to coming to school, especially during the warmer months.

Pedestrian Safety



Even very young children need to be taught pedestrian safety. Some things you should talk with your child about include:

- Remind your child to look for a crosswalk before crossing the street and to hold an adult's hand.
- When crossing the street, stop at the curb or edge of the road. Look left, then right, and then left again for moving cars before crossing.
- Keep looking left and right until you are safely across the street. If your area has sidewalks, teach your child(ren) to stay on them at all times.
- Remind your child to wait for the car to come to a complete stop before approaching the vehicle

Parent Engagement

- ➔ Parents/guardians of children currently in the program are invited and encouraged to participate in local campus parent committees.
- ➔ Each center conducts parent meetings or activities.
- ➔ Parents are given opportunities to volunteer for “In-Kind” hours.
- ➔ Parent libraries are on each campus with books for adults and children.
- ➔ *Families* work with the Family Resource Specialist to develop individualized Family Partnership Agreements based on each family’s strengths and goals.
- ➔ Father/male involvement is encouraged through the D.R.E.A.M. Team (Dads Reading, Educating, and Mentoring).
- ➔ Workshops on various topics are available to parents.
- ➔ Policy Council membership is made up of at least 51% current Head Start/Early Head Start parents who have the responsibility for participating in making decisions regarding the overall operation of the program.
- ➔ Opportunities are provided for parents/guardians to participate on Head Start advisory committees for Health Services and Education to enhance the services provided to children.

Volunteers/Visitors

Parent involvement is very important to the Early Head Start program. The teamwork of parents and teachers working together ensures children receive the best education possible. Volunteers can provide a wide range of services and support to the Early Head Start staff.

These are a number of opportunities for volunteering in the Early Head Start program.

Some suggested ways to help are:

- ➔ Cutting out and making teaching aid
- ➔ Sanitizing toys
- ➔ Reading a story
- ➔ Helping with feeding
- ➔ Helping with room set up or clean up
- ➔ Helping with parent meetings
- ➔ Helping with parent newsletter

Volunteers are encouraged to follow school district dress code policies when in the classroom.

For the safety of your child and to provide the best learning environment, you must follow school districts’ rules about signing in at the school office and receiving a visitor’s badge before entering a classroom.

Individuals who want to volunteer in Head Start/EHS must pass a criminal history background check as required by the local school district and child care licensing. Child Care Licensing Rules have additional requirements for volunteers working in a classroom. Contact your Lead Teacher for additional information.

Volunteers in Early Head Start will be trained by EIC Early Head Start.

You are an important part of your child’s education. If you are interested in working as a volunteer please contact your Site Director, Parent Advocate or Lead Teacher.

Child Health

Parents: You are your child’s first teacher and caregiver; you play a major role in your child’s health. A healthy child is a child ready for learning.

Physical Examination



Before your child can enter the classroom or receive direct services (for example, home visits or center based services) parents must provide a copy of the child’s last physical exam signed by the doctor/clinic to the Early Head Start Family Resource Specialist. The exam must be appropriate to the child’s age as recommended by the N.C. Pediatric Association.

Physical Exam Schedule	
1-2 Weeks Exam	15 Months Exam
2 Months Exam	18 Months Exam
4 Months Exam	24 Months Exam
6 Months Exam	30 Months Exam
9 Months Exam	36 Months Exam
12 Months Exam	

If your child is on a different schedule recommended by his/her pediatrician, the last well exam and a note from the doctor, defining his recommended schedule is required. If you are having difficulty obtaining a physical examination, please notify the Family Resource Specialist at your campus and we will work with you to get one.

Immunizations (Shots)

Before the child can enter the classroom or receive direct services (for example, home visits or center based services) immunizations must be current and appropriate to the age as recommended by their pediatrician.

Parents are required to submit updated immunization records after each appointment to the Early Head Start Family Resource Specialist.

Dental Exam

Dental exams are required at age 1 year and every 6 months after. Parents are responsible for providing a copy of this exam to Early Head Start Office and complete all follow-up appointments.

If you are having difficulty obtaining a copy of your child's exam, please notify the Family Resource Specialist at your campus and we will work with you to get one.

Financial Assistance/Insurance

Early Head Start will assist parents to access available health care resources to pay for required services. (Medicaid, CHIP etc.) On a case-by-case basis a **limited amount** of Early Head Start funds is set aside to pay for services for those children who do not qualify for insurance or Medicaid. All services and payment for services must be prearranged through the Family Resource Specialist assigned to your campus. Please notify the Family Resource Specialist at your campus for additional help or information.

Required Screenings

Occasionally, you may receive a notice that your child will be screened. Early Head Start is required to track height, weight, hearing, vision, nutrition, anemia, developmental and speech/ language screenings. It is your responsibility as a parent to review the results for your infant/ toddler and follow-up with any necessary referrals or appointments for your child as requested by Early Head Start. Your Family Resource Specialist is available to assist you.

Medication

In compliance with EIC Early Head Start and DCDEE, proper staff can only administer medications to your child with the proper labeled medication bottle. All medication administration will be done by the school nurse or his or her designee. Medication administration rules adopted by DCDEE licensing laws are followed. Please notify Early Head Start Family Resource Specialist at your campus if your child is taking any medications, so that arrangements can be made.

Over the counter medications, including such medications as diaper creams fall into this category and cannot be administered, unless it is labeled with your child's name by a doctor, along with the amount to be administered.

Special Needs

Occasionally a toddler may have special requirements due to health concerns. This includes sleep positions and feeding instructions. These will be followed with a signed order from your child's health care provider.

Communicable Disease Procedure

Early Head Start follows the communicable disease and health procedures required by the *Minimum Standard Rules for Child Care Centers, Head Start Performance Standards* and DCDEE. The school nurse is responsible for all health decisions while your child is in an Early Head Start classroom. If you have questions ask your Family Resource Specialist.

When a child is excluded from a center-based activity for health reasons, the Early Head Start Program will follow the guidelines as established by DCDEE. A child who displays indications of possible contagious disease or body parasites shall be excluded from the center for at least twenty-four hours. Based upon the recommendation of the school nurse and the communicable disease guidelines of the North Carolina Department of State Health Services, Early Head Start will require that the child has received written permission to return from their doctor or clinic.

How Sick is Sick?

In order to insure the safety and health of our children and staff, children who have any of the following conditions may be excluded from the classroom until either the condition subsides, the child is no longer contagious, or we receive a note from the child's doctor stating the child is no longer contagious. The school nurse is responsible for determining if a child is ill and needs to be sent home – and if a physician note is required for return.*

1. Your child has thick green drainage from his/her nose.
2. Your child has yellow discharge from the eyes.
3. Your child has had an oral fever of more than 101 degrees in the last 24 hours.
4. Your child has vomited (more than one time) in the last 24 hours.
5. Your child has had diarrhea (more than two times) in the last 24 hours.
6. Your child has cuts or openings on the skins that are pus-filled or oozing.
7. Your child has lice or nits.
8. Your child has a communicable disease
9. Your child has an undiagnosed and untreated rash.

Center Based:

- ➔ Please notify Early Head Start as soon as possible to let the teacher know that the child is ill.
- ➔ If your child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, your child must be out 24 hours after symptoms subside, is fever free without medication, or until released by the doctor. You must bring a doctor's note if required by the school nurse.

Accidents/Illness

In the event of an accident, illness or an emergency, the Early Head Start program will notify you and provide detailed information, including a written report. If a critical illness or emergency requires the immediate attention of a physician, the EHS staff will:

- ➔ **Call 911** for emergency medical services to assess and transport your child to the nearest emergency room, if required;
- ➔ Give your child first aid treatment or CPR, if required;
- ➔ Contact the physician of record in your child's record; Ensure
- ➔ supervision of all other children in your child's group.

