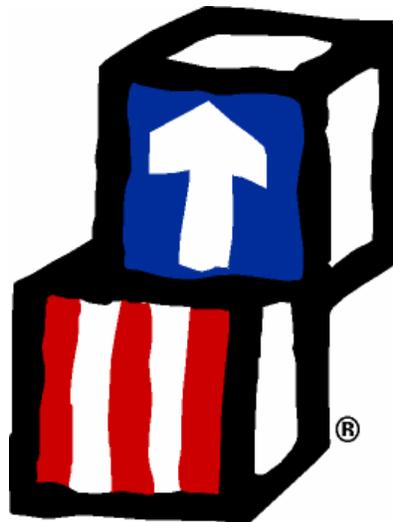


Hancock County Head Start
Sparta, Georgia
www.hancock.k12.ga.us

Early Head Start/ Head Start & Pre-K
Parent Handbook

2016 - 2017



Hancock County Early Head Start/ Head Start & Pre-K Program will deliver high-quality, comprehensive, early childhood services that focus on the needs of the child and family, both within an educational setting and within the community.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the entire staff, I would like to welcome you and your family to Hancock County's Head Start Program!

This Head Start Parent Handbook is designed to provide you with information about Head Start and the important role you play in the success of our program and your child's experience in preschool. Head Start believes that you are the most important educator in your child's life and that you have the primary responsibility for your child's development. You and the staff, working together as a team, will provide the support your child needs to succeed in school and in life.

We hope you find this Parent Handbook useful. We are always open to your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions for improvement and strongly encourage your active participation in the Head Start program.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Angela Primus
Head Start Director*

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Overview

Hancock County Head Start has been providing high-quality early care and education services since 1967. We provide a range of services in the areas of early childhood education and development, medical, dental, mental health, nutrition, family development and parent involvement. Our entire range of services is responsive to each child and family's developmental, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage and experience.

Hancock County Head Start consists of two program sites, which serve over 227 children. Both sites are located in Sparta, Georgia. The program is designed to serve children 6 weeks old to five years of age from families qualifying for Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K throughout Hancock County. Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K supports all children succeed by providing a comprehensive program that provides children with activities that help them grow mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically.. For general purposes, the name "Head Start" may refer to both programs.

Mission

Hancock County Head Start/Early Head Start Program will create and facilitate a healthy, safe and nurturing environment conducive to learning by bridging families, communities and providing comprehensive quality services for participating families and eligible children.

About Our Staff

Hancock County Head Start staff includes: Director, Administrative Support Team: Education Manager, Center Manager, Health/ Nutrition Manager, Transportation/ Facilities Manager, Teachers, Teacher Assistants, and Substitutes. All Hancock County Head Start staff receives thorough training, including initial orientation, pre-service and in-service. Together with parents, staff holding these positions form a team that is dedicated to providing every child and family the best possible services.

Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

Hancock County Head Start Program is based on the premise that all children share certain needs and can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program focusing on promoting school readiness through positive social and education skills. This program is tailored to fit the needs of the local community and families involved as well as to maximize the unique experiences of each child's desire to become lifelong learners. Head Start supports and encourages parental involvement and provides comprehensive services to enhance family development in the following areas: Health, Mental Health, Disabilities, Literacy, Nutrition, Education, Transportation, Family Support, Community Partnerships, and Parent Involvement.

Early Head Start, Head Start & Pre-K serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in Sparta, Hancock County, Georgia. Its goal is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of young children, and promote healthy family functioning.

Our objectives are to:

- Involve families in their child's growth and development
- Strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children
- Provide children with educational, health, and nutritional services
- Involve the community and other agencies in supporting the Head Start program
- Provide the best education possible for each child
- Meet the changing needs of children, families, and the community
- Help families work through transitions successfully

- Link children and families to needed community services
- Involve parents in decision-making
- Measure effectiveness for program improvement

Vision

The Hancock County Early Head Start & Head Start/Pre-K program vision is to educate families and children by providing a diverse learning experience.

**I 'm Going to School
---- it's the first time for me**

**I used to be little, but not anymore.
Tomorrow I'll get up and walk out the door.
I'm going to school—it's the first time for me.
It's great to be big, but I'm scared as can be.**

**My tummy's in knots. Do you want to know why?
I'm thinking that maybe just maybe, I'll cry.
When Dad leaves the school and I'm there all alone
I'm thinking that maybe I'll want to go home.**

**But wait --- Mommy said I'll play lots of new games,
And meet lots of friends—I can learn all their names.
The first day of school, oh there's so much to do!
There's painting and books and a big playground, too.**

**I used to be little, but not anymore.
Tomorrow I'll get up and walk out the door.
I'm going to school – it's my first day, you see.
It's great to be big! I'm so glad that I'm me!**

Author Unknown

General Procedures

Center-Based Program: Children enrolled in center based programs attend Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K classes in one of our centers/sites, depending on age of the child.

Classes meet five (5) days per week, Monday through Friday.

Full- Day School Year Program:

School Session: 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.



Classroom Entry

In order to enter the classroom children must have an up-to-date record of their immunizations signed by a physician (DO or MD), Physician Assistant (PA), Nurse Practitioner (NP), or Certified Medical Assistant (CMA). Provisional certificates of immunization and religious/medical exemptions for immunizations will be accepted according to Georgia's Immunization Law.

Each child admitted into the program requires a current (within the past 12 months) and comprehensive well-child physical examination. This examination must be signed and dated by a MD, DO, PA, or NP. This well-child examination must be updated every 12 months. Dental exams will also be required at minimum every 12 months for children over 1 year of age.

Equal Opportunity Policy

It is the policy of Hancock County Head Start that no person will be discriminated against in employment because of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap, and that; no person shall be excluded from participation in, or be denied the services of any program or activity the agency offers because of race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap.

Arrival Time

Children need to arrive on time to class in order to fully benefit from the program. If a child will be

late, parents are responsible for notifying site staff as soon as possible. If there are circumstances that make arriving on time difficult, please contact your child's Head Start site – together you may be able to find a solution.

Arrivals by Parents

Policy:

When parents bring children to the center, they must sign the child in at the front entrance and physically escort the child to the classroom. All children must be released only to the classroom staff or designated staff person.

If a parent leaves the child at the door without the knowledge of the staff, the parent will be notified by the Family Service Advocate the same day of the occurrences and advised of the danger of the situation and the correct procedure to bring the child to the center. The contact with the parent must be documented and filed.

When Children Arrive to School

Policy:

The bus monitor will count all children before leaving the bus. After children have departed the bus, the driver should check the entire bus to ensure the accountability of the children. Children will be escorted inside the building by the monitor. Once inside the building, children are greeted and escorted to the classroom or designated area by the center staff (designee or teacher) to prepare for breakfast.

Departure Time

If a parent is unable to pick up their child on time, it is their responsibility to notify site staff in advance as well as to arrange for someone on the child's "Authorized Persons List" to pick up the child. If there are circumstances that make picking up a child on time difficult, please contact your child's Head Start site – together you may be able to find a solution.

***Note:** If a child is not picked up within 30 minutes past class close time and no arrangements have been made with site staff to have the child picked up by another authorized person, site staff will contact the Department of Family and Children Services.*

Authorized Persons List

Parents must provide a list of persons (18 years or older) authorize to pick up their child. All authorized persons must sign the Child Sign-In/Sign-Out Sheet when arriving or departing with a child. Authorized persons who are unknown to staff are asked to show a picture identification before being allowed to pick up a child. No unauthorized person is permitted to pick up a child under any circumstances.

Release of Child

In order to ensure your child's safety, a child will only be released from the center or the bus to

the child's parent/guardian, or designated person indicated on the child consent to release form. If you know in advance that a designated person will be picking up your child, please notify the staff. Persons unknown to the staff will be required to provide photo identification. Parent/guardian or designated person is required to sign the child out of the center. All persons, relatives, or others, must abide by these policies.

FACILITY SECURITY

Generally doors remain locked during the school day and visitors, including parents, will only have access to the building by Head Start staff. The Early Head Start Center has a scan pad security system and during the school day parents and visitors have to utilize the buzzer to enter the building. The buzzer is located at the front entrance of the building. The security systems are utilized to enhance the safety and security of Head Start staff and children.

Child's Legal Name

A child's last name, as it appears on their birth certificate, will be used unless the parent/guardian provides legal documentation of a change of name.

Change in Information

Whenever there is a change in address, phone number, emergency contacts, health providers, health conditions, work/school schedule, family situation, or other related information, please notify the site staff. You may be asked to update the Contact Information Form at the site.

Accessing Your Child's Records

Hancock County's Head Start will only transfer your child's records to other agencies with specific written and signed consent. You may also request copies from your child's file in person, at the center or the main office. Please allow up to 48 hours for records to be copied.

Confidentiality

All family information and children's files are kept strictly confidential. Only authorized Head Start representatives have access to these files. However, Head Start is obligated to provide access to children's files to our funded program representatives. Parents and legal guardians have the right to review and or obtain copies of their child's files upon written request.

Registration /Orientation

Upon enrollment, and prior to the child's first day in the classroom, families are required to participate in a Head Start registration/orientation. The Parent Handbook is given to each family as a reference for program policies and procedures.

Employment Opportunities

Head Start parents are encouraged to apply for positions posted by Hancock County Head Start

Program for which they are qualified. See the Hancock County School Human Resource Department for current postings or go online at www.hancock.k12.ga.us

Mandatory Reporter Statement

All Head Start staff are Mandated Reporters and must immediately notify the Department of Family and Children Services with any concern of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental injury, child prostitution, denial of critical care, bestiality in the presence of a child, the presence of illegal drugs or person responsible for the care of a child, manufactures a dangerous substance or is in possession of a dangerous substance.

Weather Related Closings Procedure

EMERGENCY CLOSING

In the event of an emergency, the Director is responsible for making the decision to cancel or postpone classes. Examples of situations that might call for canceling or postponing classes would be inclement weather, natural disasters, or damage to center buildings.

Closure announcements will be made on TV station WMAZ Channel 13. When bad weather causes early dismissal or cancellation of classes, parents are responsible for picking up your child in an allotted period or arranging for someone to be home when the bus transports your child home.

CRISIS / EMERGENCY INFORMATION

In the event of a crisis such as tornado, fire, earthquake, or civil disturbance: No child will be dismissed from school unless a parent/guardian (or individual designated on the contact information form) picks up the child and has proper identification.

All parents/guardians or designated individuals who pick up the children must sign them out in the classroom or at a temporary release station. Signs will be posted indicating where the temporary release station is located.

We are prepared to care for your children in times of critical situations. We have a number of staff with first aid certificates and we will be in communication with various local emergency services. We ask for your help in the following areas:

Please do not call the school we must have the lines open for emergency calls. Following a crisis situation, do not immediately drive to the center-streets due to access to the center may be cluttered with debris. The center access route and street entrance areas must remain clear for emergency vehicles. Do turn your television to WMAZ Channel 13 for further information and directions.

Full-Day Classrooms

- If area schools are closed, Head Start classes are cancelled.
- If area schools are dismissed early, Head Start classes will be dismissed early.

If the Hancock County School District is closed, all Head Start sites will be closed. Head Start program closings will be announced on the robo call and television.

Attendance and Discharge Policy

Head Start is a federally funded program requiring 85% attendance, which is equivalent to one absence a month per child. Attendance is analyzed on a monthly basis to ensure each child is regularly attending.

Regular attendance at Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K supports your child's development and kindergarten readiness. All children are expected to attend Head Start five (5) days a week, Monday through Friday.

Hancock County Early Head Start/Head Start & Pre-K program will maintain its funded enrollment level. When the program determines that a vacancy exists, no more than 30 calendar days will elapse before the vacancy is filled.

When the monthly average daily attendance drops below 85%, Hancock County Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K will analyze the cause of absenteeism. Where chronic absenteeism (meaning unexcused absents of 10 days per month) exists and it not feasible to include the child in the program, the slot will be considered an enrollment vacancy.

Every effort will be made to retain an enrolled child over the ten (10) days per month termination time period. The Family Service Advocate will assist the families to keep their children in the program as much as possible. Terminations of enrolled children originate with and issued by the Family Service Advocates after receiving permission to withdraw the child by the Head Start Director.

1. The Head Start /Early Head Start Family Service Advocate will submit a memo requesting termination of an enrollee. This request will include the reason(s) for the request, and all efforts made to keep the child in program, and all services provided to the child and family to ensure continued enrollment. This request will be submitted to the Family Service Manager. Enrollee may be terminated from the program for any of the following reasons:

- a. Child's family moves away from the service area
- b. Parent/guardian request termination
- c. Documentation establishes pattern of chronic absenteeism with no legitimate causes
- d. Other legitimate reason(s) as determined by the Head Start Director

2. The Family Service Manager will review the request to determine that all efforts to assist the family for continued enrollment have been made.

3. If the Family Service Manager determines that all efforts to assist the family for continued enrollment have not been rectified by the family, the request will be denied, and the Family Service Advocate will be given instructions on how to continue the termination process.

4. The Family Service Manager will determine if the request is valid. He or she will instruct the Family Service Advocate to submit necessary paperwork to the Data Entry Manager to terminate the child's enrollment in Child Plus system using the effective date of the request. The Family Service Manager will email the requesting Family Service Advocate that this has been done, and forward the request to the Head Start Director for approval.

5. The Head Start Director will notify the Family Service Advocate within 24 hours of the approval for termination with a copy sent to the Family Service Manager.

6. The Family Service Advocate will inform child's teachers, Center Managers and the Data Entry Manager of the termination and the effective date.

If a child is withdrawn from the program, and the parent wishes to re-enroll the child, a new application must be completed. Once the application is complete, the child's name will return on the Head Start priority waiting list and the child will be considered for enrollment if and when a vacancy occurs.

If there is a planned absence, due to a scheduled vacation or family visit, it is the responsibility of the parent to contact the Center Manager to discuss the situation. At that time, the Center Manager and ERSEA Coordinator will evaluate the amount of time the child will be gone, the reason, and the expected return date.

If an absence is expected to be longer than two weeks, or the child does NOT attend on the expected return date, the child's slot may become a vacancy.

Attendances (1305.8)

Performance Objective: The Hancock County Head Start and Early Head Start program staff will keep track of attendance and absenteeism. They will communicate with families when children have four or more consecutive days of unexcused absence.

Operational Procedures:

1. When the monthly average daily attendance rate in the Hancock Head Start/Early Head Start programs falls below 85%, our programs analyzes the causes of absenteeism. The analysis includes a study of the pattern of absences as well as the number of absence that occur on consecutive days.

- a) Early Head and Head Start Attendance records are entered in the Child Plus Data base, and a report is printed daily. Child Plus Program number 2301.
- b) Early Head Start and Head Start daily and monthly attendance reports are kept in (3) Ring Binder at each program site and stored at the end of the year and are filed in locked file cabinets at the main site.
- c) The programs monthly average daily attendance for Head Start and Early Head Start is printed and shared monthly with the Director or Assistant Director to obtain signatures for monitoring and shared with the Nutrition Director for CAFA nutrition count and Director for monthly ADA to be shared with the Hancock County Head Start Policy Council and Hancock County Board of Education.

2. The Family Service Advocate will monitor daily attendance by observation of the classroom, reviewing the child call in notebook and communication with education staff. Attendance is entered into Child Plus Data base daily by the Administrative Assistant. If the absences are a result of illness or if well-documented absences for other reasons, no special action is required. A scheduled leave of absence should be no more than (ten) 10 consecutive school days, with prior

approval from Family Service Advocate.

- If absentees are a result from other factors, including temporary family problems that affect a child's regular attendance, the Family Service Advocate will initiate direct contact with the family to develop appropriate family support procedures. These procedures include home visits, phone calls or both.
- When parents are not home or do not respond, Family Service Advocate will utilize other methods to make contact, i.e. postal mail, e-mail, leaving notes at the residence or work, emergency contact when necessary.
- Continued efforts will be made until contact is made, a reason for the absence is documented, and a family support plan is developed.
- Contacts made with the family emphasize the benefits of regular attendance, while at the same time remaining sensitive to any special family circumstances influencing attendance patterns. All contacts with the child's family as well as special family support service activities provided by program staff are documented.
- If chronic absenteeism persists after family support services are in place, Family Service Advocate will submit a request to the Family Service Manager. The Family Service Manager will review the request to determine that all efforts to assist the family for continued enrollment have been made.

3. The Attendance Policy is discussed at Early Head Start /Head Start Registration and a copy is given to each parent. It is also written in the Early Head Start/Head Start & Pre-K Parent Handbook, which is given to parents during Open House, or at the time of enrollment for those families enrolling during the school year.

4. In circumstances where chronic absenteeism persists and it does not seem feasible to include the child in either the same or a different program option, the child's slot is considered an enrollment vacancy.

Tardiness Policy

Regulation Reference:

Head Start Performance Standards:

Policy:

Arriving to school on time is important. It allows the center staff and children to begin the day with little disruption. Tardiness affects meal counts, disrupts the classroom routine, and prevents children from receiving all the benefits the program offers. Parents are asked to contact the Family Service Advocate in the event the child will be late arriving to the center. If a child is late more than twice in a given week, the parent must meet with the Family Service Advocate to determine the cause of the late arrival.

The Family Service Advocate shall determine if additional services are required to assist the family in assuring the prompt arrival of the child. If it is determined that additional services are necessary, the Family Service Advocate shall refer the family to the appropriate service for follow-up. A tardy form will be completed by the parent/guardian each time a child is late and signed by the Family Service Advocate. All tardy forms will be kept in the absentee binder in the Family Service Advocate office. Late arrival is defined as after 8:30 a.m.

HOME VISITS/PARENTTEACHER CONFERENCES

Parents of children enrolled in the center based programs will receive a minimum of two home visits by teaching staff during the year for the purpose of discussing your child's development and progress. Parents will be contacted to schedule a mutually agreeable time for the home visit.

At least two parent/teacher conferences will be held per year to assist staff and parents to understand the child's educational and developmental progress.

NEWSLETTERS

Parents will receive two newsletters each month during the school year, a classroom newsletter and an agency newsletter. Newsletters will describe classroom activities, field trips, parenting tips, Head Start news, home activity suggestions, and agency/center announcements and activities. Please read this newsletter as part of your parent responsibilities. The newsletter will also list job openings within the program (i.e., bus drivers, monitors and substitutes).

Education

The Child Development Program is designed to meet each child's individual needs and the educational priorities of the community. Regardless of cultural background or special needs, every child is offered a variety of learning experiences designed to foster physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth and to develop an appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity. Children participate in indoor and outdoor play, field trips in the community, and in music, art, and language activities. Activities contribute to the development of students into civilized young men and women who possess more knowledge about art, have stronger critical-thinking skills, exhibit increased historical empathy, display higher levels of tolerance, and have a greater taste for consuming art and culture.

Classroom size consists of a maximum of 15 - 20 children per classroom.

The general daily schedule at Head Start/Pre-K and Early Head is as follows:

Full day schedule:

8:00 a.m.	Arrival/Greeting
8:15 a.m.	Breakfast/Cleanup/Tooth Brushing
9:30 a.m.	Child Activity Time
11:00/11:30 a.m.	Lunch/Cleanup/Prepare for Nap Time
12:30 p.m.	Nap Time
2:45/3:00 p.m.	Snacks
	Prepare for Departure
	Departure

Teaching staff consists of highly qualified, degree teachers to support participating children and families education needs. One supervising teacher and one teacher are assigned to each classroom.

Curriculum

Hancock County Head Start classrooms utilize the *Creative Curriculum* as a guide for planning our program for children. This curriculum is designed to encourage active learning, positive adult-child interactions, a child-friendly environment and a consistent routine. Teachers work as a team to provide an age appropriate environment for young children and to assess the growth and development of children over time. Building school readiness for children is emphasized.

The environment of the classroom is an organized play space. The areas have diverse materials that children can use to help them comprehend and explore the world. Areas include: reading & writing, block play, counting & math, sand & water play, drawing & painting, dramatic play, and music & movement.

The instructional staff in the classroom is aware of how young children learn. They are sensitive to the needs of the children and support these needs by providing suitable materials, activity space, real life experiences, and encouragement.

The *Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers* serves as the guidepost for planning our center-based program. *Creative Curriculum* encourages strong adult-child attachment and

interaction, active learning, a nurturing and inviting environment, and routines that support the needs and interest of the children. The staff and families will work as a team to establish appropriate environments and assessments of each child's development.

Child Assessment and Parent-Teacher Conferences

As a parent, you may notice your child's teacher taking notes on your child's development in the Head Start classroom. The classroom teacher will use these notes to complete your child's assessment report. This report will explain your child's teacher valuable information about your child's progress. You will be given the opportunity to review the report at each parent-teacher conference and during the home visit.

In addition to providing parents and teachers with valuable information about your child, some data from your child's assessment report will be part of our yearly Measurable Outcomes report. These reports help our program show the benefits of Head Start in our community.

Developmental and Health Screenings

Head Start is mandated to provide health and educational screenings to all children enrolled within our programs. Head Start is obligated to receive parental permission and inform parents prior to screenings. Screenings will take place within 45 days of the first day of attendance. Children receive screenings relating to speech & language, developmental skills, social, emotional development, hearing/vision, and height/weight. Results of your child's screenings are kept confidential and provided to you. The Health/ Nutrition Manager will give you the results of each screening and make referrals as necessary.

Classroom Daily Activities

Providing children a regular schedule makes an easy transition plan for fun and successful time. A schedule of events during the day is posted in each classroom for both children and adults to know what happens next. A day in Head Start will include the following:

- **Arrival time** is very busy for young children. They greet friends, settle in, and say goodbye to their parents.
- **Mealtimes** are served family style so children can eat unhurried and share conversation with their friends.
- **Large group time** is a time for all children to play together. They may dance, sing, play group games, or have class meetings.
- **Small group time** allows children to work with a small group of friends. They read, write, draw, paint, cut, and work with all kinds of materials.
- **Outside time** gives children a chance to run, jump, climb, and play with balls, or ride tricycles and wagons while enjoying the outdoors.
- **Rest time** is planned in the full day programs so children have time to sleep or rest quietly on their cots.
- **Departure Time** is another busy time. Children and parents are anxious to see each other and talk about their day.

FIELD TRIPS

To enrich our curriculum, spark the child's interest, and provide an opportunity for children to practice and develop social skills in a variety of settings, field trips are included in our teaching instructional program. Written permission will be obtained from parent/guardian for each trip. You will be notified of each scheduled trip. Parents are encouraged to attend with their child. To ensure safety, field trips will not exceed 70 miles one way, a minimum of four adults will be required to keep staff/child ratio low, and at least one adult will be certified in First Aid/CPR.

Support Services

If you suspect your child may have a developmental, physical, or behavioral concern, please share your concerns with the Disabilities/Mental Health Manager who is available to assist families...

- Understand their parental rights
- Learn about available support services
- Appropriate referrals
- By attending education evaluations
- By attending Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings
- Know their child is reaching individual goals in the classroom
- Assist in transition plans for children from one program to another, including from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to Kindergarten

Support Services/ Disabilities

The Disabilities Service Area is designed to identify, evaluate needs and coordinate services to children with special needs and their families. Children with disabilities may be dually enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K and special education programs. The child development staff works closely with local school districts and agencies to provide services to the children.

Assisting the family through referrals, locating, and providing services with outside agencies for children with special needs are important functions of this service area. The child development staff supports the parents to ensure that they are educated about their child's disability and are aware of the child's rights to the optimal available education. The child development staff provides support to the classroom teacher to ensure the teacher has the knowledge and skills to support the needs of the child.

Local Education Agency (LEA) Referral Process

Head Start and Early Head Start Sites

1. Children are screened for development and speech.
2. If a child does not pass a screen, they are re-screened.
3. If a child does not pass the re-screen, an Instructional Decision Making Process will be written by the Disabilities/ Mental Health Manager and teacher. Learning skills will be instructed on individually for 4 to 6 weeks. If the child is not progressing, the Disabilities/ Mental Health Manager will meet with parents about the referral progress to the LEA.
4. Parent will sign the consent to refer the child to LEA; then the Disabilities/Mental Health Manger sends a referral to the LEA.
5. LEA reviews the referral and determines if further evaluation is needed.
6. LEA contacts the parent to schedule an evaluation or make other suggestions.
7. If a child is evaluated and evaluation results determine special education services are needed, a meeting is scheduled to make an individual education plan for the child or family.
8. Placement decision is made during individual education plan meeting for child's services.
9. Child begins individual education plan services and placement.

Note: If you would like to know more about your child's disabilities services, have your child's teacher or Center Supervisor contact the Head Start Disabilities/Mental Health Manager.

Behavior Guidance

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline of children is viewed as an educational process. The staff will assist children in developing self-control and self-direction needed to thrive in group situations. Children are taught to assume responsibility for their actions and appropriate behavior is encouraged and rewarded. Our goal is to provide an accepting classroom environment where all children are viewed equally. Each classroom teacher will develop rules with their children at the beginning of each school year. These rules will be posted in the classroom and will be reviewed with the children frequently throughout the school year.

Firm positive statements and redirection of inappropriate behaviors shall be the accepted techniques used in the classroom. No physical discipline, verbal humiliation, demeaning or other inappropriate language shall be tolerated at any time. Parents and teachers will discuss the child's behavior at parent/teacher conferences, home visits, and whenever the teacher or parent feels a discussion is necessary. A staff member will request a parent conference to inform and work with the parent in developing a plan of action for children who exhibit challenging and disruptive classroom behaviors. Generally, it is not Hancock County Head Start policy to withdraw children due to disciplinary issues. However, in some cases Head Start may not be able to meet the needs of all children.

Mental Health Services

The primary role of the Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K mental health services is to provide activities that encourage the social and emotional development of children enrolled in the program. The Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K agency has a mental health consultant to assist with family support issues, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, or stress-related issues. The staff receives training on how to work with children and families dealing with a child's behavior and family functioning.

Promotion of mental wellness and encouraging positive social relations in children is our goal. Through social/emotional screenings, curriculum activities and general classroom observations, which are performed periodically throughout the year, we ensure that our classroom environments are supportive, responsive, and positive in meeting children's needs. Parents will complete a social/emotional screening to provide observations on their child to determine the need for any additional services. At times a teacher may feel a child is experiencing difficulties or displaying behaviors in the classrooms and would benefit from mental health services. Parents will be contacted to discuss the situation. Many preschool age children experience periods of noncompliance and stress. Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K teaches children and families how to handle stress in a more positive way.

Head Start collaborates with parents by:

1. Soliciting parental information, observations, and concerns about their child's mental health.
2. Sharing staff observations of their child and discussing child's behavior and development, including separation and attachment issues
3. Discussing appropriate responses to their child's behavior
4. Discussing how to strengthen and nurture a supportive environment in the home and in the program.
5. Help parents to better understand mental health issues.
6. Support parents' participation in any needed mental health interventions.

The Head Start program contracts services with licensed mental health consultants. The contracted mental health consultants assist in:

1. Coordination of mental health services for children with the Head Start Disabilities/Mental Health Manager
2. Classroom observations are made by the contracted mental health consultant who can help identify children who may need referral for services and give suggestions to teachers on meeting the needs of children's behavior and emotions
3. Individual child observations arranged with written parental consent by the Disabilities/Mental Health Manager
4. Helping families locate mental health resources for concerns about a child
5. Parent training on mental health or behavior support for young children

Note: If you would like to know more about mental health services for your child, ask your

child's teacher or Center Supervisor to contact the Head Start Disabilities/Mental Health Manager.

Health Services

Early Childhood Development and Health Services

Your child's health impacts his or her total development and ability to benefit from the Head Start experience. Our program's goal is that each child is in the best possible health, that preventative health measures are taken, and that follow up treatment and services are obtained for any health condition detected.

How do we ensure all children have their health checked for a safe & healthy classroom?

Head Start requires that each child have a complete physical exam, an up-to-date immunization record, a blood lead test with results, a hemoglobin screening with results, vision and hearing screening, and a yearly dental exam.

The following are health exams and records that parents are responsible for obtaining:

- Complete Physical Exam
- Blood Lead Test with results
- Hemoglobin or blood test with results
- State required record of immunizations
- Vision and Hearing Screening
- Yearly Dental examination

Up to Date Immunization Record

By age three, your child should have:

- 4 DPT
- 3 OPV
- 1 MMR
- 3 HepB
- HIB (depending on age child began series)
- 1 – Varicella or proof of chickenpox

If additional treatment or services are needed as a result of the above screenings, you should work with your child's health care provider(s) and Head Start to ensure that all necessary services are received. Also, be aware that our program may contact your child's health care provider(s) for information to ensure their follow-up care is complete. All information is kept confidential according to the agency's confidentiality policy.

Health and Safety Needs

In order to collect essential information and identify any needs or concerns, you will be asked to complete a health history on your child and update it yearly. If your child is taking any medications, has any specific allergies, or has any health/safety needs, please inform the Health/Nutrition Manager and Family Service Advocate before your child is enrolled in the program. This includes if your child has any diagnosed conditions, such as asthma. Some health

conditions may require a follow-up plan, physician documentation, staff training, or other accommodations that meet the needs of the child and ensure your child's health and safety in the program.

Medical Referral

Medical referrals are given if a possible serious/contagious illness/condition exists or if screening indicates further evaluation. If your child receives a medical referral, please present the form to his or her health care provider for follow-up care. Your child may return to the classroom pending the doctor's recommendations.

ACCIDENT/INJURY

A staff member trained in first aid will handle all injuries. Minor injuries (bumps, scrapes, bruises) will be reported to parents by our injury incident report, which will be sent home with your child. Should your child receive an injury that requires medical care, Head Start Early Head Start & Pre-K staff will provide you with an accident/medical claim form. Notify your center director that you will be taking your child to see a doctor and they will guide you through the process.

Should your child be involved in a medical or dental emergency, our staff is trained to follow the steps in our emergency plan of action. A decision will be made if the accident/illness requires an ambulance to transport your child to emergency medical care, or if parents/staff are able to transport your child. You will be contacted immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will call the next person designated on the permission and release form that you have completed.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

At times, we have children enrolled in our program that require special attention due to a medical or physical condition. If your child has any limitations, medications, or special conditions at time of enrollment or throughout the year, you must provide written documentation from a physician.

The health staff will provide individual attention to those families with special health concerns, and assure that children with special health needs are monitored closely on a daily basis within the program. Your child's general wellness will be noted on a daily basis. Whenever the limitation or treatment is discontinued, parents should again provide written documentation from the child's physician stating the limitations have been concluded.

Illness

All children seem to have occasional illness in spite of your good care. Please do not send your child to school if he or she is ill. If we determine that we are unable to care for a child in attendance due to illness, parents will be notified and requested to pick up their child immediately. In some instances, we may request a statement from a physician stating that your child may return and participate comfortably in program activities. If your child displays any of the below symptoms, you will be contacted:

- Appearance/Behavior: Unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite. More difficult to wake, confused, and/or irritable than typical.
- Complaints of not feeling well and is unable to comfortably participate in classroom activities.
- Fever: Temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit or higher with other signs or symptoms of illness.
- Diarrhea: Increased number of watery stools that cannot be contained by diaper or the child's ability to use the toilet.
- Vomiting: Must be symptom free for 24 hours.
- Rash: Body rashes, not obviously associated with diapering, heat, or allergic reactions to medicine.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye): When eye is red or pink with white or yellow eye discharge. Other symptoms are matted eyelids, eye pain, and redness of the eyelid or skin around the eye.
- Head Lice or Nits: Child will be sent home at the end of the day and will not be able to return until treatment has started and nits have been removed. (different for ages 0-2 years)
- Open sores or sores that have drainage: mouth, nose, or body.
- Breathing difficulties.
- Shows any signs or symptoms of a communicable disease, including but not limited to: Impetigo, strep throat, ringworm, chicken pox, whooping cough, scabies, MRSA, etc.
- Shows any signs of a possible severe illness.

Note: These guidelines are to be used as a reference and shall not be a substitute for the advice of the child's doctor.

Returning after Illness

If your child has been temporarily excluded from the classroom due to illness or symptoms there are certain guidelines that must be met in order to return. For common symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, and vomiting, the general rule is that the child may return after 24 hours and is symptom free, or with a note allowing re-admission from the child's physician. For some symptoms or illnesses, more guidelines must be met in order to return, sometimes including written permission from a physician stating your child may return to school.

Sick Child Procedures:

1. The teacher or a staff person contacts the parent. If unable to reach the parent, the emergency number is contacted.
2. No child is left alone or unsupervised. The child is made as comfortable as possible.
3. If unable to contact anyone and the child's condition becomes critical, 911 is called. The parent is notified to meet the staff person and child at the hospital. The center staff will complete a Child Incident Report.

Communicable Disease Notices

Parents and guardians are requested to report to the Head Start center all communicable (contagious) diseases your child's physician has diagnosed. Staff distributes a communicable disease notice to parents within 24 hours of all documented and diagnosed communicable diseases.

Daily Health Check

Upon arrival at the center each day, your child will be observed by the center staff for signs of illness/injury that could affect their ability to participate in the classroom's activities. Staff will also ask about your child's sleep, eating, toileting, medications, and any other health problems or concerns you may have since their previous day of classroom attendance.

Growth Assessments

Each Head Start child's height and weight will be obtained at the beginning and mid through the school year. This information will be placed on a growth chart and your child's Body Mass Index (BMI) will be calculated. This information will be shared with each child's parent or guardian. Please be aware that we may ask that you take this information and follow up with a health care professional.

Medications

If possible, medication schedules should be arranged to prevent administration during school hours. If medication is to be given during school hours, you will need to fill out a Medication Authorization Form. **No medications will be given until all forms are received.**

Prescribed medication will only be administered if it has the following:

1. Child's first and last name
2. Name of medicine
3. Directions for use
4. Name of prescribing health care provider
5. Pharmacy name and address
6. Date of prescription
7. Prescription number
8. Copy of the medication information sheet provided by the pharmacy

Over-the-Counter Medications

Over-the-counter medication will not be administered to children at Head Start Early Head Start & Pre-K.

Notable Medications & Health Care Plans

Be aware that we require asthma medications, severe allergy medications, and ADHD medications, to have a Medication Authorization Form signed by the prescribing physician. If asthma is indicated, we will need medication for the classroom, a physician signed Medication Authorization, and Asthma Action Plan.

Clothing and Hygiene

A child's clothing and grooming should reflect cleanliness, modesty, safety, and good taste. It is very important for a child to feel comfortable, to be able to move freely while being protected from various weather conditions during classroom activities. Children should be dressed in loose clothing, comfortable footwear that fits the child's feet, and clothing that is appropriate for the weather conditions. Children may go outside in weather as cold as 35 degrees, depending on wind, and as warm as 85-90 degrees, depending on humidity. Dressing for the weather will protect your child from the cold and keep your child from possibly overheating. In the winter, gloves, hats and winter coats, are recommended. Shoes should allow your child to move freely and safely.

Health and Safety

To ensure the safety and well-being of each child present in our program, the following guidelines are followed:

- Children are always supervised – children are never left alone.
- Anyone removing a child from our program must be authorized on the Contact Information Form. Head Start staff will check the list and ask to see a photo ID.
- Staff has immediate access at all times to a working telephone.
- Both fire and tornado drills are held monthly.
- Classroom evacuation plans for fire, tornado, and other emergencies are posted by the classroom telephone; a medical and dental emergency plan is posted in each classroom.
- Equipment maintenance is ongoing. Items needing repair are removed immediately.
- There is always one CPR and First Aid trained staff on site.
- All medications are kept in locked containers when on site.
- All unsafe chemicals are stored in locked cabinets.
- Staff distributes a communicable disease notice to families within 24 hours of all documented exposures.

Safe Sleep Policy

To ensure their safety, all infants' birth to 12 months of age, at minimum, will be placed on their backs in a safety approved crib with a firm mattress and a tightly fitted sheet. All pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft products shall be removed from the crib. Blankets will not be used. The infant's head shall remain uncovered during sleep. A doctor's note is required in order for modifications to be made to the back sleep position.

TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION AND PROGRAM RULES

Generally, transportation is provided for children enrolled in the Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K programs. Transportation services are designed to provide safe and efficient transportation of your child to and from the Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K centers. Parents and children are expected to follow bus rules. Bus monitors will assist with the supervision and safety of all Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K children. Transportation is also provided for parents, upon request, when they need assistance to attend Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K functions, medical and dental exams, or various types of social services appointments. Contact your Center Manager, Family Service Advocate or Data Entry/ Transportation/Facilities Manager for further information concerning parent transportation.

All drivers comply with Georgia Secretary of State bus driver regulations and Head Start Performance Standards. Bus monitors are assigned to each bus route. Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K take the responsibility of transportation very seriously and requests full cooperation in following our bus procedures and policies. Parents must abide by the following bus procedures that are also listed on the Transportation Agreement signed during the time of application. Failure to do so may result in the loss of pickup and drop-off services.

1. Children should be ready and waiting for the bus, as Head Start's policy is a one (1) minute wait at each house.

2. **Parents/guardian/designated person are responsible for walking their children to and from the bus.** Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K will assume responsibility for children after they have entered the bus.

3. Parent/guardian/designated person is responsible for being at an assigned drop-off location at a specified time. If the approved adult is not at the drop-off location, your child will not be released from the bus. The driver will contact the bus garage and the bus garage will contact Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K who will attempt to contact the approved adult. Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K staff is not expected to work after normal working hours and therefore, cannot be responsible to care for your child when the approved adult is not at the specified drop-off location. When an approved adult is not at home or at the drop-off location, the program reserves the right to take the child to the local police department; however, procedures vary with each individual case.

4. Parents should notify the center when their child will not attend class. Parents may meet the bus driver and explain their child's absence.

5. If there is a change in the child's pickup or drop-off point, parent/guardian **must** contact the center director in writing to determine if the change can be made. If the change is approved, the parent is required to sign an amended permission and release form. **Only the Center Director can authorize a change.** In general, pickup and drop-off point changes **cannot** be made over the telephone, unless it is an emergency.

6. If a child is being transported to a location other than home, i.e. day care facility, another school program, parents must designate where the child is to be dropped off and who is authorized to receive the child on the permission and release form.

7. For safety reasons, the following items are not allowed: Rolling backpacks, food, drink, toys or other personal items. Personal items are allowed if requested by the Teacher for a special day. All personal items must fit in the child's backpack.

Health and Nutrition

Nutrition Goal

Hancock County Head Start nutrition program promotes a healthy nutritional lifestyle. Nutrition education is provided on a variety of topics for both children and families. Each child will have a Health Record completed to collect specific information and identify any needs or concerns.

Menu and Meal Time Information

Menus will be posted in each classroom at each site. Meal times are established to promote the children's learning experiences. Family style eating with balanced, nutritious meals gives children an opportunity to learn about healthy eating habits with support from their peers. Children are served and participate in conversation with other children and adults sitting at the table. This is an opportunity to develop language skills and to practice skills like asking politely for things and generally enjoying a positive social experience.

Head Start children are served the following meals and snacks based on the program in which they are enrolled:

- Full Day/More than 6 hours – Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack

Food Experience and Healthy Habits

Children are provided with opportunities to experience new and different foods. Food experiences allow literacy, math, science, and social skills to be developed. Healthy habits are established in the classroom with daily tooth brushing and an emphasis on hand washing and other habits that help reduce the spread of illness.

Special Dietary Needs

Head Start works to meet the special dietary needs of all children. If an allergy or intolerance is identified during registration, an allergy form obtained from Head Start staff must be completed and signed by a medical doctor before a child is admitted into the classroom. Please allow the nutrition staff applicable time for the special diet to be administered to the child.

Religious Beliefs

Dietary changes due to religious beliefs will be followed when a parent/guardian submits a written request to Head Start staff.

Menu Planning

Meals are planned according to the USDA regulations. USDA is a federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children and adults receiving day care and to at-risk youth in after school programs. The Nutrition Consultant welcomes comments from parents.

Celebrations

Head Start Performance Standards

1304.23(b)(1)(ii)(v)(vi)(vii), 1304.23(a)(2), 1304.23(b)(2), 1304.23(c)(1)(2)(6)(7), 1304.23(e)(1)
Department of agriculture- Food and Nutrition Services 7 CFR Part 226 Federal Register.

Policy

Head Start will establish, maintain and implement a procedure to ensure standards are met and individual needs are met. This is to ensure that food is not used as punishment or reward. Food safety ensures nutritional needs and special diets are adhered to cultural, religious and racial differences are respected.

Procedure

Health/ Nutrition Manager and Lunchroom Manager

1. A special birthday menu will be developed once a month and placed on the monthly menu. This day will be used to celebrate all birthdays within the center during the month.
2. A special menu will be developed for holidays and special occasions and placed on the monthly menu.
3. All parties, holidays and special occasion days will meet Child and Adult Care Food Program Standards and Head Start Performance.

Nutrition Staff

1. Follow menus and recipes.
2. Follow all State and Federal guidelines and standards.

Center Coordinator, Nutrition and Classroom Staff

1. Assure all religious, racial, cultural and medical concerns are addressed on an individual basis.
2. Accept no food from outside sources as in-kind due to food safety issues.

Parents

1. Do not bring in food from the outside for parties, holidays, etc.
2. May donate "goody bags" with non-food items, such as crayons, stickers, pads, magnets, friendship bracelets, necklaces, or small books.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS INFORMATION AND RULES

The primary role of the Family and Community Partnership staff is to support families in their growth and development. The Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K program serves as a link between families and the community. Every family enrolled in Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K is assigned a Family/Community Service Advocate (FCSA or Community Worker) who will:

- Assist your family in obtaining health requirements for Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K attendance.
- Support your family in setting and reaching goals and overcoming challenges.
- Inform parents of community resources and how to access them.
- Encourage you to volunteer in the program.
- Transport you to scheduled appointments when needed.
- Help you in crisis or emergency situations – please call in times of crisis.
- Help you obtain special Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K services, such as helping families learn about nutrition, good health, appropriate childhood development & more.
- Keep you informed of parent involvement, volunteer and employment opportunities at Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K
- Provide information about early childhood development.

Your Family Service Advocate will meet with your family at least one time per enrollment year during a scheduled home visit. This home visit will take place soon after your child enters the program. The purpose of the visit is to build a relationship to help your family build upon its strengths and identify areas for support and growth. All families are encouraged to develop at least one Family Partnership Agreement goal with staff to work toward achieving personal and/or family goals. The home visit will be scheduled at times that are convenient for parents and staff.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

- Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K staff compiles and distributes a Community Resource Guide to all enrolled families.
- The guide is a comprehensive listing of community resources, agencies, programs and services available to individuals, families and children in Hancock County.
- You will receive a Community Resource Guide at parent orientation.
- Your Family Service Advocate will help you locate resources and provide confidential referrals to agencies providing services, such as TANF, food stamps, clothing, employment, assistance, housing, mental health services, domestic violence, substance abuse, counseling, etc.

REFERRALS

Referrals requesting services for children and their families may be obtained from Head Start, Early Head Start & Pre-K staff and/or our agency to other community agencies. Head Start, Early

Head Start & Pre-K must receive a Release of Information Authorization from parents/guardians before sharing any information with any outside community agency. All information is considered confidential. Family/Community Service Advocates will follow up with families about their satisfaction with referrals.

Parent Rights and Responsibilities

As a Head Start Parent, I have the RIGHT...

- To be welcomed in the classroom
- To be informed regularly about my child's progress in Head Start
- To receive guidance for my child's total development from Head Start teachers and staff
- To be treated with respect and dignity
- To learn about the operation of the program
- To participate in major policy decisions by attending Parent Committee meetings and electing a representative to Policy Council
- To choose whether or not to participate without fear of endangering my child's rights to participating in the program
- To help develop adult programs which will improve daily living for me and my family
- To participate in planning in the program designed to increase my skills in areas of possible employment
- To learn about the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions
- To be informed about community resources concerned with health, education, and the improvement of daily life

As a Head Start Parent, I have the RESPONSIBILITY...

- To learn as much as possible about the program and to participate in major policy decisions
- To accept Head Start as an opportunity to improve my life and my child's life
- To participate in the classroom as an observer or a volunteer and to contribute my services in whatever way I can toward enrichment of the program
- To provide parent leadership by taking part in elections, to explain the program to other parents and encourage their full participation
- To welcome teachers and staff into my home to discuss ways in which parents can help their child's development at home in relation to school experience
- To work with the teacher, staff, and other parents in a cooperative way
- To guide my children with firmness, which is both loving and protective
- To offer constructive criticism of the program, to defend it against unfair criticism, and to share in evaluating it
- To become involved in community programs which help to improve health, education, and recreation for all participating families

- To become an advocate for future Head Start children by recruiting others to the Head Start program
- To participate in programs designed to increase my knowledge about child development and develop skills which could lead to employment opportunities

Procedures for Resolution of Parent Concerns

1304.50(d) (2) (v) The Governing Body and Policy Council have the operating responsibility (the individual or group that is directly responsible for performing the functions consistent with the general guidance and oversight from the group holding general responsibility) to establish and maintain procedures for hearing and collaborating with grantee agency to resolve community complaints about the program.

The policy council establishes and maintains procedures for collaborating with the grantee agency to resolve community complaints about the program. The procedure for parents or a community member to make a formal concern/complaint regarding the Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K program the following procedures must be followed:

1. All formal parent/community concerns/complaints must be submitted in writing to the Center Manager/ Education Manager on the parent/community complaint form. The center director will forward a copy of the concern/complaint to the Director for information purposes only. The Center Director will investigate and make every effort to resolve the concern/complaint at this level within two weeks of receiving the complaint.
2. If the Center Manager/ Education Manager cannot satisfactorily resolve the concern/complaint, the Center Manager/ Education Manager will refer the concern/complaint to the Director to investigate and determine if any actions should be taken. The complaint when deemed appropriate will be forwarded to the executive director.
3. If the Head Start director cannot resolve the concern/complaint, the executive director will be informed. The executive director will determine necessary action to be taken. The executive director will inform the policy council of the complaint and action taken or seek input from policy council for resolutions concerning incidents of a serious nature such as incidents involving injuries, potential litigation, and safety issues.

Note: Complaint forms are available at each site with the Center Manager or Director. Anyone needing help completing the form may contact the respective Family Service Advocate and/or Center Manager.

Parents as Partners

Head Start's vision for parent involvement is to create and maintain a family partnership with all Head Start families with goals to:

- Support parents as primary educators, nurturers, and advocates for their child.
- Provide every family with opportunities for a significant experience in Head Start.
- Ensure that parents are involved in making policy and program decisions for the Head Start program.

Hancock County Head Start program reflects this vision through efforts with the following principles:

- *Culture* - All aspects of the program support the cultures of the families and the community in which the program operates.
- *Program Governance* - Parents have opportunities for participation and shared decision making in every area of the program.
- *Individualized Family Partnerships* - The staff and program meet the expressed interests and needs of each parent through the on-going process of personal and family goal setting and partnership of activities to meet these goals.
- *Disabilities* - All aspects of the program respond to and support children with disabilities and their families.
- *Community Resources* - Families build the confidence, skill, and knowledge they need to access community resources on their own behalf.
- *Male Involvement* - Our program will make efforts to extend an invitation to include fathers, supportive male family members, and male caregivers in parent involvement activities, especially those activities involving the development of their children.
- *Leadership* - Parents, Staff, and Policy Council members work together and provide leadership to communicate with their community about the interests and needs of Head Start; and assist in strengthening existing services or introducing new services that are needed.

Parent Involvement

Head Start provides many opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's education and recognizes parents as partners in the decision-making process. Parent involvement in education enhances the ability of parents and staff to work together to support each child's growth and learning in the home and program environments. Every parent has the opportunity to assist in the governance of activities which address interests and needs that support the education and healthy development of their child.

These programs work with the family holistically and provide opportunities for parents to learn and grow. Workshops and training sessions for parents are held on a regular basis throughout the year. Staff will work with families on achieving more formal goals, such as receiving a high school diploma/GED, learning English as a second language (ESL), obtaining employment, etc.

Education

Parent/Child Interactions - This is an excellent opportunity for parents to interact with their child and provide learning experiences away from the regular classroom activity. These experiences are facilitated by Head Start staff and give parents a unique opportunity to participate in organized activities.

Library Visits - A trip to the library to enjoy story time with your child and to check out books for home is another way to have quality one-on-one time with your child.

Story Writing - Creating your own book is a good activity, especially after a special event or trip. Your child can share the book with classmates.

Cooking Experiences - Setting up a time to do a special cooking activity with your child is an excellent way to teach good nutrition along with measurements/quantities and types of foods used to prepare meals.

Other Activities may include games, puzzles, or activity kits that the teacher may provide for you to take home. Check with your child's teacher for other ideas.

Governance

Parent Committee Meetings

These meetings are scheduled throughout the year and may include planning for upcoming parent education activities, celebrations, and parent/child interactions.

Policy Council

The Policy Council works in partnership with staff and board members of Hancock County Board of Education to develop, review, and approve or disapprove Head Start policies and procedures. The Policy Council is comprised of at least 51% current Head Start parents and 49% past parents and community representatives. One delegate is elected from each center to

serve on the Policy Council. The delegated parents preside over parent center meetings and represent their Head Start site at Policy Council Meetings. Policy Council members work together for the good of all Head Start parents and children. There are opportunities to make suggestions and express ideas for program improvements, approve and disapprove decisions for Head Start policies, budgets, hiring of staff, as well as plan activities for families and community involvement.

Other Opportunities

- Georgia Head Start Association
- Self-Assessment
- Health Services Advisory Committee

DRUG FREE

Hancock County Head Start centers operate a healthy environment that is free from alcohol, illicit drugs, and smoke.

Volunteering

Volunteer participation is a vital part of our day-to-day success of the program. There are many ways you can share your time and talents with us and the benefits are priceless. Children benefit from the presence of parents and other volunteers who participate in the classroom and with other activities.

Activities in which volunteers can assist

- Greet children
- Read stories
- Wash tables and chairs
- Conversation with children during meals
- Assist with outside play
- Assist with transition activities
- Assist children during work time
- Aid with small group activities
- Assist an individual child with a specific skill
- Prepare art materials
- Help prepare and serve snacks

Classroom Volunteer Guide

- Remember to call the Head Start center if you are unable to attend your scheduled volunteer day.
- Prepare your child before you arrive so he/she will know that you will be sharing time with other children.
- Dress comfortably.
- Decide with the teacher what activities you will be involved.
- Participate in activities and ask questions if needed.
- Smoking is prohibited - all facilities are smoke-free.
- Cell phones should be turned off while in the classroom - you may give the center number for emergencies.
- Food, beverages, and snack foods are not permitted in the classroom
- Allow children to work out their own differences in socially acceptable ways before you assist in resolving conflicts and make the teacher aware if any issues arise.
- All volunteers must follow program policies regarding confidentiality
- Taking pictures of other children is not permitted.
- Complete and sign a Volunteer In-Kind Form.
- Sign up for your next classroom visit.

Standards of Conduct for Volunteers

The Head Start Performance Standards implemented January 1, 1998, require that volunteers abide by the program's Standards of Conduct listed below.

- All volunteers will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or ability.
- All volunteers will keep information concerning children, families, and other staff members confidential.
- All volunteers will ensure that no child will be left alone or unsupervised while under their care.
- All volunteers use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. All disciplining will be implemented by the teaching staff.

VOLUNTEER- INKIND

In order to operate, the Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K is required annually to generate 20% of its funding from volunteer hours and donations, which is called in-kind. We rely on parents to help us meet this federal grant requirement. The activities listed on **page 42** are activities you can do to assist with the program. Parents are to complete an in-kind sheet each visit to document services provided.



Volunteer Requirement Process:

Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K staff support and supervise all parent volunteers, working closely with parents to make sure that standards are followed and parents succeed with volunteer experiences. Physical with TB test, background check and/or fingerprinting may be required for volunteers, depending on hours and responsibilities; to be determined on a case by case basis. You will be notified if additional items are needed. The program has outlined the following as general requirements and responsibilities for parent volunteers.

- Show emotional maturity when volunteering.
- Demonstrate respect for children and adults.
- Seek guidance from classroom teacher/center director.
- Keep all information about children and families confidential.
-

Parents may, when qualified, be considered for employment in positions in the Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs. Former and current parents are encouraged to apply for vacant positions, and their Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K background will be given consideration when positions are filled. Positions are listed in the monthly newsletter, on the website (www.hancock.k12.ga.us) and posted at each center location.

PARENT/VOLUNTEER AWARDS, RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION

A Parent Volunteer of the Month will be selected for each center location from September through April based on the criteria established. The criteria for the parent volunteer of the month and parent volunteer of the year will be reviewed annually by parents at the September parent meetings. Generally the criteria will be printed in the October parent newsletter. At the end of the year, parent volunteers will be recognized at the center/site for their contributions. Parents/guardians who have volunteered 50 hours will receive a parent volunteer recognition certificate. Others who volunteer 25 hours will receive a general volunteer recognition certificate. The center/site volunteers who meet the established center/site volunteers of the year criteria during the program year will be awarded the center/site volunteer of the year award. The Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K volunteer of the year award with the highest volunteer hours is entitled the Parent of the Year Award at St. Simons Island during the Georgia Head Start Association Spring Training Conference.

MALE INVOLVEMENT

All men involved in the lives of Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K children have the opportunity to significantly influence the children's social development, health and emotional wellbeing. Children guided by responsible male care giving have the opportunity to experience the unique male perspective.

Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K celebrate and enhance the male parenting role by:

- Encouraging responsible fathering/male role modeling;
- Helping children and men relate and connect;
- Educating men about parenting; and
- Creating opportunities for individual and group male involvement and leadership.

Unique opportunities are provided by Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K to help foster male involvement:

Expect fathers to participate: When the family's situation allows it, invite both parents to events, address letters and program information to both parents, and consult both parents when decisions about a child needs are made. Make sure parent-child activities can be accomplished with one or two parents present, and develop activities that encourage parents to share interaction with their children. Of course, use discretion in working with families in which separation exists for the protection of family members.

Go the extra mile: Send a personal invitation to fathers who do not have the opportunity to visit the program, explaining that you would like to meet them, since they are an important part of their children's lives.

Create a neutral forum: Make sure that program literature refers to parents as "she" and "he," and that photograph on the walls or in brochures include both mothers and fathers.

Make men visible: Have men on staff or as volunteers. A father might feel more comfortable participating if he does not have to worry about being the only man. Spotlight a father every month in your newsletter.

Meet fathers' needs: Conduct meetings or support groups for fathers, and provide services that address the interests and needs of fathers, such as employment assistance or training and recreation.

Make fathers feel necessary: Sponsor activities that will help to show fathers that they are an important part of the program and of their children's lives. Get fathers to participate by calling upon their individual skills (repairs in the center, teaching children to play a musical instrument or kick a soccer ball, cooking, etc.). Develop father-child activities. Host an annual Dads' Day.

In addition to these male focused services, men in the program are encouraged to participate in all parent involvement activities including: monthly parent committee meetings, home visits, parent/teacher conferences, classroom field trips and the annual parent activity. Leadership

opportunities are available for parents on parent committee, policy council, education committee and health advisory committee and men are strongly encouraged to take a leadership role in the program.

ACTIVITY FUNDS

The parent activity fund is established for parents to plan and participate in activities which they have designed. Normally, \$10.00 per child per center set enrollment will be provided by Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K grant funds annually and will be administered by guidelines developed by the Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K policy council who will direct and monitor how these funds will be utilized throughout the year. Parent committees determine how to use their respective center funds for individual center activities or a program wide activity.

This information is submitted to the policy council who approves the plans. Planning committee(s) are established to implement the plans. Each center parent committee is provided with funds to plan activities for children. With guidance and assistance from the appropriate staff and center director approval, will utilize funds to support parent/child activities, supplies, materials, etc. that enhance the goals and objectives of the Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K program.

These funds should be sufficient to provide activities for the children, and therefore should eliminate the need for any center initiated fund raising activities. Any fund raising project must have the prior approval of the Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K Director.

PARENT COMMITTEES

All parents who have children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K are members of the parent committee. A parent at Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K is defined as a child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent, guardian or the person with whom the child has been placed for purposes of adoption pending a final adoption decree. Parent committees meet once a month from September through April.

Onsite childcare, refreshments and transportation arrangements are available at the meetings. The parent committees are established at the center level. In this program, the parent committees are established at the following sites:

- M.E. Lewis Head Start/Pre-K Site
- Early Head Start Site

The three main functions of the parent committees are:

1) Participate in the governance of the Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K classroom and program by:

- a) Attending and supporting the parent committee meetings
- b) Serving as officers of the parent committee
- c) Serving as elected members of the policy council
- d) Electing representative(s) to the policy council per the above established guidelines

At the September parent meeting, parents will elect officers for the remainder of the year and select their representative(s) to the policy council. Offices include chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary.

2) Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities and services.

3) Plan, conduct and participate in informal as well as formal programs and activities for parents and staff.

The names of parents elected to serve as parent committee officers, policy council representatives or other leadership positions will be listed in the October parent newsletter.

HEALTH ADVISORY BOARD

This board is another governing body of Hancock County Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K which consists of several community representatives. The membership includes those with the following expertise: a background in early childhood education, past/present Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K parent whose background is reflective of the community served, and a community member with expertise in education, business administration or community affairs.

The health advisory board members have various administrative responsibilities for sharing community issues that relates to health and nutrition, educational needs, employments or major issues in the community.

CHILDCARE SERVICES

Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K will provide childcare services to parents attending authorized and appropriate meetings, i.e., parent committee meetings, policy council meetings, and other Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K related functions, with the exception of overnight conferences. The Director is responsible for childcare decisions and for making any exceptions for special circumstances.

Preparing for Your Child's First Day

Beginning Head Start offers children and families many new experiences and opportunities. Like any other change, children are inexperienced and do not know what to expect on their first day. You can help your child make a smooth transition into the Head Start classroom by following a few simple tips.

- Be positive about school and talk with your child about the changes that will take place. Help him/her understand that they will have many new friends, teachers, toys to play with, and a new routine to follow.
- Give your child the opportunity to play with others their own age and develop friendships.
- Teach your child self-help skills such as dressing independently and serving foods.
- Read to your child as often as possible and discuss the pictures and characters in the story. Books about school are helpful.
- Take walks in your neighborhood or to the park.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest.
- Allow your child time to adjust to the new environment. Spend a few minutes in the classroom while your child starts his/her day. When you feel your child is ready, say "good bye" and leave the classroom. If you would like, you can call the staff later to check on your child.
- Become involved in your child's classroom. If you feel comfortable in the classroom, your child will be less anxious. Ask the teachers how you can participate in activities. Feel free to ask about your child's progress.
- Be patient with your child. It sometimes takes a few weeks for a child to adjust to a new setting.

What to Bring

- Have your child wear comfortable clothing for inside and outside play
- Extra change of clothing to leave at the site.

Appendices

Student Information

My Child's Head Start Center: _____

Telephone # _____

My Child's Teacher: _____

My Child's Center Director: _____

My Child's Bus Driver: _____

My Child's Family & Community Service Worker: _____

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

My Child's Doctor: _____

Telephone # _____

My Child's Dentist: _____

Telephone # _____

Local Police # 706-444- 5777 or 911

Fire Department # _____

Georgia Poison Control Center # 1-800-222-1222

Other Resource Numbers

Child Support Enforcement # 1-800-227-7993

Georgia Parent Support Network # 1-800-832-8645

Babies Can't Wait # 1-800-229-2038

Infant and Child Health # 404-657-4143

Georgia Healthy Families # 1-888-423-6765

SIDS Other Infant Death Information & Counseling # 404-463-2117

RESOLUTION FORM

Complainant Name _____ Date _____

Head Start Child's Legal Parent/Guardian _____ Community Member _____

Other (Please describe) _____

Child's Name (if applicable) _____

Center Location: _____

Attendance ___ am ___ pm ___ all day

Summary of complaint.

Nature of Investigation: How was investigation handled (meeting, phone call, interviews, etc.)?

Action Taken:

Completed by _____

Signature

Absence Notification

_____ is absent from school on _____, _____, _____,
Name of child **Dates Absence**

for the following reason:

_____ **Illness (specify)** _____

_____ **Hospitalization (specify)** _____

_____ **Death in Family (specify)** _____

_____ **Other (specify)** _____

Teaching Staff Signature

Date

Family Service Advocate Signature

Date