



**Child Development Council of Brazoria County
Sponsoring Agency for the
Brazoria County Head Start and Early Head Start Programs**

Parent Handbook

These policies were written to provide a clear description of what parents can expect of the program, and what the program expects of parents.

Welcome to our Program!

Welcome! Our staff is looking forward to working with both you and your child during the Program Year.

Below you will find information that will assist you in becoming better acquainted with the Brazoria County Head Start and Early Head Start Programs, which are sponsored by the Child Development Council. If you have any suggestions, questions, comments or concerns with any of the information, please feel free to contact your child's teacher, your Family Services Worker, or the Center Director. Providing our children with the best quality services will take the cooperation of parents, staff and community people.



We strive to provide the highest quality of services. Six of our eight centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and all of our centers either meet or exceed minimum federal standards. If you find that conditions are sub-standard, please follow the complaint procedure as outlined on page 14 of this handbook.

Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Child Development Council to provide early childhood development services, health services, and family and community partnerships in order to bring about a greater degree of social competence in preschool children from low-income families.

Centers

- ✓ **Alvin Head Start Center** - 1019 E. House, Alvin. Serves Alvin, Liverpool, Northeast Rosharon.
- ✓ **Angleton Head Start Center-** 651 West Miller, Angleton. Serves Angleton, Rosharon, Danbury, Holiday Lakes, Baileys Prairie, McBeth, Chenango, Long Pond.
- ✓ **Brazoria Head Start/Early Head Start Center** – Henry O. Tanner Campus, Brazoria. Serves Brazoria, Hinkle’s Ferry, Wild Peach.
- ✓ **Freeport Head Start/Early Head Start Center** - 1216 West 9th Street, Freeport. Serves Freeport, Jones Creek, Oyster Creek, Surfside.
- ✓ **Lake Jackson Head Start/Early Head Start Center** – 303 Garland Drive, Lake Jackson. Serves Lake Jackson, Clute, Richwood.
- ✓ **Pearland Head Start Center** - 2335 N. Texas Avenue, Pearland. Serves Pearland, Manvel, Brookshire.
- ✓ **Sweeny Head Start/Early Head Start Center** - 601 Sycamore, Sweeny. Areas served are Old Ocean, Sweeny Churchill, Mims, Higgins Settlement, Magnolia, Shady Acres.
- ✓ **West Columbia Head Start Center** - 652 South Street, West Columbia. Serves West Columbia and Damon.

The double session classrooms for preschool-aged children (3-5) operate from **8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** (AM session) and from **1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.** (PM session). The double sessions hold classes from Tuesday through Friday.

The full day classrooms for preschool-aged children (3-5) operate from **7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**, Monday through Friday. These classrooms serve children of parents who are working or in training.

Early Head Start classrooms for infants and toddlers (0-3) are targeted to teen parents served by the local school districts; however, all parents are invited to apply. These classrooms operate from **7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** Monday through Friday, all year.

Curriculum Goals

The curriculum is designed to:

- ✓ Support the child's full development while providing an environment that will promote school readiness.
- ✓ Develop safe and healthy habits in young children with an emphasis on proper hygiene, sound nutrition, exercise and physical care.
- ✓ Foster positive self-esteem by providing an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for creative expression.
- ✓ Support the development of social skills such as sharing, cooperation, generosity, and empathy.
- ✓ Stimulate cognitive problem-solving skills with an emphasis on the concepts of cause and effect, classification, space, time, numbers, shape, and colors.
- ✓ Strengthen communication skills necessary for listening, reading, writing, and speaking by providing an environment rich in the practical uses of words.
- ✓ Enhance fine motor and gross motor skills.

Services Provided

1. Education - A learning environment that includes experiences that will help him/her as he/she develops socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally.
2. Health - We ensure that each child is on a schedule of well-child care, as well as ensure that the environment is clean, safe, and mentally sound.
3. Nutrition - We provide all children with a nutritious lunch daily, along with breakfast for morning children and a snack for afternoon children.

4. **Family Support and Services** - The staff will give you assistance to help improve the condition and quality of family life (as needed by coordinating needed services with social service agencies). The program will also provide you with the opportunity to get involved in program activities by attending parent meetings and workshops and also by working in the program as a volunteer. It is vital to the success of the program that you actively take part in parent activities.

Parent Committee and Policy Group Participation

You will have an opportunity to serve in the following capacities:

1. **Parent Committee**: This committee is set up at the local center level and is composed of all parents with children enrolled in the Head Start Program. This committee will meet monthly beginning in October. This Committee will provide parents the opportunity to make decisions about the nature and operation of the program.
2. **Head Start Policy Council**: This group is set up at the agency level and is composed of at least 51% parents plus community representatives. The parents are elected from the local parent groups. The Policy Council approves or disapproves programmatic operations (i.e. policies, budget, grant applications, etc.).
3. **Board of Directors**: This is the grantee agency for the operation of the Head Start Program. The agency has an 18-member Board of Directors including one member from the Policy Council. The Child Development Council receives the funds for the operation of the program from the Federal Office.

For these and with all parent functions, transportation, translation, and child care services are provided.

Parent Training Opportunities

You will be provided with opportunities for personal growth and development. Training opportunities will be offered to all parents on a regular basis, and will include such topics as:

- ✓ Child Growth and Development
- ✓ Discipline and Guidance
- ✓ Child Abuse and Neglect
- ✓ Health and Nutrition Topics
- ✓ Employment Skills Training
- ✓ GED/ESL
- ✓ Computer
- ✓ Community Resources
- ✓ Adult and Child Mental Wellness
- ✓ Transition

Volunteer Opportunities

You will be encouraged to provide volunteer support to the Head Start Program. This will give you a better understanding of what the program is doing for your child(ren) and the kinds of home assistance that will be required to better meet his/her needs. This action will also show your child the depth of his/her parent's concern. In addition, this will provide the staff the opportunity to know you better and an opportunity to learn from you.

Recognizing that some parents are unable to physically volunteer in the center, opportunities will also be provided for you to take part in volunteer activities outside of the center. More information on the volunteer program may be obtained from the Center Director or from the Volunteer Handbook.

Discipline

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. Corporal punishment and threats of corporal punishment are prohibited. Children will not be shaken, bitten, or hit, or have anything put in or on their mouth as punishment. Children will not be humiliated, yelled at, or rejected. Children will not be subjected to abusive or profane language. Children will not be punished for not eating or napping, or during toilet-learning activities.

Positive guidance techniques used by the staff will include but are not limited to:

- ✓ Recognizing and encouraging appropriate behaviors.
- ✓ Developing reasonable and clear rules and expectations in each group.
- ✓ Redirecting children into positive behaviors.
- ✓ Modeling pro-social behaviors.
- ✓ Enforcing limits and rules consistently and fairly.
- ✓ Helping children to identify and express feelings in acceptable ways.

Please discuss with your child's teacher specific guidance techniques that work best with your child. Changes at home do affect a child's behavior at the center. The center staff is anxious to work with you regarding behavior problems at the center or home. You will be notified immediately in cases of continued behavior that is potentially harmful to your child, other children and/or staff, or property.



Holidays/Teacher In-Service Days

The center will be closed on the following days:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day immediately following
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Good Friday
- Independence Day

In addition, the double session classrooms are closed during the summer months, a 2-week Christmas break, and a one-day spring break. They also observe the following as in-service days:

- Every Monday
- The day before the Annual Banquet (designated centers only – parents will be notified)
- The day of the Annual Banquet (all centers)

The center may designate other days as in-service at the discretion of the Center Director. If for any reason school is cancelled for the entire day for an unforeseen circumstance (i.e. plumbing problem, staff training), the day will be made up.

For your reference a calendar will be posted on the Parent Bulletin Board along with the daily schedule of activities that the children will follow. You will be reminded in advance of holidays and in-service days.

Severe Weather Conditions

Head Start classes abide by the school district's decision to keep schools open or to close them. Please tune in to your local radio or television broadcast. If your local school district cancels school, then your Head Start classes will also be canceled.

Change of Contact Information

If you plan to move, please inform the center staff of your new address. Also, please keep staff informed of changes to your current telephone number, or if you would like to change any other information (such as persons authorized to pick up your child).

Attendance

The Head Start program believes in the benefits of regular attendance. For children and families, regular attendance helps to establish a pattern that will assist the family in meeting their obligations when they are enrolled in the public school system and later in life. Young children are at their best when following a routine and know what to expect.

If it is necessary for your child to be absent, please call or send a note as soon as possible. If your child rides the bus, let the center know at least **one hour before scheduled pickup**. If your child is able to return on the next regular day, please send a note so that the staff will know what happened. If your child misses school and we have not heard from you, a staff member will contact you.

Continual absenteeism without a documented reason may result in your child being placed on the waiting list. We do not wish to drop any child from the program; however, there is a waiting list of children who would like to attend school and who are willing to attend sessions on a regular basis.

Arrival and Departure

Double Session

The Head Start double session program provides pick-up and drop-off to and from a child's home or childcare. Bus stops will be identified and you will be informed of the stop for your child. Double session parents may be asked to provide their own transportation depending on the availability of buses for routes to a specific area and the number of children in a specific area.

Continual violation of transportation policies may result in a loss of services.

If you elect to transport your own child, you must bring the child into the center no earlier than five (5) minutes before the session is to start. Please do not bring your child earlier or later. Also, be sure the staff sees you and greets your child.

Full Day

We request that children enrolled in the full day program be dropped off no earlier than five (5) minutes prior to opening. Please sign your child in and out each day.

It is also important that you pick up your child promptly when class ends. It is especially important if your child attends the full day session that they be dropped off to attend the entire session on a regular basis. Those children who are consistently late or are consistently picked up late will be re-evaluated for placement in the double session option.

Early Head Start

Children should be dropped off no earlier than five (5) minutes prior to opening. Please sign your child in and out each day. Also, please take time to inform the staff of the events of the night and morning prior to your child arriving at the center. At the end of your child's day, please be sure to take your child's daily log with you so that you will know the events of your child's day.

Transportation to the center may be provided to teen parents and their children on a case-by-case basis, depending on the availability of buses.

All Sessions

A visual health check is done each morning to ensure that your child is feeling well. This procedure has been found to prevent the spread of illnesses. Your cooperation is appreciated. Also, when your child leaves the center, please check his cubby or backpack for artwork, soiled clothing, and notes to parents.

Release of Children

Children are released only to persons authorized by written permission from the parents. Parents should provide the center staff with a listing of authorized adults. Before the child is released, the designated person will be required to show a picture I.D. No child will be released to an unauthorized person.

Any person picking up a child in an impaired condition (ill or under the influence of drugs or alcohol) will be encouraged to allow us to find alternative transportation.

Child Custody Issues

It is the Program's intent to meet the needs of children, especially when the parents may be experiencing difficult situations such as a divorce, separation, or remarriage. Sharing information about such situations may be helpful to the center staff and will remain strictly confidential.

The center cannot legally restrict the non-custodial parent from visiting the child, reviewing the child's records, or picking the child up unless the center has been furnished with legally filed, executed and current documents. Copies of all court documents must be submitted to the center. In case of conflicts, the proper authorities will be contacted.



Transportation

Where possible, Head Start offers transportation to and from school on school buses for interested families in our double session. For things to go smoothly on our bus routes, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. You must accompany your child(ren) to the bus. Also, you or authorized persons must be present to meet the bus when the child gets off the bus in the afternoon.
2. Please do not allow your child to take toys, gum, or food on to the school bus.
3. When riding the bus, volunteers should maintain order and keep the children buckled. If serving as our trained bus monitor, please sit at the rear of the bus.
4. It is not our policy to transport children to an address other than their regular take-home address. If you must arrange to have someone other than yourself receive the child, please have him or her present at your home in plenty of time to get your child off the bus.
5. Volunteers are always needed to ride the bus, as it is required that we have two adults to transport children (one driver and one bus monitor).
6. We make every effort to pick-up and deliver your child on time – *please do not panic if we are delayed*. In return, we ask that your child be ready and waiting for the arrival of the bus.
7. If you are not present to meet your child, he/she will be taken back to the Head Start center or to your alternate address. Bus service may discontinue if repeat problems occur.
8. We will not let your child leave the bus with any person whose name is not on the Release Form.

Communication

Please contact the Head Start center:

- ✓ When you will not be home for a home visit or cannot make a scheduled parent-teacher conference.
- ✓ If you move or have your phone disconnected or receive a new phone number.
- ✓ If your child will not be attending his/her school session.

We value and encourage regular communication between you and the teachers. We will be sending notes home with your child. These notes will be in your child's backpack or handed to you directly so that they will arrive home safely. Please respond promptly to notes if required. On a monthly basis, you will also receive a newsletter with a calendar of events, and you will be updated regularly at monthly parent meetings

Further communication (i.e. menu, job opportunities, community resources, community events, parent meeting minutes) will be posted on the parent's bulletin board in the center. Please consult the board regularly for the latest information.

Your child's teacher will contact you for at least two (2) home visits and two (2) conferences. Additional conferences with your child's teacher may be scheduled as needed.

With your consent, relevant information will be shared with the school district or other agencies. Your consent may also be requested for our agency to retrieve necessary information from other agencies or providers, such as doctors, dentists, and school districts.

Celebrations

The center celebrates major holidays with parties. You may bring treats that are prepared commercially or pre-wrapped.

The center does not celebrate Halloween. Instead, we honor the arrival of fall with an Autumn Harvest party. The children are still allowed to go "treating" for candy and goodies. However, we do discourage costumes.

The center does not hold graduation exercises. To commemorate the child's participation in Head Start, the program takes year-end pictures of each child, and each center holds a year-end picnic to celebrate each child's successes.

Clothing and Individual Supplies

Dress your child in clothing that is durable and comfortable. Many of your child's favorite activities may tend to be a little messy. Clothing and shoes should be easy for children to take off and put on during toileting. The children go outside every day (unless it is raining), so dress them accordingly. You will need to provide the Center with a complete change of clothes (with nametag on them) for your child.

Bringing Items from Home

Children frequently want to share with their class nature items and treasures from home. Such items are welcomed if they support the topic being studied. Please check with your child's teacher first before sending or bringing objects to the center.

The center does not allow toys of violence like guns, swords, or violent action figures. Also, children will not be allowed to bring cosmetics, candy, gum, or money to the center. We do also discourage your child from bringing toys from home, as we cannot ensure that they will not be lost or broken.

The program will not be liable for theft or damage to children's clothing or jewelry.

Field Trips

Occasionally, educational field trips are taken during the year. You will be notified regarding field trips by posted notice at least two days prior to the field trip. You are invited and encouraged to participate in the field trips with the children.

Emergency Procedures

Fire and evacuation drills are held monthly to acquaint your child with evacuation procedures. The evacuation routes are posted in each classroom. In case of a toxic fume release or if the building must be evacuated, the children will be taken to a location designated by the area authorities. You or your child's emergency contacts will be contacted. If your child is injured, a trained staff member will provide first aid and you will be contacted. If necessary, your physician or emergency personnel will be notified. In the event that your child needs to be transported by ambulance, a staff member will accompany your child.

Administering Medication

The agency encourages that all medication be administered outside of center operational hours. However, when medication does need to be administered, the center will only do so with a written permission form and as stated on the medicine's label directions or as amended by the physician in writing. Any medication brought by parents for their child must: 1) Be in an original container; 2) be labeled with the child's name; 3) be labeled with the date; 4) include directions to administer the medication; and, 5) if prescribed, include the name of the physician prescribing the medication.

Illness

One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations for young children is preventing illness. The staff will strive to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness. Proper handwashing procedures will be followed and taught to the children. The toys, eating surfaces, and toilet equipment will be sanitized between children's use.

One of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease is to have strictly enforced standards regarding the exclusion of ill children. We need your support for this. Do not bring ill children to the center and if your child becomes ill at the center, please ensure that the child is picked up immediately.

According to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, children cannot attend the center if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- ✓ The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in facility activities.
- ✓ The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.
- ✓ The child has any one of the following:
 - a. Armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other symptoms of illness.
 - b. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness such as lethargy, uncontrolled breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, vomiting illness (two or more episodes in 24 hours), rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior change, or other unusual signs.
- ✓ The child has been diagnosed with a contagious disease, until medical evaluation determines that the child is no longer contagious and is able to participate in the facility's activities. Please refer to the *Communicable Disease Chart for Schools and Child-Care Centers* posted in all centers.

The center reserves the right to require a doctor's statement before the child can be re-admitted to the center.

Medical Care Statement

This agency is required by federal law to ensure that each child enrolled in the program is placed on an up-to-date schedule of well-child care. At Head Start, each child must have a health and developmental screening, and a physical examination once per year; and each child must have a dental examination every six months.

Your help is crucial to this process. You may already have a primary source of health and dental care. If so, please submit a copy of your child's most recent health record to the center.

If you do not already have a primary source of care, the Head Start staff will work with you to find one. Efforts will be made by our staff to link your family with Medicaid or low cost insurance. At enrollment, you will be given a list of area doctors to choose from.

As your child's primary caregiver, we encourage you to take your children to his/her medical and dental services. Head Start will assist you with whatever you need (transportation, childcare, assistance with making appointments). As your partner in this process, we will do whatever it takes to ensure that each child receives well-child care.

We are requesting your assistance to ensure that this process is done in a timely manner, and that no child goes without necessary health services.

Child Abuse and Neglect

In an effort to protect the well being and safety of children, the State of Texas requires anyone who suspects child abuse and neglect to report it to the proper authorities. The center staff has been trained to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. If, after investigation, symptoms indicate abuse or neglect, designated agency personnel will document and report the suspected abuse. The center is required by law to cooperate with any investigation of child abuse and neglect. You will be notified if your child is questioned as part of an investigation.

Filing a Civil Rights Complaint

The information that follows is provided to inform you of your protection under The Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits any person on the grounds of race, color, physical or mental handicap, age, or national origin be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal Financial Assistance.

Any individual who feels they have been discriminated against should forward their complaint to the Center Director. If that individual is not satisfied with the information provided, the complaint will be forwarded to Evelyn Moore, Executive Director, 651 West Millier, Angleton, Texas 77515, (979) 849-1881 or Brazoria County Courthouse Ext., 1495. If the individual is then not secured, he/she will be instructed to contact the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights, 1200 Main Tower - Room 1900 in Dallas, Texas 75202 or call Voice Mail: (214) 767-4056 TDD: (214) 767-6599. All complaints must be filed within six months from the time when you were subjected to discrimination.

Do You Have A Complaint?

Brazoria County Head Start and Early Head Start staff is dedicated to working with families. If you have a complaint, we will work with you to address your concerns. Please call us first with your concerns so that we may address them. Discuss the concern with the Center Director of your Head Start Center.

If your concern is not taken care of to your satisfaction, set an appointment with the Head Start or Early Head Start Director. If your concerns are still not addressed properly, request to speak with the Executive Director. The Center Director will be responsible for making the phone number and other information available to you as you pursue addressing your concerns.

Again, thank you for enrolling your child in the Head Start or Early Head Start Program. We look forward to partnering with you to help your child to reach his or her full potential.

**Child Development Council of Brazoria County
Sponsoring Agency for the Brazoria County Head Start Program**

Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received Brazoria County Head Start Program's Parent Handbook, which includes the philosophy, center procedures and information, procedures for filing a complaint, and a discrimination statement.

This information was explained to me during the enrollment process. I understand that I should contact the center staff to further explain any items that were unclear.

Parent's Signature

Date

Witness Staff Signature

Date

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