

Early Head Start Program Parent Handbook



Northwest Community Action, Inc.

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www.nwcaa.org

WELCOME TO EARLY HEAD START!

Northwest Community Action's Head Start program has been serving families in Northwestern Minnesota since 1965. Currently, our Head Start and Early Head Start programs serve more than 280 children each year in Roseau, Lake of the Woods, Kittson, and Marshall Counties. Early Head Start socialization sites are located in all four counties. These Socialization sessions are referred to as Busy Buddy Groups.

Northwest Early Head Start is a family-oriented program, which provides services to families expecting a child, or have children who are birth to 3 years old. Information in the areas of education, health, mental health, nutrition, disabilities, parent involvement and family services is provided. We believe that parents are the most important influence in their child's life and parent involvement in all aspects of the program is essential. Your participation is needed for a successful year with Early Head Start.

MISSION STATEMENT

Northwest Head Start seeks to assist children to achieve appropriate physical and developmental growth, increase self-confidence, and to improve and expand each child's ability to think, reason, and communicate with others. Northwest Head Start also seeks to assist parents and families to improve their parenting skills, self-sufficiency, and the conditions in which they live, learn, and work.

HEAD START STAFF

Head Start Director - Mark Carlson

Early Head Start Education/Disabilities Services Manager – Patti McKinnon

Early Head Start Health/Community Services Manager – Jo Christian

Early Head Start Family Services Manager - Sharon Millner

Family Advocate – Misty Lundbohm

Family Advocate – Deb Stanelle

Early Childhood Instructional Coach – Tessa Zimney

Mental Health Consultant – Kendra Marvin

Administrative/Technical Support Assistant - Cecelia Hendrickson

Office Assistant – Natasha Lee

The Early Head Start office is open Monday through Friday,
From 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

If you have questions about any aspect of the Early Head Start Program,
Please call our office at (218) 528-3226 or 1-800-568-5319.

HOME VISITS & SOCIALIZATIONS INFORMATION

Home Visits:

During the first home visit, you and your EHS Educator will schedule a regular day and time for home visits. The EHS Educator will also bring a box containing educational items, which are age appropriate. Each home visit will last approximately 1½ hours and will consist of:

1. Arrivals and Greeting
2. Handwashing & Toothbrushing
3. Follow-up and discussion of activities you and your child have been working on since the last home visit; and return of materials you may have borrowed for the week.
4. Presentation and discussion of new materials and parent planned activities.
5. Write comments pertaining to the home visit.
6. You and your educator will plan for the next home visit.
7. Review Family Partnership Agreement (FPA): update family goals, request information, and discuss information received.

Early Head Start attendance for Home Visits and Busy Buddies is an important part of your child's future school success! **If a parent needs to cancel a home visit for any reason, please let your EHS Educator or the Office know.** Home visits cancelled by the program or home visitor will be rescheduled with the family's input. Home visits cancelled by the parent will be made up as the home visitor's and parent's schedule allows. If a family chooses not to be available for home visits, even after attempts have been made to re-engage the family, they will be considered a drop and be replaced by the next eligible child on the waitlist.

Socializations (Busy Buddy Groups):

Each Busy Buddy Group will last 1 ½ hours and are held every other week. Parents are responsible to attend and participate. Regular attendance is important for your child's social and emotional growth. Irregular attendance will be followed up by a central office staff member. In case of bad weather, listen to your local radio or TV station for announcements. If your local school is closed, so is Early Head Start. Busy Buddies is a time for parents to interact with their enrolled child and to get to know other parents and children in Early Head Start.

Child Protection:

ACYF Department of Health and Human Services Transmittal Notice 77.1 requires that all Early Head Start program staff report all incidents of suspected abuse and neglect to their local child protective service agency. All NWCA Early Head Start staff are mandated reporters of any suspected child abuse or neglect.

Grievance Procedure:

If a parent or community member feels they have been treated unfairly or in a disrespectful manner by an Early Head Start staff person, he or she may implement the following grievance procedure.

1. Present, in writing, the reason and circumstances surrounding the specific incident to the Early Head Start Director. The Early Head Start Director will attempt to resolve the issue within five working days of action.
2. If unsuccessful in Step One, the complaint can then be sent to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will attempt to resolve the issue within five working days of action.
3. If unsuccessful in Step Two, the complaint can be sent to the chairman of the Agency Board of Directors, who will attempt to resolve the issue to the satisfaction of the parent or community member.

EDUCATION INFORMATION

Child Development:

Early Head Start believes that you, the parent, are the most important teacher your child will ever have. You know your child better than anyone else. You know your child's strengths and needs, and what he or she is most interested in. By working together with your EHS Educator, your child is given many learning opportunities. Home visits and lessons are planned to best benefit your child and family.

Disabilities Services:

The Early Head Start program makes every effort to meet the needs of all enrolled children. Ten percent, or more, of our enrollees are children with specific special needs or disabilities.

There may be times when a referral for further assessment of a child may be indicated. Parents, EHS Educators and other Early Head Start staff will work together to determine whether a referral or further evaluation is needed. Early Head Start will work with other agencies or health care providers, as well as families, to best insure that a child's needs are being met. Early Head Start Staff will make every effort to attend IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) meetings to support and advocate for Early Head Start families.

If you have any concerns or questions about your child's development, please discuss them with your EHS Educator or another Early Head Start staff member. All information given to Early Head Start is kept strictly confidential. No information from a child's file is released to anyone without written permission from the child's parents or guardians.

Developmental Screening:

Each child enrolled in Early Head Start will have a developmental screening called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. Either county nursing services or Early Head Start Staff will do this screening. Further follow-up and assessment will be completed as needed.

Assessment Tool & Curriculum:

Partners for a Healthy Baby and Learning Games are the curriculums used in Early Head Start. These are activity based programs where parents work and plan together with their Educator. The HighScope COR (Child Observation Record) is the ongoing assessment tool used in Early Head Start and is used to assess your child's developmental progress throughout the year.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Early Head Start's health goal is to involve your family in an ongoing health care system.

Medical Services:

Your child is required to have a complete physical examination, including lab work, upon enrollment in the program. Early Head Start physical exams will be completed at screening sites in each area, or by your doctor. The physical exam and labs may include: hemoglobin/hematocrit, lead screen, blood pressure, pulse, height, weight, immunizations, hearing and vision screening, oral exam, and a nutritional assessment. Prior written approval is needed for all services, including follow-up. You will need to have the proper forms accompanying your child on all referred visits. Basic expenses for out-of-area referrals may be reimbursed.

Oral/Dental Services:

A dental screening is required to be completed (according to EPSDT screening requirements for age) within 90 days after enrollment. Prior written approval is needed for all services, including follow-up. You will need to have the proper forms accompanying your child on all referred visits. Basic expenses for out-of-area referrals may be reimbursed.

All enrolled children may also receive a dental assessment by a calibrated dental hygienist.

Immunizations:

Immunizations need to be completed or made current by the end of our program year. Immunization clinics are held throughout the 4 counties served by Early Head Start.

Health Rules at Busy Buddies/Home Visits:

If your child shows signs of illness or has a contagious infection, do not bring him/her to Busy Buddy Group. Please refer to the "What To Do When Your Child Gets Sick" book. Contact your Educator if anyone in your household is ill or has a contagious infection and you have a home visit scheduled.

Health Education:

Your child will receive education about dental health, personal hygiene, nutrition and safety at Busy Buddies, with follow-up on home visits. Health education for parents is provided through workshops and home visits, and a health resource listing is provided for your family. Please review medical and dental emergency procedures that are posted at Busy Buddy Group sites.

MENTAL HEALTH INFORMATION

The Mental Health Consultant is available to assist parents and Early Head Start staff with areas of concern. The Mental Health Consultant is available for on-site consultation at the Badger. Consultants can also provide training for staff and parents, and observe at Busy Buddies if requested. Counselors are available for individual or family counseling. Referrals can be made upon request. The Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire is used as our screening tool for each child. If you feel your family would benefit from counseling, please discuss it with your Educator or call the Central Office.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ: SE) Screening:

As a part of the developmental screening, you will be asked to complete a social emotional questionnaire during one of your first Home Visits. Our agency, in coordination with local school districts and county nursing services, use this questionnaire to help assess your child's social-emotional development.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Nutrition at Home Visits:

Throughout the year, plan for the preparation of fun and nutritious snacks during home visit time. You, your child and your EHS Educator can prepare nutritious foods together. Preparing food can be a wonderful learning experience for your child. While your child is helping you prepare food you can talk about good nutrition, food preparation, colors, shapes, and textures of different foods, or practice math skills by counting and measuring.

Nutrition at Socialization Sessions (Busy Buddy Groups):

While your child is at Busy Buddy Groups, he or she will receive nutritious meals and/or snacks as appropriate for the age of the infant and/or toddler and family style eating is encouraged. The meals/snacks that will be served will follow the USDA meal/snack planning standards, and will be reviewed by the Child Health Manager and Nutrition Consultant.

Every effort is made to follow doctor-prescribed diets for children at Busy Buddies. If your child has diagnosed food allergies, or is on a doctor prescribed diet, be sure to let your EHS Educator know. You will be required to give your EHS Educator a written copy of the child's special diet, listing any/all specific foods the child should not be allowed to have and any other pertinent information.

Nutrition Education:

A Nutrition Consultant is available through the Early Head Start program to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have regarding nutrition. Specific presentations on nutrition topics, such as preparing nourishing but inexpensive foods, can also be arranged with the Child Health Manager throughout the year.

PARENT FAMILY and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parent Involvement:

Early Head Start believes that parents are the most important influence in their child's development. You know your child better than anyone else. By working together with your EHS Educator, you can be sure that your child will have many wonderful learning experiences.

Family Partnership Agreement:

Each family is encouraged to develop a Family Partnership Agreement at the beginning of the program year. Early Head Start staff will assist parents in identifying strengths, setting goals, and in seeking out services to address family needs.

Family Outcomes Assessment: The Family Outcomes Assessment is a tool for families to identify their needs and measure growth. Northwest Head Start and Early Head Start also use this program-wide assessment to measure our effectiveness in helping enrolled families improve their lives and the lives of their children.

Parenting Education:

Parenting Now! is a group-based parenting curriculum that is researched based. Topics from Parenting Now! will be presented during Busy Buddy Group.

Home Visits:

Parent involvement is very important during home visits. You are teaching your child that you value education by being on time and ready to participate. During each home visit, you and your EHS Educator will plan for the next home visit. It is also important that you evaluate the home visit, and write your comments on the lesson plan. At each Home Visit, your EHS Educator will discuss parenting, and other issues of concern.

Busy Buddy Groups:

Group socialization is an important part of Early Head Start. Parents attend with their child. Busy Buddies gives you the opportunity to see how your child interacts with other children. It's also a good chance for your child to explore and learn with others. We are counting on you!

Respect for the CONFIDENTIALITY of all families must be kept. Parents may not disclose confidential information that they become aware of.

Remember that Busy Buddies should be FUN! If you feel that group time is not fun and enjoyable, please discuss this with your EHS Educator, or an EHS office staff member. Communication is the best remedy in most situations.

Parents are reimbursed for mileage when transporting their child to Busy Buddy Group. You will be reimbursed at a rate of 20¢ per mile for one round trip to the center each time your child attends. When there is a Busy Buddy special event or trip in which transportation is provided by Early Head Start mileage will not be reimbursed. When parents attend with their Early Head Start child, in addition to mileage, any childcare expenses incurred during that time will also be reimbursed. Parents can pay the child care provider and ask for reimbursement later, or can ask the child care provider to bill Early Head Start directly. Child care reimbursement rates are paid as follows: \$2.50/hour per child. Any expense over the set amounts is the responsibility of the parent. Reimbursement checks are only issued to parents when the total reimbursement amount due to the parent is \$10.00 or more. If you wish to be reimbursed, the proper paperwork must be turned in monthly.

Parent Meetings/Parent Committees:

These meetings may occur concurrently with EHS Busy Buddy Groups.

- The committee elects a representative and alternate to the Policy Council at orientation.
- The local teacher is responsible for the agenda with input from parents and assistance from their family advocate.
- The most recent Policy Council minutes are shared. The local PC representative makes a report and shares local parent concerns with the PC as appropriate.
- Staff will seek parent input for developing and implementing program policies, activities, and services to ensure they meet the needs of children and families.

Policy Council:

Policy Council consists of Early Head Start/Head Start parents from each center site and Busy Buddy Group. Meetings are held monthly to discuss issues affecting Early Head Start, and to make decisions about how the program operates. Each area may elect one representative and one alternate representative to attend Policy Council meetings. It is very important that your area's representative is dedicated and willing to attend Policy Council meetings. If your area does not have a representative, your site will not be represented when issues come to a vote at Policy Council meetings. Becoming the Policy Council Representative for your site area requires a commitment to attend meetings, and to be more involved in Early Head Start. Parents who are members of the Policy Council are reimbursed childcare expenses at the standard rate and mileage to and from meeting location at the government rate. On-site childcare may also be available. Policy Council members receive a monthly connectivity reimbursement of up to \$40.00. A noon meal after the meeting is provided.

Health Advisory Committee:

Each year Early Head Start forms a Health Advisory Committee, which is made up of area healthcare professionals, Early Head Start/Head Start parents, and Early Head Start/Head Start staff. This Committee meets twice a year to review all aspects of the Early Head Start health requirements. Committee Members are reimbursed for mileage and childcare at the same rate as Policy Council.

Minnesota Head Start Association Parent Affiliate Member:

The Policy Council elects the MHSA Parent Affiliate Representative. This position requires out-of-area travel 3-4 times per year to attend MHSA Meetings. Reimbursement rates are the same as Policy Council.

Other Parent Activities:

Special events, parent workshops and other trainings are held throughout the year on topics of interest to Head Start parents. Parents who attend workshops may be reimbursed for mileage, at a rate of 20¢ per mile, and for childcare at the standard rates.

In-Kind:

In-Kind is the way parents and the community help support the Early Head Start program. The Federal Government grants funds to a Community Action Agency with the stipulation that the local community contributes 25% matching funds. These funds are raised by In-Kind.

The following activities qualify as In-Kind contributions:

- Time spent doing curriculum-based family home activities provided by your Educator.
- Time and materials used in making things for Busy Buddy Group.
- Time spent attending Policy Council Meetings.

Each month you, along with an EHS Educator, will complete an In-Kind sheet for your family. Please keep track of the amount of time you spend doing Early Head Start activities with your child. Your EHS Educator will turn this form into the Early Head Start office at the end of each month.

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

Physical Development and Health

- 1) Children will acquire and maintain a high level of physical health, including being up-to-date on Physical and dental check-ups and immunizations.
- 2) Children will demonstrate increasing control of large muscles for movement, navigation, and balance consistent with their chronological and developmental level.
- 3) Children will demonstrate increasing fine motor strength, coordination and agility for use in self-care, manipulation of materials and exploring their environment.

Social-Emotional Development

- 1) Children will be able to manage feelings appropriately and self-regulate with regard to their emotions, attention span and behavior.
- 2) Children will demonstrate positive, appropriate social relationships with family members, peers and other significant adults.
 - a) Children will demonstrate positive social relationships in individual and group settings.
 - b) Children will follow developmentally appropriate limits and expectations.
- 3) Families will take an active role in the social emotional growth of their child.

Approaches to Learning

- 1) Children will demonstrate a positive approach to learning through persistence, attentiveness, engagement, problem solving, flexibility, curiosity and inventiveness thinking.
- 2) Children will show an increasing ability to express themselves through sound, movement, visual media and role play.
- 3) Families will become more aware of various approaches to learning.

Language and Literacy

- 1) Children will demonstrate increasing skills in comprehension and use of more complex and varying vocabulary.
- 2) Children will demonstrate increasing proficiency using language to communicate needs, wants and for self-expression.
- 3) Children will demonstrate comprehension and will respond to books (texts, environmental print, and symbols).
- 4) Children will demonstrate an increase in the development of writing skills through the writing stages.
- 5) Families will be encouraged to actively participate in language and literacy development of their child through information and materials.

Cognition and General Knowledge

- 1) Children will use math skills in everyday classroom and family routines as appropriate for their developmental level. They will show increased Competency in counting, comparing, relating and problem solving.
- 2) Children will engage in scientific exploration through observation, Imitation, manipulation, and curiosity.
- 3) Children will demonstrate use of skills in reasoning and problem solving, finding multiple solutions and answering questions.
- 4) Children will increase their understanding of classroom, community, and home environment.

Head Start/Early Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes

1. Family Well-Being

Parents and families will be safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.

2. Positive Parent-Child Relationships

Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families will develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.

3. Families As Lifelong Educators

Parents and families will observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

4. Families As Learners

Parents and families will advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

5. Family Engagement in Transitions

Parents and families will support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school.

6. Family Connections to Peers and Community

Parents and families will form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

7. Families As Advocates and Leaders

Parents and families will participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.