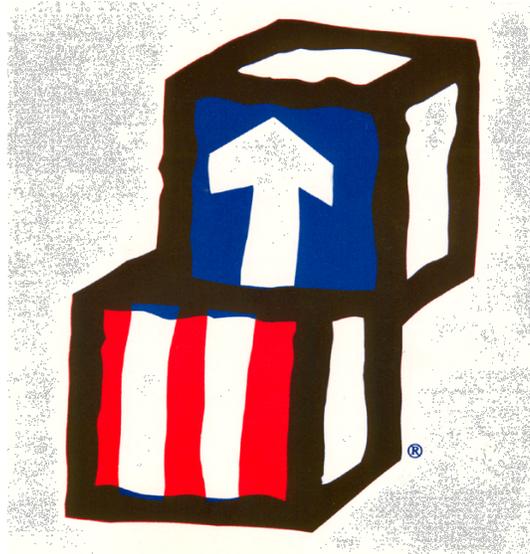


Head Start Program Parent Handbook



Northwest Community Action, Inc.

312 North Main Street

P.O. Box 67

Badger, MN 56714

(218) 528-3227 or (800) 568-5319

www.nwcaa.org

WELCOME TO 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. Eleven thousand families are served by Head Start programs throughout the state of Minnesota each year, and more than one million children are served nationally.

Northwest Head Start is a family-oriented program, which provides services to children who are three to five years old, and/or information in the areas of education, health, mental health, nutrition, disabilities, parent involvement and family services. Head Start believes that parents are the most important influence in a child's life. Parent involvement in all aspects of the program is essential. Your participation is needed for a successful year with 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 Childhood Services & Disabilities/Mental Health Manager – Natasha Stengrim

Early Childhood Services Manager Assistant – Lynn Balstad

Health Services Manager – Krystle Sorenson

Family Services Manager - Sharon Millner

Family Advocate – Deb Stanelle

Family Advocate – Misty Lundbohm

Early Childhood Instructional Coach – Tessa Zimney

Mental Health Consultant – Kendra Marvin

Administrative/Technical Support Assistant - Cecelia Hendrickson

Office Assistant – Natasha Lee

The 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 Head Start Program,
please call our office at (218) 528-3226 or 1-800-568-5319.

www.nwcaa.org

HEALTH INFORMATION

Medical Services:

Your child is required to have a complete physical, including lab work. Head Start physical exams will be completed at Health screening sites in each area or by your family doctor. 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.

Dental Services:

A dental exam is required to be completed within 90 days after entry date. 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.

A qualified calibrated dental hygienist will complete a dental assessment on each enrolled child. This will not replace your regular dentist visits.

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 Head Start.

Mental Health Services:

Mental Health Consultants/Counselors provide training for staff and parents and observe at center sessions periodically. The Mental Health Consultant is available for on-site consultation at the Badger Office. In addition, Family Service Workers and Mental Health Consultants/Counselors are available for individual or family issues. Referrals will be made upon request.

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

As part of the developmental screening, you will be asked to complete a Mental Health screening. Our agency, in coordination with local school districts and county nursing services, uses the Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social Emotional screener or the ASQ:SE.

Health Rules at Center:

- If your child shows signs of illness or has a contagious infection, do not send him/her to center.
- Only prescription medication can be given at the center. Please make every effort to give your child any needed medications at home. If your child must receive prescription medicine while at the center, you must bring the medicine to the center in the prescription bottle and sign a consent form.
- If your child has diagnosed food allergies or is on a doctor prescribed diet, please be sure to let your teacher know. You will be required to give your teacher 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.
- Medical and dental emergency procedures are posted in classrooms; please review them when you are visiting the center.
- No homemade food items are allowed at center.

Nutritious Meals:

Head Start participates in the Child & Adult Care Food Program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture which enables Head Start to provide free meals and snacks to all enrollees.

EDUCATION INFORMATION

Developmental Screening:

Each child enrolled in the Head Start program will have a developmental screening through the local school districts and/or Head Start Staff. Parents, teachers and other Head Start staff will work together to determine whether a referral for further assessment is needed.

If you have any concerns or questions about your child's development, please discuss them with your teacher or another Head Start staff member. All information given to 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.

Head Start staff use the following tools to provide a comprehensive education for children and families:

- The Creative Curriculum for Preschool
A developmentally appropriate classroom based curriculum. It is the foundation for daily classroom activities, which build on children's interests and strengths to meet individual and classroom learning objectives and goals.
- I am Moving, I am Learning
A developmentally appropriate classroom based curriculum that promotes physical health.
- S.M.A.R.T. (Stimulating Maturity Through Accelerated Readiness Training)
A program that uses brain stimulation exercises to help children become ready for Kindergarten.
- The Incredible Years
A developmentally appropriate classroom based curriculum that promotes social-emotional health.
- Parenting Now!
A group-based positive parenting curriculum.
- Teaching Strategies GOLD
A comprehensive, research-based assessment system that supports effective teaching and children's development and learning.
- Words Work!
An early literacy program proven to cultivate the early reading and writing skills in low-income and other at risk preschoolers.

Child Protection:

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

CENTER INFORMATION

Northwest Head Start provides a wide variety of options for children and families throughout our service area. The number of center sessions and home visits offered varies among communities due to space availability and the individual needs of children and families. The 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 diagnosed disabilities.

The following components are part of a typical center:

- Opening
- Large and small group activities
- Gross motor and small/fine motor activities
- Story/Music/Creative Arts
- Hygiene: Hand washing and tooth brushing (once per center with a pre-pasted disposable toothbrush)
- Nutritious Meals and/or Snacks: Head Start contracts with area schools to provide meals for our enrollees. They follow the USDA Guidelines. Head Start discourages snacks high in sugar, salt and fat. If you wish to provide treats at Center for a holiday or a special occasion, you are encouraged to bring a snack that is NUTRITIOUS (fruit, crackers and cheese, yogurt, etc.). No homemade food items are allowed at center.
- Free-play/Learning Stations
- Closing

Attendance Policy:

Your child's regular attendance at Head Start is important to his/her academic success today and in the future! If a child is absent, and the teacher has not been notified as to the reason for the absence beforehand or within the first hour of center, the teacher will attempt to contact the family.

Information will be provided to parents at orientation and throughout the program year via parent meetings and newsletters about the benefits of regular attendance at center. Teachers will notify their Family Advocate when a child has been absent two consecutive days with no explanation. The Family Advocate will contact the family and conduct a home visit if necessary to determine the reason for the absence and encourage attendance. The Family Services Manager will monitor monthly attendance. Children who are considered chronically absent which is two or more times in one month will be contacted by their Teacher or Family Advocate to provide education and family support to increase the child's attendance. Managers will be consulted and provide additional support to families as needed. If a family chooses not to send their child to center, 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.

Transportation:

Parents complete a Release Authorization Form which lists people, other than the child's parents or legal guardians, that are authorized to pick-up their child from the Head Start classroom and/or Head Start bus. A copy of this form is kept on the Head Start bus, at the center, and in the child's file at the main office. The Release Authorization Form will be updated at conferences or as changes or additions occur. Handwritten notes signed by the parent or legal guardian identifying additional individuals to whom their child may be released will be allowed. Phone calls and electronic communications (such as E-mails, texts, faxes, etc.) will not be accepted for the purpose of making changes to the Release Authorization Form. Legal documentation is needed on site and in the child's main Head Start file if a legal parent or guardian is NOT authorized to pick up their child.

In larger communities, where there are more children and centers, Northwest is able to offer transportation with a Head Start bus. Parents in these areas will receive the Bus Transportation Guidelines and other specific information. In areas where Head Start is unable to provide busing the school district busses may be able to provide AM and/or PM bussing, discuss this with your teacher. For your child's safety, bring your child into the Head Start classroom and pick your child up in the classroom.

Please call your teacher or the Head Start office if your child will be absent from center. In case of bad weather, listen to your local radio or TV station for announcements. If your local school is closed, the center will be canceled also. Each center teacher will inform parents of the local policy if their school has a late start.

PARENT FAMILY and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Center Volunteers:

Volunteers are an important part of Head Start. All parents are strongly encouraged to volunteer at center at least once per year and are welcome to volunteer more regularly. Being a volunteer at the center gives you an opportunity to experience first-hand the social and academic activities that your child participates in each center day.

When you arrive at the center, ask the teacher to show you the center plan so you will know what is scheduled for the day. Some ways you can help out in the classroom are: welcome the children to center, help children with coats, boots, etc., read to children, and assist with small group activities.

Some rules to follow when volunteering at the center: Physical discipline is NOT allowed at the center; verbal put-downs, profanity, name calling, etc. is NOT allowed at the center. If you have a concern about a child's behavior, please discuss it with the teacher. These rules apply to all children at the center, including yours.

Respect for the CONFIDENTIALITY of all families must be kept. Volunteers may not disclose confidential information that they become aware of while working in the center, including the progress of children.

Remember, volunteering at the center should be FUN! If you feel that center is not fun and enjoyable, please discuss this with your teacher. Communication is the best remedy in most situations.

When parents volunteer to help at the center, any child care expenses incurred during that time may be reimbursed. Parents can pay the child care provider and ask for reimbursement later, or can ask the childcare provider to bill Head Start directly. You may request a Child Care Reimbursement Form from your teacher. The Childcare reimbursement rate is \$2.50/hour per child. Any expense over the set amount is the responsibility of the parent.

Home Visits:

Teachers, Family Advocates and other Head Start staff make home visits. The number and structure of home visits varies among communities depending on the number of centers offered by each local program option. A minimum of 2 Home Visits are made by your child's teacher annually, however participation in Head Start is not contingent upon allowing the teacher into your home.

Home visits for additional family support such as parenting education or crisis assistance are also offered.

If you need to cancel a home visit for any reason, please contact your teacher or the Head Start Office.

Parent Meetings:

Throughout the Head Start program year, each center has parent meetings which give parents the opportunity to discuss issues that affect each community participate in parenting education activities utilizing the Parenting Now! curriculum. Mileage and childcare may be reimbursed at the standard rates at parent only meetings.

Family Partnership Agreement:

Each family is encouraged to develop a Family Partnership Agreement. The FPA includes identifying family strengths, setting family identified goals, requesting information and discussing information received.

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.

Policy Council:

Policy Council consists of Head Start parents from each center site. Meetings are held monthly to discuss issues affecting Head Start and to make decisions about how the program operates. Each site's parent group may elect one Representative and one Alternate Representative to attend Policy Council meetings. It is very important that your site elect a Representative who is dedicated and willing to attend Policy Council meetings. If your site 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 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 also receive a monthly connectivity reimbursement of up to \$40.00. A noon meal after the meeting is also provided.

Health Advisory Committee:

Head Start's Health Advisory Committee is made up of area health care professionals, Head Start parents, and Head Start staff. This Committee meets twice a year to review all aspects of the Head Start health requirements. 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 Head Start program. The Federal Government grants funds to a Head Start Program 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 volunteering at the center.
- Time spent doing curriculum-based family home activities provided by your teacher.
- Time and materials used in making things for the center or children.
- Time spent attending Policy Council Meetings.

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

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:

If a parent or community member feels a Head Start staff person has treated them unfairly, or in a disrespectful manner, he or she may implement the following grievance procedure.

1. Present, in writing, the reason and circumstances surrounding the specific incident to the Head Start Director. The 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish).

Persons with disabilities, who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

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