

# LUZERNE COUNTY HEAD START INC.



## *“Moving Families Forward”*

Serving Children and Families in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties

2022-2023 Family Handbook

Policies and Procedures

[www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org)



**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**This Family Handbook Belongs To:**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

**Head Start Pre-School Services**

Name of Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom #: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Aide: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Health Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

**Early Head Start, Home Visiting Program**

EHS Family Center: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Educator: \_\_\_\_\_

Nurse Educator: \_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation Information, if applicable:**

Bus Driver: \_\_\_\_\_

Bus #: \_\_\_\_\_

Bus Pick-Up Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Bus Drop-Off Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Important Telephone Numbers:**

| Name  | Telephone Number |
|-------|------------------|
| _____ | _____            |
| _____ | _____            |

**Special Dates / Appointments:**

| Date  | Name  |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

**LCHS Central Office**

23 Beekman Street, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

Telephone: (570) 829-6231 Fax: (570) 829-6231

Email: [lchinfo@hsweb](mailto:lchinfo@hsweb) Website: [www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org)

FB: [www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart)

## Table of Contents

|    |  |     |  |
|----|--|-----|--|
| 4  | Welcome                                    | 24  | Child Welfare                            |
| 5  | Our Vision, Mission and Motto              |     | Mandated Reporter                        |
| 6  | Program Options                            |     | Megan’s Law Policy                       |
| 7  | Parent Rights and Responsibilities         | 25  | Consent, Authorization and Releases      |
| 8  | General Information to Families            |     | Family Records                           |
|    | General Policies and Procedures            |     | Release of Confidential Information      |
|    | Standard of Conduct                        |     | Community Resources                      |
| 9  | Video Recording, Photography and Cellphone |     | Help Line                                |
|    | Photos Policy                              |     | Warm Line                                |
| 10 | Attendance, Arrival and Departure          | 26  | Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO) |
|    | Attendance Policy                          |     | North Penn Legal                         |
| 11 | Active Supervision of Children             |     | WIC                                      |
| 12 | Procedure for drop off and pick up         |     | Introduction                             |
|    | Emergency Evacuation                       |     | Healthy Children                         |
|    | Emergency Notification System              |     | Dental Exams and Treatment               |
| 13 | Weather Delays and Cancellations           | 27  | Neighborhood                             |
|    | Smoking Awareness Policy                   | 28  | Health, Nutrition and Safety             |
| 14 | Transportation                             | 29` | Health Insurance Coverage and Medical    |
| 16 | Early Childhood Education                  |     | Assistance                               |
|    | Early Intervention Services                | 30  | Medication Policy                        |
| 17 | Google Classroom                           |     | Sick Children                            |
|    | Live Sessions                              |     | Doctor’s Notes                           |
|    | Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies  | 31  | Accident Reports                         |
| 18 | Sample of Daily Schedule                   | 32  | Student Health Screening Protocol        |
| 19 | Mental Health                              | 33  | Common Childhood Infections              |
|    | Discipline Policy                          | 34  | Head Lice / Bed Bugs                     |
|    | Birthdays, Holidays and Celebrations       | 35  | Pet/Animals Policy                       |
| 20 | Clothing                                   |     | Nutrition Consultation                   |
|    | Diapers                                    |     | Healthy Resources for families           |
|    | Transition                                 | 36  | Food Allergies, Special Diets            |
| 21 | Family Engagement                          |     | Meal Service                             |
|    | Family Partnerships                        | 37  | Child Passenger Safety                   |
|    | Expectations of Mutual Respect             | 38  | Early Head Start Home-Based Program      |
| 22 | Family Engagement Opportunities            |     | Transition from Early Head Start         |
|    | Parent Training                            | 39  | General Policies and Procedures          |
|    | Family Literacy Program                    |     | Emergency Information                    |
|    | Fathers/Father Figure                      |     | Transportation in Early Head Start       |
| 23 | Parent Cafe                                |     | Bus Rules                                |
|    | Program Governance                         |     | Clothing for Family Days and Home Visits |
|    | Parent Committee                           |     | Weather and Program Closings             |
|    | Policy Council                             | 40  | Smoking Awareness                        |
|    |  |     | School Readiness, Curriculum,            |
|    |  |     | Assessment and Screening                 |

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 41 | Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies |
| 42 | Family Days                               |
|    | Family Engagement in Early Head Start     |
| 43 | Expectations of Mutual Respect            |
|    | Family Engagement Opportunities           |
| 44 | Family Literacy                           |
|    | Father/Father Figure                      |
|    | Program Governance                        |
| 45 | Parent/Guardian Volunteers                |
|    | Mandated Reporter                         |
| 46 | Megan's Law                               |
|    | Family Records                            |
| 47 | Family Files                              |
|    | Parent/Staff Agreement                    |
| 48 | Attendance                                |
|    | Health, Nutrition and Safety              |
| 48 | Health Screenings                         |
| 50 | Food Allergies                            |
|    | Nutrition                                 |
|    | Choosy                                    |
| 51 | Child Passenger Safety                    |
| 52 | Safe Sleep for Baby                       |
|    | Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention           |
| 53 | Head Starts Role in Helping Children      |

## Welcome to Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.!

The year will be one of exploration, growth, and development for your child and your family, filled with opportunities to learn and to prepare for the future.

If your child is three or four years old, he or she will be participating in our preschool program in selected classrooms. Coming to his or her classroom will mean seeing the new friends they have made, having fun on the playground, enjoying delicious meals, reading books, using the computer, and learning their letters and numbers. They also will be developing the necessary skills they will need to succeed in school, such as how to get along with others, how to listen to their teachers and follow directions, how to plan the things they will do each day, and how to eat and exercise to be physically healthy.

If you are participating in the Early Head Start program for pregnant women and children from birth to three years of age, you will have weekly visits with a nurse or family educator who will discuss your child's development and show you ways in which you can help ensure that your child reaches his or her maximum potential. Other activities include parenting, nutrition, health education, and family support services along with encouragement and guidance will help you in providing a warm, caring, and responsive environment for your child and family.

The staff looks forward to partnering with you to make sure that your child receives the full benefit from this experience and to helping you in your role as your child's first and most important teacher.

The Board of Directors, Policy Council, and staff of Luzerne County Head Start present this *Family Handbook* with the expectation that awareness of procedures will contribute to effective participation in the program and greater satisfaction and results for your child. We are committed to our mission, principles, and values and strive to implement them in all of our activities. We recognize that a personal and mutually trusting relationship with our children and their families is essential for truly effective participation and we will always meet our professional and ethical responsibility to you.

The following information is provided to acquaint you with our services and policies. We are pleased to have you join the Head Start program and we intend to provide your child with the very best early childhood development and school readiness services, as well as educational and support services, for you and your family.

It is important that you, as your child's first and most important teacher, participate in and support the activities provided for both your child and yourself in order for the program to have the greatest benefit for your child. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your teacher, family worker, family educator, or center or program manager.



## Our Vision

Our vision is children growing and thriving in a supportive, nurturing environment of parents, family, neighborhood, and community where they and their families have options and opportunities for optimum growth, development, and learning.

## Our Mission

As proven leaders in early childhood education and family development, Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for low-income children and families in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Our knowledgeable and caring staff accomplish our mission by providing early care and education for pregnant women and children from birth to five years old, emphasizing healthy outcomes and school readiness, promoting family self-sufficiency, and partnering with individuals, school districts, and our community.

## Our Motto

***“MOVING FAMILIES FORWARD”***

***YOU***

***ARE YOUR CHILD’S  
FIRST and MOST IMPORTANT  
TEACHER!***

***IF YOUR CHILD IS GOING TO  
SUCCEED IN SCHOOL AND LIFE,  
PARENTS AND EDUCATORS  
MUST WORK TOGETHER AS  
PARTNERS!***

***Thank you for joining our Head Start Family***

**PROGRAM OPTIONS**

Your preschool age child will be participating in one of several program options which are staffed by qualified teachers and other professionals.

For each Program Option, classrooms are inclusive and all children participate fully in the classroom experience regardless of any disability. Head Start makes sure that children with physical, language, speech, vision, hearing, or mental health needs are identified early and that treatment is begun as soon as possible.

**Head Start Center-Based Program** provides services throughout Luzerne and Wyoming Counties from August to Mid-June.

**Head Start Dual Language Learning Classrooms** are offered in Wilkes-Barre and throughout the Head Start Centers to aid children in developing English listening and speaking skills while maintaining their home language in preparation for kindergarten.

**Pre-K Counts Program** is a center-based, preschool program funded by the state of Pennsylvania, serving Crestwood, Dallas, Wilkes-Barre, Wyoming Valley West, and Pittston Area School Districts, and other select service areas for qualifying families.

**Early Head Start Program** is a year round home visiting program for children birth to three in selected service areas in Luzerne and Wyoming Counties. Weekly home visits include parenting education, health services, early childhood development and support and referral services. Group activities with other families are held twice a month. Children who are enrolled in the Early Head Start program are given priority for the Head Start preschool program at three years of age.

**Early Head Start Prenatal Program** offers home visiting services to pregnant women provided by a registered nurse. At birth, the baby is enrolled in the Early Head Start program.

For up to date information, please look at our website at [www.ltheadstart.org](http://www.ltheadstart.org). We believe this will be a helpful tool and valuable source of information for our families and our community. You can also find plenty of pictures and information on LCHS's Facebook [www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart) and Instagram page [luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart).

## PARENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

## **Parent Rights**

1. To take part in major policy decisions affecting the planning and operation of the program.
2. To help develop adult programs which will improve daily living for you and your family.
3. To be welcomed in the classroom.
4. To choose whether or not to participate without fear of endangering your child's right to be in the program.
5. To be informed regularly about your child's progress in Head Start/Early Head Start.
6. To always be treated with respect and dignity.
7. To expect guidance for your child from Head Start teachers and staff, which will help his/her total individual development.
8. To be able to learn about the operation of the program, including the budget and the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions.
9. To take part in planning and carrying out programs designed to increase your skill in areas of possible employment.
10. To be informed about all community resources concerned with health, education, and the improvement of family life.
11. To enhance your skills as the most important teacher in your child's life.

## **Parent Responsibilities**

1. To learn as much as possible about the program and to take part in major policy decisions.
2. To accept Head Start/Early Head Start as an opportunity through which you can improve your life and your children's lives.
3. To take part in the classroom as an observer, a volunteer worker or a paid employee, and to contribute your services in whatever way you can toward enrichment of the total program.
4. To provide parent leadership by taking part in elections, to explain the program to other parents and encourage their full participation.
5. To welcome teachers and staff into your home to discuss ways in which parents can help their children's development at home in relation to school experiences.
6. To work with the teacher, staff and other parents in a cooperative way. To talk respectfully to staff and other parents at all times, avoiding nasty and abusive words.
7. To guide your children with firmness, which is both loving and protective.
8. To offer constructive criticism of the program, to defend it against unfair criticism and to share in evaluating it.
9. To take advantage of programs designed to increase your knowledge about child development and your skills in areas of possible employment.
10. To become involved in community programs which help to improve health, education and recreation for all.
11. To complete the necessary immunization records, medical and dental forms are required.
12. To ensure your child attends on a regular basis, adhering to arrival and departure time.
13. To complete the Student Health Screener at home prior to child leaving for school and the Family Health Screener prior to socializations and home visits.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES**



## **Calendars**

Each month, you will receive a calendar from your child's center in your Google Classroom. This calendar will help you to know what is happening at your child's center, class, in the Head Start program, Early Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts. Notices of school closings and holidays, etc. will be posted in your Google Classroom. **Please be sure to check your Google Classroom each day for important information!**

## **Website for Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.**

Families are encouraged to visit our website at [www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org) to see all of the center happenings and to get useful information about child development, health, dental visits and nutrition. Our *School Readiness Goals* can be found on our website under the Resources Tab 'Parent Resource' section. Additionally, you will find information for area school districts, employment opportunities, and community resources that support the needs of our families.

You will be asked for permission for your pictures and your child's pictures to be used on the LCHS website and other related websites, including social media. You can also visit our Facebook and Instagram pages at [www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart](https://www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart) and [www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart/](https://www.instagram.com/luzernecountyheadstart/).

If you know of any families who are looking to apply, please go to [www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org) and click on the red **APPLY** button in the top left corner on the home page. The application is available in both English and Spanish. If they have questions, they can call -829-6321 and ask to speak with an enrollment specialist.

## **GENERAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **Standards of Conduct**

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. (LCHS) is committed to operate all activities within the spirit and letter of all laws and regulations affecting its services, staff, consultants, contractors and volunteers. The provision of a code of conduct reinforces appropriate professional behavior as everyone has the duty to act in the best interest of the agency at all times and exercise the highest level of integrity, ethics and objectivity in their actions and relationships which may affect the agency.

*This rationale serves the 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards, Part 1302, Subpart I - Human Resources Management, §1302.90 Personnel Policies, (c)(1-2).*

Therefore, LCHS's *Standards of Conduct and Professional Ethics* include, but is not limited to, ensuring the following:

Staff, Consultants, Contractors and Volunteers implement positive strategies to support children's wellbeing and prevent and address challenging behavior; Staff, Consultants, Contractors and

Volunteers do not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including, at a minimum, that staff must not:

- Use corporal punishment;
- Use isolation to discipline a child;
- Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
- Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
- Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
- Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
- Physically abuse a child;
- Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family; or,
- Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward.

LCCHS is committed to conducting all activities within the spirit and letter of all laws and regulations affecting its services and employees. All employees of LCCHS must exercise the highest level of integrity, ethics and objectivity in their actions and relationships which may affect LCCHS. Everyone has the duty to act in the best interest of the agency at all times.

#### **Video Recording, Photography, and Cellphone Photos Policy**

Throughout the year, the agency will be taking photographs of various activities. These photos may be used for publications and newspaper articles. You have been asked to sign a consent form to have your child included in these photos. Please discuss any changes to this permission that you might have with your teacher, family worker or family educator throughout the school year. The staff may record events for use by staff in the centers. If you do not wish to have your child's picture or video taken, the consent form will allow you to refuse pictures and video. Your child's picture will not be used in any publication or newspaper articles. **Parents must refrain from taking pictures of children and placing them on social media.**

Video surveillance is used in Luzerne County Head Start centers, on the buses, and surrounding areas.

#### **Note:**

- ***Families are not allowed to take pictures/videos of other children when present onsite.***
- ***Families are not allowed to take photos/videos on any virtual platform where other children are displayed.***
- ***Prior to the arrival and departure, you are responsible for your child's supervision. We ask that you limit distractions, such as cell phone usage, so that you can attend to your child and get him/her safely to and from the center.***

## ATTENDANCE, ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

The Head Start program is required to keep records of attendance and reasons for absences. As "partners" with us in our program, parents are expected to:

- Send your child to school regularly and on time if your child is **not** sick;
- Call the center before class begins or tell your family worker/teacher whenever your child will be absent;
- Tell us the **reason** for the absence;
- Please do not send your child in when they are ill and cannot participate in daily activities.

**(PLEASE SEE HEALTH SECTION)**

When a child is absent and no contact has been made by the parent it will be considered an "unexcused absence". Families will be contacted by staff when there are unexcused absences.

**We expect all children to arrive at school on time for the start of their day. Our staff may not be available to leave the classroom and get your child at the door if you are late. The safety of the children is our priority and staff need to be in the classroom for active supervision. Please let the staff know in advance if you will be late due to a specific reason such as a medical or dental appointment.**

### Attendance Policy

We want your child to have the best preschool experience possible and to be "Kindergarten Ready" when they enter elementary school. Setting up consistent routines such as bedtimes and wake times through positive conversations with your child will help you set an early standard of on time regular attendance, which is extremely important for your child and is also a requirement of our regulations.

Our program *regulations expect children to be in attendance*. However, *we understand that children can become ill and must be kept at home when they are sick*.

**Excused absences** are defined as: Those absences when a student is prevented from attending for mental, physical or other urgent reasons. These can further be defined as illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health, dental or other appointments that cannot be scheduled after school hours, fire, natural disasters, or other extenuating circumstances deemed as excused by the program.

**Unexcused absences** are any absences that are not included in the above definition of excused absences. Research shows that attendance is directly related to achievement and success in school. Therefore, when children have more than 5 consecutive, unexcused absences, the provider and family together, must discuss the reasons for the absence and determine ways to support the child's attendance in school.

***If a child is absent, parents must contact the center before class begins or within one hour of class start time and speak with their Teacher/Family Worker/Center Manager or leave a message as all absences and the reasons for them must be documented by our staff. If you are calling education staff during school hours, the staff will return your call after the children have left for the day.***

Please refer to the “*Infectious Disease Policy*” chart located in this parent handbook to see when a doctor’s note is recommended in order for your child to return to class. When children are absent from the center and no contact is made by the parent, our staff may reach out to you through phone contact or a home visit. If contact is not made by the third day of an unexcused absence, a letter of concern will be sent. If unsuccessful, the Family Engagement–Specialist will send a follow-up letter. If no resolution is agreed upon, the slot will become a vacancy and filled with the next eligible child on our waiting list in order to maintain full enrollment in our program.

***Any plans for an extended absence (i.e. due to a family trip or emergency) must be discussed with staff.*** The situation will be evaluated to determine if the enrollment slot can be held during the absence. There must be an expected date of return no more than 30 calendar days from the first day of absence. If the child does not return by the deadline, the slot will become a vacancy. You may be asked to sign an agreement indicating your understanding and expected date of return.

Due to circumstances changing daily, such as COVID-19 exposures, building issues, staffing, and weather, which may affect staffing and children, families will be notified of school or classroom closures and will need to be prepared to return to virtual services for a brief or extended time frame. In this situation, the FIP (Flexible Instructional Plan) may be used and attendance will be documented.

***Lastly, our Support Staff are in place to provide services and referrals for families with children.***

If you have any needs or concerns related to you or your child’s health or any other issues affecting your family, staff can provide you with quality information on a variety of topics and are familiar with the services of the many helping agencies in our community. Our staff wishes to develop a friendly and productive working rapport with all our families, so we encourage you to communicate with us regularly. Our goal is to keep your child enrolled and on a healthy path of lifelong learning!

### **Parent Concerns**

We want you to have a rewarding and satisfactory experience at Head Start/Early Head Start. If you should have a complaint or concern that you would like to bring to our attention, please call your Center Manager/Program Manager (See Center Information Sheet) or the Central Office. Community/Parent Concerns are documented, and we will work with you to resolve the situation.

### **Active Supervision of Children**

Keeping children safe is a top priority of our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The staff of LCHS practices *Active Supervision*, which means that classroom staff focus their attention on children and intentionally observe children at all times. To ensure that children are closely supervised, our staff will be using a *Picture Card Accountability System*. Each child will have an

individual card containing the child's picture, the child's first name and last name, and if the child has an allergy. The Picture Cards follow the children from the time they enter the program until the time they leave the program each and every day. The education staff will not have access to or use their agency cell phone during class time due to active supervision of the children. If you leave a message for the education staff, they will return your call or text after the children have left the center for the day. If you need a center staff member during class time, please call the center directly.

### **Procedures for Drop Off and Pick Up**

- ❖ Classroom staff ensure that every child has a Picture Card to start the day.
- ❖ As a family drops their child off at school, the teacher will hand the family the child's picture card. The family member will check the card to confirm it's their child's picture card. They will then hand the picture card back to the teacher.—This will transfer responsibility between the family and teacher ensuring the teacher recognizes and assumes responsibility for their child while at school.
- ❖ After all the children have been received at the door, the cards will be divided into primary care groups.
- ❖ When a child leaves the center/classroom at the end of the day, teachers will hand the Picture Card to the family. The family will confirm it's their child then place the Picture Card in the Picture Card Basket.

***Prior to the Picture card transfer, you are responsible for your child's supervision. We ask that you limit distractions, such as cell phone usage, so that you can attend to your child and get him/her safely to and from the center.***

### **Emergency Evacuation - Location Site**

Each center has an ***Emergency Evacuation Location Site***, suitable to that location. This information will be provided to every parent during Orientation/Enrollment.

LCCHS uses the Standard Response Protocol from "I Love U Guys". LCCHS will be utilizing this response in Head Start, Early Head Start, and Pre-K Counts Centers that are not located in School District buildings. The centers that are located in School District buildings will follow that School District's Emergency Plan. Each family will receive information about the plan during Orientation/Enrollment. This plan includes Lock Out, Lock Down, Evacuation, and Shelter. Your child will practice various drills throughout the school year to be prepared in case of emergency.

### **Emergency Notification System**

LCCHS utilizes two different messaging systems for families in our Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K Counts programs. Child Plus and One Call Now allow us to notify parents/guardians within via a phone call, text and/or email. It is extremely important for parents/guardians to keep all phone numbers and emails current in One Call Now and Child Plus. Please register with One Call Now by going to our website and clicking on the link to One Call Now. Please contact your Teacher or family worker as soon as possible with any changes to your contact information so they will be able to update the Child Plus system.

## **Weather Delays and Cancellations**

Each center will follow the local school district in regards to weather delays and weather related school cancellations. If the local school district is not in session and LCHS due to be open and there is a weather concern, then LCHS will send text and/or email notifications via Child Plus Messaging and will additionally post weather notifications on our website – [www.lchheadstart.org](http://www.lchheadstart.org), on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart](http://www.facebook.com/luzernecountyheadstart), or on WNEP-TV (channel 16, [www.wnep.com](http://www.wnep.com)) and WBRE PAHomepage.

The Flexible Instruction Plan (FIP) will be used in the event that school needs to be closed due to staffing, health reasons, building issues, or weather. Families will be notified that the FIP is being used by classroom staff.

\*LCHS will notify you if there is an early dismissal.\*

## **Smoking Awareness Policy**

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. cares about the health and safety of our children, families, and staff. It is part of our mission to promote health and wellness. In addition, our Federal Performance Standards require us to provide information to our families regarding preventative health awareness, including environmental hazards.

Smoking presents more than the risk of cancer. The Pennsylvania Department of Health reports that children exposed to smoke experience frequent colds and ear infections, increased risk of developing asthma, higher risk of pneumonia and bronchitis, and weaker lungs. A recent study shows that 40% of children who have been exposed to secondhand smoke were more likely to experience breathing problems while under general anesthesia. Smoking during pregnancy can put a woman at risk for miscarriage, stillbirth, or premature birth, and can cause the baby to have less oxygen than needed, low birth weight, and respiratory problems. Smoke in the home has also been linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Did you know?

- Second-hand smoke and third-hand smoke can cause serious health problems.
- Invisible particles from smoke stay in a room 3-4 hours after a person has smoked a cigarette.
- Tobacco products contain over 4,000 chemicals.
- Even “third-hand” smoke, the chemicals that stay on clothes and furniture, is dangerous.

Our staff is aware that smoking is a personal choice, and that smoking is a powerful addiction. We will be happy to provide you with information and support if you should decide to quit. In the meantime, we offer these helpful tips for you and your children:

- Don't smoke when your child is present, especially in your car.
- If you must smoke, do so OUTSIDE of your home.
- Ask others not to smoke around you and your children.

For the health and safety of your children and our staff, we ask that you and others in your home make every effort to refrain from smoking during Head Start and Early Head Start home visits.

***NOTE: Smoking is prohibited in and around all Luzerne County Head Start/Early Head Start sites and in agency vehicles, including our buses, parking lots, and property. This includes the use of e-cigarettes and all smokeless tobacco products.***

## **Transportation**

LCHS will provide transportation services on a **limited** basis. If your child receives transportation services you will still need a way to transport your child to and from school in case of certain circumstances, such as Covid-19 exposures, sickness, or injury. Families will be notified of school or classroom closures and the Flexible Instruction Plan may need to be implemented for a brief or extended time frame. If transportation is unavailable, but the classroom is still open, families will need to provide their own transportation.

LCHS will no longer pick up and drop off at child care centers. By eliminating pick up and drop offs at child care we feel it will help to decrease the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 therefore helping to keep children and staff healthy and safe.

### **Bus procedures:**

1. Families are asked to answer the health screen questions prior to taking the child to the bus stop.
2. Children will wait with their family members outside of the bus.
3. The bus monitor will meet the child and family at the door of the bus at the stop.
4. The bus aide will take the masked child onto the bus and buckle them into the safety restraint seat.
5. Children will be assigned seats on the bus that will not be able to be moved without permission of the Center Manager and Director of Operations.
6. Children must wear masks while on the bus.
7. On the return trip home, the Bus Aide will unbuckle the child at their bus stop.
8. The bus driver will verify the adult outside of the bus door as an approved pick up person.
9. Once verified, the Bus Aide will release the child to the approved adult and have them initial the bus book .

There are three basic bus rules for children to follow when riding on a Head Start bus:

- (1) Buckle Up and Bottoms Down**
- (2) Inside Voices**
- (3) Keep Your Hands to Yourself**

Children must remain seated at all times and **MUST** wear a safety restraint.

An authorized individual, 18 years or older must be at the designated drop off location in order to release the child in the afternoon. The authorized individual must be on the release consent in order to release the child. The authorized individual must hold the child's hand while walking to and from the bus. A parent or family member will be responsible for escorting the child from the house and/or vehicle to the bus stairs and from the bus stairs to the house and/or vehicle safely.

Please contact the staff at your center to make any additions or deletions to the authorized individuals to release your child. In cases where the Bus Monitor does not know the identity of the parent, guardian, or authorized individual person picking up the child, the Bus Aide **must** see a form of picture identification of the authorized adult. If there is no picture identification, the child will be returned to the school building.

If a parent or responsible individual who is 18 years or older is **NOT** at the bus stop, the Bus Driver will adhere to the following procedure: The Driver/Bus Aide will call the primary contact number to discuss where the adult is located. The Driver/Bus Aide will then call the family worker and/or Center Manager to inform them of the situation. The Center Manager and/or family worker will then inform the Family Engagement Team and the Director of Operations. The Driver will continue the bus run with the child being returned to the Center at the end of the run. The Center Manager and/or Family Worker will then inform the Family Engagement Team and the Director of Operations that your child will be returning to the center. This will be listed as an occurrence. After one hour of no contact from the family, proper authorities will be contacted. **Please make sure all emergency contact numbers are up to date at all times.**

If at any time your bus is late (more than 10 minutes after scheduled bus stop time) dropping off your child, please contact your child's center.

*According to 2016 Head Start Program Performance Standards, §1303.73 Trip Routing, (b)(1), a child, riding on a bus, must not exceed one hour of riding, therefore we ask all families to be waiting at their designated bus stop in the morning and afternoon prior to the bus stopping. Please be at the child's designated bus stop at least ten minutes before the scheduled time of pick up and-drop off.* Your Driver will not be able to beep the horn and cannot wait. The Driver will return your child to their Center at the end of the day if no one is available at the bus stop. You will need to make arrangements to pick up your child from their Center. You will also be in jeopardy of losing transportation for your child.

Parents/guardians and children are provided Bus Safety Education along with Pedestrian Safety at Orientation and Enrollment. For late enrollees, parents/guardians and children will receive Bus Safety Education along with Pedestrian Safety within the first 30 days of enrollment. Head Start children participate in monthly bus education lessons. Bus drills will take place for all children throughout the year. The purpose of the drill is for all children to understand what to do in case of an emergency when on the bus.



## **Cameras on Buses**

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. utilizes cameras among all Head Start buses. These cameras record voices, sound, and activities inside the buses, and also record activities outside in front of the buses. This is done for the safety of all.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

The magical ages of three and four are a time of wonder and questions. **We believe that parents are the primary teachers of their children.** Teachers work together with parents, communicating regularly to build an understanding and a greater consistency for children. You will see teachers at Orientation, Enrollment, monthly Parent Committee meetings, home visits, Parent/Teacher conferences, and transition meetings.

Our goal is to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of your child. **Children learn through play.** A child needs to see, touch, smell, taste and hear to understand and obtain the true meaning of their environment.

Children need safe and supportive environments where they can practice newly acquired skills and build on those skills to learn new information. Teachers support children's individualized learning opportunities by providing meaningful experiences that engage their interests, abilities and culture. Learning for young children is a balance of self-discovery and supportive and nurturing teachers who construct challenging, yet attainable goals.

The *Ages and Stages Questionnaire Developmental Screening*, *Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment*, individual goals, the *PA Early Learning Standards* and teacher observations of children's progress and achievement are all used to plan curriculum, highlight areas for further evaluation, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness. Children with special needs receive additional supportive services from Early Intervention.

### **Early Intervention Services**

The teacher will contact you after the *Ages and Stages Questionnaire Developmental Screening* is scored if your child needs further testing. While all children grow and change at their own rate, some children experience delays in their development. Early Intervention (EI) provides services and support to young children and their families/caregivers to help the child grow and develop. With your permission, additional testing will occur. The permission forms will come from Hazleton Area School District. If your child qualifies for services after the evaluation is complete, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be developed that includes individual goals the therapist and teacher will work towards. It is very important for you to attend the IEP meeting. Your input is vital in the process. You know your child the best. Teachers will also support the family in working on these goals at home.

All Parent(s)/guardian(s) of children with an IEP are given a "A Family's Introduction to Early Intervention" packet, to help them better understand Early Intervention, the IEP, and transition

process. The packet also provides more information to the families on IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and resources they can access in the community.

If your child is going to kindergarten next year, you will be invited to attend a Transition Meeting with your teacher, Early Intervention Therapist, and a School District representative. This meeting usually takes place in February. The district will discuss services that will be continued in kindergarten and may request further testing. As a team member, it is important that you attend.

### **Google Classroom**

Each LCHS classroom will have a Google Classroom. This online platform is used by LCHS to share information about the children's learning experiences. Teachers will share classroom newsletters, calendars, and video links to live learning sessions in the Google Classroom. The classroom teacher will invite a family to join their Google Classroom after the-orientation process has been completed.

Teachers and families will communicate regularly about a child's learning, development, routines, activities, and progress towards goals. Parents are encouraged to comment in the Google Classroom, post pictures, or videos of their child participating in the learning activities. Videos or pictures of the child's work can also be emailed to the teacher.

### **Flexible Instruction Plan**

Flexible Instruction Plan (FIP) will be used in the event that school needs to be closed due to staffing, health reasons, building issues, or weather. Families will be notified that the FIP is being used by classroom staff. Directions will be posted in the Google Classroom. Families have three options to count towards attendance:

- Synchronously through a live zoom session.
- Asynchronously by watching a recording of the zoom session at a later time.
- Non remote option by completing an At Home Activity.

Attendance will be taken by the classroom staff and family worker. Classroom staff will provide fun and engaging learning experiences for children and their families. The live learning session will be no more than 30 minutes in length. The live session will be recorded. Families consent to the recording during the Orientation process and additionally before joining each daily Zoom session. A message will appear before the Zoom session informing families, "This meeting is being recorded. By continuing to be in the meeting you are consenting to be recorded". The recordings will be posted in the Google Classroom that same day as the live session. Families can view the recorded session at a later time if they are not able to join live. The Teacher will survey families' availability for live learning experiences. The live session will be offered during the day. The Zoom link for Daily Live Session will be posted in the Google Classroom.

### **Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies**

Promoting **A**lternative **T**hinking **S**trategies (PATHS) is a researched-based social and emotional curriculum that addresses the following goals:

1. Increase children's self-control
2. Increase children's ability to get along with others by improving friendship skills

3. Enhance children's self-esteem, self-confidence and ability to give and receive compliments
4. Increase children's understanding and communication of emotions
5. Help children recognize and understand how their behavior affects others
6. Increase children's understanding and use of logical reasoning and problem-solving vocabulary.

Daily PATHS activities include songs and stories led by Twiggie and his friends. PATHS characters Twiggie the turtle, Daphne the duck, Henrietta the hedgehog, and Duke the dog help to create socially acceptable expectations used through our program. Our expectation of everyone at Head Start:

We are Kind  
 We are Safe  
 We are Helpful  
 We all Work Together  
**Children's Temperament**



Children are born with their natural style of interacting with or reacting to people, places and things-temperament. Nine temperament traits are present at birth and influence development throughout life. The nine temperament traits combine to form three basic types of temperament, easy, difficult and slow to warm up. By understanding these traits, parents can be more aware and respect their child's uniqueness, communicate with their child, set limits and be a good role model. Please refer to the handout *Understanding Your Child's Temperament* given at Orientation for more information.

### Sample of Daily Routine Schedule

- **Arrival** - Breakfast
- **Planning Time** - Your child will be given the opportunity to decide where they would like to play. This helps with decision-making, language skills, organization of thoughts, and social skills.
- **Work Time** - Your child is completing their plan. Children select their own activities and materials from among a variety of learning areas the teachers prepare, such as:
- **Block** - Children practice building cooperatively, sorting, grouping, comparing, and arranging objects, counting, and balancing.
- **Dramatic Play** - Children demonstrate make-believe play by using the experiences they have observed: pouring, zipping, buttoning, playing with others, writing, and one-to-one correspondence.
- **Art** - Children draw representations of what they have seen by using paint, crayons, scissors, glue, and many other art materials. They are learning to cut, mix, make decisions, and be creative. In the art area emphasis is placed on the "process rather than the finished product" that is when the ideal learning occurs.
- **Library** - Literacy skills are very important to young children. Children are to read, dictate stories, read labels, act out a story, pretend to read a story, play literacy games on the computer and identify words and sounds.
- **Manipulative** - Children develop fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination by putting puzzles together, stringing beads, using counting bears, matching pictures, and sorting objects.
- **Recall Time** - Your child will tell where they played, who they played with, what they played with and how they accomplished their plan. This helps with social skills, organizing thoughts, and literacy skills.

- **Small Group Time** – Children are involved in teacher designed activities based on the needs and interests of the children. Teachers and children are asking questions, offering suggestions, experimenting, drawing conclusions, adding more complex vocabulary and ideas. Children can be involved in a variety of activities such as cooking, planting, science experiments, drawing, etc.
- **Outside Time** - Children have opportunities to use their large muscles by jumping, balancing, running, climbing, pedaling, catching, throwing, etc. Outdoor activities are also planned so children can express themselves freely.
- **Large Group Time** - Children experience and enjoy many types of music using instruments, dancing, and self-expression.
- **Story Time** - Children develop listening skills, learn new vocabulary words, analyze the stories, learn the parts of a book, and appreciate books.

## **Mental Health**

### **Consultation with Licensed Professional Therapists**

LCHS's works with licensed professional counselors who specialize in children's mental and behavioral health. If you have concerns or questions regarding your child's mental health and behavioral health, they are available for consultation. Please share with your child's classroom teacher to schedule an appointment.

### **Discipline Policy**

The education staff are trained in classroom management and child development. **At no time is physical punishment or timeout used.** Appropriate positive methods, which are outlined in a 5-step Positive Guidance Procedure, are used instead. The staff corrects a child's behavior by helping the child understand the consequences, discussing their problems, and including them in the problem solving process.

A Behavior Protocol Agreement will be reviewed with parents during Orientation to outline steps that will occur if a child's behavior becomes a safety-concern.

### **Birthdays, Holidays & Celebrations**

The Head Start/Early Head Start program is interested in facilitating inclusive experiences for children; therefore, children will be encouraged to share meaningful experiences from their own family traditions with the class. Conversations about the diversity of cultures will be encouraged, and will be included as part of our inclusive curriculum and program, however we do not emphasize specific holiday celebrations.

Children's birthdays are acknowledged in various ways in our classrooms. We want all children to feel special when celebrating birthdays, and therefore do not allow families/guardians to bring goody bags or gifts for the children in the class or center. We prefer to keep the celebration simple, but special for your child. Invitations to birthday parties will not be distributed by Head Start/Early Head Start staff.

**In keeping with our Nutrition Policy, we do not allow families to bring any food or treats into the center to celebrate birthdays. Classrooms do celebrate birthdays with a book and song in the classroom.**

### **Celebrations**

You will be invited to Classroom Appreciation Day, at the end of the year, which will recognize your child's accomplishments. You will be presented with their portfolio and their certificate of accomplishment.

### **Clothing**

The classrooms, both indoor and outdoor, are busy with many activities such as painting, water play, sand and glue, just to name a few. Let your child wear comfortable play clothes so he or she will not have to worry about getting dirty. Comfortable, full coverage footwear, such as sneakers (with laces or Velcro), should be worn. No flip-flops, Crocs, or sandals should be worn due to gross motor and outdoor play. Children should dress according to the weather.

**► We do go out every day, even if it's only for a few minutes, unless it is below 25 degrees F or above 90 degrees F. This guidance comes from Caring for our Children standard 3.1.3.2: Playing Outdoors .**

Each parent should send an extra set of clothes to leave at the center in case of an accident. All such clothing should be marked with the child's name. Please include one of everything (underwear and socks included). If by chance your child does have an accident, the teacher will send the dirty clothes home. **► Please remember to send a clean set in once again.**

### **Diapers**

Some enrolled children need to wear diapers or disposable training pants. If your child needs to wear diapers or training pants, they will be provided while your child is in session. If you prefer a special brand of diapers or training pants, you are responsible for providing them.

### **What to Send to School with Your Child**

It is not recommended to bring toys from home. There are many toys available at the center, which will be sanitized daily.

### **Transition**

Transitioning to kindergarten is an exciting time for both you and your child. Throughout the year, your child's Head Start/PreK Counts teacher will share many activities that will focus on a variety of readiness skills. The time you spend with your child doing activities is a fun way to prepare for the move to kindergarten. Your Head Start/Pre-K Counts teacher will conduct a Spring Transition meeting with you to discuss your child's strengths and goals. You'll receive information about Kindergarten registration from your teacher.

Here are some tips for a successful transition process:

- Attend the spring Parent Committee meeting when a school district representative shares information about kindergarten registration.
- Complete the kindergarten registration process before your child leaves Head Start/Pre-K Counts.

- Remember to attend kindergarten orientation if your district has one (this might be via Zoom)
- Try to meet the teacher before the first day of class
- Read books about kindergarten and share stories about your first day of school
- Talk about the bus ride, and offer reassurance that school is a great place to be!

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Family Partnerships**

The Head Start/Early Head Start vision for parent involvement and family engagement is to support parents as their child's first and most important teacher. **We Are Partners.** When your family is enrolled in a Luzerne County Head Start program, which includes but is not limited to Jump Start, Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K Counts, we become partners. To build our partnership, we need to get to know each other. In Head Start, your family worker will be completing a *Family Strengths Assessment* with you. This is a great way to learn about you and your family and to celebrate all of the strengths and successes you have. It will also allow us to partner with you in using those strengths to set and work towards achieving any goals you may have.

Our partnership with parents is fundamental to providing quality early childhood services. Four elements of our program that are key to parent and family engagement are:

1. *Program environment* - families feel welcomed, valued and respected by program staff;
2. *Family partnerships* - staff and families work together to identify and achieve goals and aspirations;
3. *Teaching and learning partnerships* - families are engaged as equal partners in children's learning and development; and
4. *Community partnerships* - communities support families' interests and needs and encourage parent and family engagement in children's learning.

In addition, communication is a vital part of a partnership. It is important that we have communication with you on a regular basis to ensure that your family has what you need to receive the most out of our services. We are here for you and will continue to support you in any way we can.

### **Expectation of Mutual Respect**

LCHS has an "Expectation of Mutual Respect" between staff and families. In the partnerships that we build, we develop an atmosphere of mutual respect in the provision of Head Start/Early Head Start services.

We understand that parents are their child's first and most important educator and we want to help parents be successful in that role. All expectations of respect are given to our families' values and culture. Head Start/Early Head Start staff will show respect to the families in our workplace. In return for families who are Head Start/Early Head Start participants, we look for the same mutual respect toward our staff.

### **Family Engagement Opportunities**

LCCHS will be providing families with opportunities to be involved in their child's learning, as well as ways to grow as a leader and advocate for their family. The following opportunities for engagement will be offered at various times throughout the program year.

### **Parent Training/Curriculum**

LCCHS offers opportunities for parents to participate in a research based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge and offers the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children's learning and development.

### **Family Literacy Program**

LCCHS will be available at our 4 locations; however, you are also eligible to enroll in the Family Literacy program through Luzerne County Community College. Staff will provide information, if interested.

#### *What is Family Literacy?*

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

*As parents acquire new educational, social, employment and life skills, they are able to enhance the literacy skills of their children.*

Family Literacy programs are conducted at LCCC. Contact your Family Worker or Family Educator for details and to enroll in the Family Literacy Program.

### **Father/Father Figures in Head Start**

In addition to specific programming designed to bring the father/father-figures together with the child, ways to be involved include attending Parent Committee meetings and parent workshops; serving on Policy Council, the Health Advisory Committee, the Transition and Family Services Advisory Committees, and attending specific activities, such as Breakfast With Dad and family literacy activities. Reading "father friendly" books that dads will enjoy reading to their children. Participating in the Parent Committee; participating in Parent/Teacher conferences and participation in any Head Start group activities.

**Parent Cafe**

This is an opportunity for our families for the upcoming program year. Parent Cafés are physically and emotionally safe spaces where parents and caregivers talk about the challenges and victories of raising a family. Through individual deep self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning, participants explore their strengths, learn about the Protective Factors, and create strategies from their own wisdom and experiences to help strengthen their families. Cafés are structured discussions that use the principles of adult learning and family support. Participants leave Parent Cafés feeling inspired, energized, and excited to put into practice what they've learned.

**Program Governance**

We rely on the leadership and insight of our parents/guardians enrolled in our program. They help us to make decisions and guide the direction of our agency. During this time, we are still adhering to the policies of our program and conducting our Parent Committee and Policy Council.

**Parent Committee**

Parents are offered opportunities to participate in shared decision-making at your center through Parent Committee groups. Every parent of an enrolled child is automatically a member of the Parent Committee. The Parent Committee provides parents with an opportunity to assist in the development of activities that address their interests and needs, and that support the education and healthy development of their children. It provides parents with an opportunity to advise staff in developing and implementing program policies, activities and services. Meetings are held monthly, during the school year for Head Start and Pre-K Counts. During the meetings, parents are elected to serve on the Policy Council.

**Policy Council**

Opportunities for parents to participate in agency program governance happens through Policy Council. Policy Council is established and charged with specific functions outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards in order to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be involved in shared decision-making.

Our Policy Council members continue to meet monthly. Membership consists of current and former Head Start parents and members of the community who share a common interest in the welfare of children and families. Representatives are elected through the Parent Committee from Head Start, PA Pre-K Counts, and Early Head Start.

**Volunteering in Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.**

Volunteerism is an important part of the Head Start experience. Volunteer opportunities will be presented and explained during communication with your family worker or Pre-K Counts teacher. Some of these opportunities will include participation in monthly Parent Committee Meetings, participation in Policy Council, or participation on one of our Advisory Committees. This year, there may be opportunities to volunteer in one of our classrooms or assist with Center activities, depending on local health conditions and CDC guidelines. Again, your family worker or Pre-K Counts teacher will be providing you with this information as it becomes available.



## **Child Welfare**

### **Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect**

Head Start and Early Head Start staff, like other medical, social and educational professionals, contracted staff, bus staff, and volunteers are **Mandated Reporters of child abuse and neglect**. This means that we are required by law to report any *suspected cases* of child abuse or neglect to the Childline Abuse Registry of the state of Pennsylvania. It is important for families to keep in mind that a report is made in order to get help for a family experiencing an abuse or neglect problem, not to punish or embarrass the family. All child abuse/neglect reports are kept strictly confidential. For more information and helpful resources visit [Keep Kids Safe PA](#).

### **What is Child Abuse?**

Child abuse, according to the CPSL, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
- Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:
  - Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
  - Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
  - Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
  - Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
  - Interfering with the breathing of a child.
  - Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
  - Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

### **Megan's Law Policy**

Head Start/Early Head Start staff will be updated on a regular basis regarding any individuals registered under Megan's Law.

## Consents, Authorizations, and Releases

During the Orientation Process, you will complete the “*Consents, Authorizations and Release*” form electronically. A verbal consent from parents or guardians with 2 staff members acting as witnesses to parents verbal consent will be obtained. The form must be kept current at all times. We recommend that there be at least three responsible adult contacts at least 18 years of age, who are willing to pick up your sick child from the Center in a timely manner, if needed.

## Family Records

### Release of Confidential Information

Any information you provide to us, or any information that we have concerning your child or family, will not be discussed or shared with anyone within the program unless it is for the purpose of providing services to your family. No information will be shared with anyone outside the program unless we have a parent’s permission. Parents are allowed to see their family’s records only.

### Community Resources

Your Family Worker or Teacher has access to a variety of community resources. They will be sharing information with you regarding social service providers and community events on a weekly basis. However, if you have a specific need, please reach out to them for information. A variety of resources can be accessed by visiting our website [www.lcheadstart.org](http://www.lcheadstart.org) Once on the LCHS website, click on “Resources”, then “Parent Resources” for a list of community social service agencies. Head Start staff can assist you in accessing services. Some commonly used resources can be found below.

### HelpLine



HelpLine is an information and referral service, as well as a first response point for crisis calls. HelpLine operates throughout Luzerne and Wyoming Counties, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is staffed with trained caseworkers. HelpLine maintains a listing of over 400 local agencies to assist callers. **Those seeking information or referrals can dial 570-829-1341, or 2-1-1 in some areas.** HelpLine can also be reached by texting your zip-code to 898211. HelpLine maintains a resource guide titled

*Negotiating the Networks.*

### Warm Line

The Warm Line is a telephone support line where the caller is able to talk to trained peers that can listen to concerns and offer support. The Warm Line Peer Responder has a unique perspective on issues since they may have experienced many of the same feelings in the past. Warm Line is available seven days a week from 5:00pm to 9:00pm. **Warm Line can be reached by calling 1-866-839-0445 or 570-270-6866.**

### **Commission on Economic Opportunity (CEO)**

Operating a broad array of programs, CEO exemplifies its "People Helping People" mission by mobilizing resources to fight the causes and effects of poverty and promoting self-sufficiency among low-income and vulnerable populations. Some of these resources include:

- The Weinberg Regional Food Bank
- Planning and Service Coordination for the Homeless
- PPL, UGI Fuel Funds and Energy Conservation
- Weatherization
- Case Management
- Income Tax Preparation Assistance
- Food 4 Kids

For more information on CEO:

Phone: (570) 826-0510

Toll Free Number: 1-800-822-0359

E-Mail: ceonortheastpa@gmail.com

Weekdays: 8:30am - 5:00pm

### **North Penn Legal**

North Penn Legal Services is a nonprofit organization providing civil legal aid to low-income residents of Northeastern Pennsylvania. They provide legal assistance so that people can know their rights and free legal representation in non-criminal matters such as eviction from housing, discrimination, family law, and consumer protection issues.

For more information:

Call our legal aid hotline at 877-953-4250

Intake hours are Mon-Thurs: 9 - 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 - 4 p.m. (No Friday Intake)

### **WIC (Pennsylvania Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants & Children)**

The WIC Nutrition Program provides pregnant and breastfeeding women, new moms, and children birth to age 5 with nutrition counseling to make healthy food choices and improve overall health, and vouchers to purchase healthy foods at grocery stores and local farmers markets.

**WIC Clinics:** Wilkes-Barre WIC Center: 570-823-1516

Hazleton WIC Center: 570-459-1805

Tunkhannock WIC Center: 570-836-6622

### **Free Meals For Kids**

English: [www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals](http://www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals)

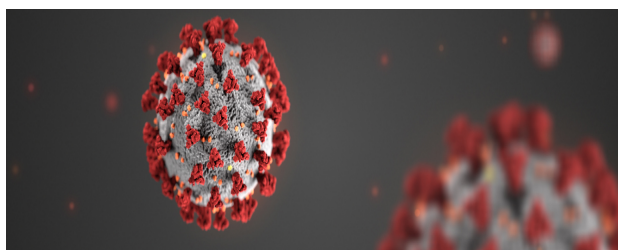
Spanish: [www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals-es](http://www.nokidhungry.org/find-free-meals-es)

Recipes, videos and tips on healthy meals: [www.cookingmatters.org](http://www.cookingmatters.org)

## Neighborly



Neighborly helps individuals and families find free or reduced-cost services in their communities. Search for local resources to access food, housing, child care, transportation, utility assistance, healthcare, financial assistance and other needs. Neighborly can be reached at <https://www.neighborlypa.com/>



### **COVID-19 Information**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/)

Pennsylvania Department of Health

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/coronavirus/ohs-covid-19-updates>

### **Opioid & Substance Abuse Information**

PA Department of Health: 1-800-662-HELP

Luzerne/Wyoming Counties Drug and Alcohol Program: 570-826-8790

Or After Hours - HelpLine: 570-829-1341 or 2-1-1

The prescription opioid and heroin overdose epidemic is the worst public health crisis in Pennsylvania. It affects Pennsylvanians across the state, from big cities to rural communities. The Wolf Administration takes an all-hands-on deck approach to prevent the disease from happening, rescue those suffering and get Pennsylvanians into treatment.

## HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND SAFETY

### Introduction

Staff and healthcare professionals work closely with our families to identify health and developmental concerns and referrals can be made to address those concerns. Our goal is to ensure that every family has ongoing access to a medical and a dental provider. Additionally, staff will provide assistance, as needed, with appointments, follow-up and treatments. Staff will also conduct Health Literacy workshops that will educate families on becoming self-sufficient within the healthcare system.

### Healthy Children are Ready to Learn and Have Fun

Every child must have completed and on file:

1. Up-to-date immunization record: **Head Start or Pre-K Counts may not retain a child at the center for more than 60 days without an up to date immunization record on file.**
2. Annual Physical Exam and treatment every 12 months including annual flu shots
3. Screenings: Vision – completed at Head Start  
Hearing – completed at Head Start  
Lead – required at 24 months. If no results are available from testing at age 24 months or older, you can request this blood test from your doctor and provide us with the results.
4. Dental exam, every 6 months, and treatment completed

These are Head Start and PA state requirements. **Head Start and Pre-K Counts staff will work with families to obtain immunizations, immunization records, and health requirements.** To help promote health, safety and first aid, a Health Staff Member is assigned to each center. Health Staff are available to assist staff, families, and children. Parents can call to speak with a member of the health staff team.

### Dental Exams and Treatment

Healthy teeth and gums improve appearance and self-esteem. They allow children to eat a variety of healthy foods, speak clearly and promote healthy placement of secondary teeth.

- Have a dental exam by age 1 then every 6 months as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Brush teeth after meals and at bedtime.
- Floss after brushing when teeth are present.
- Replace toothbrushes when worn, every 3 months or as directed by your doctor or dentist.
- Use fluoride supplements as instructed by your dentist or doctor.
- Obtain immediate care for broken or knocked-out teeth, tooth pain, or decay.
- Avoid sugary food and drinks.

**Head Start/Early Head Start requires all children to have a professional dental exam every 6 months. This should include cleaning and fluoride and treatment, as needed. Toothbrushing will occur in the classroom after a meal time.**

## Health Insurance Coverage and Medical Assistance

### Medical Assistance Plans offered :

- Northeast AmeriHealth Caritas PA
- Geisinger
- Health Partners
- UPMC



### Enrollment Contact Information

Medical Assistance PA Enrollment Service

Go to PA Enrollment Services ([enrollnow.net](http://enrollnow.net)),

**or**

Use the mobile app called PA Enrollment Services (available through the Apple store or Google Play)

**or**

Call 1-800-440-3989 (TTY: 1-800-618-4225) and select Option 6 to speak with a representative. Mon - Fri, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### **CHIP: Children's Health Insurance Program** ([chipcoverspakids.com](http://chipcoverspakids.com))

1-800-986-KIDS(5437) Provided by:

#### **Luzerne County**

- Aetna Better Health Kids
- First Priority Health
- Geisinger Health Plan
- United Health Plan Community Care of Pa.
- UPMC for Kids

#### **Wyoming County**

- First Priority Health
- Geisinger Health Plan
- United Health Community Care of Pa.
- UPMC for Kids

CHIP is a state and federally funded children's health insurance program. CHIP provides free or low cost health insurance to children who fall within CHIP income guidelines and who are not eligible for Medical Assistance (Medicaid) or covered by private insurance.

A list of Free Medical Clinics is located on our website @[lcheadstart.org](http://lcheadstart.org) under parent resources.

## Medication Policy

Medication should be given at home before or after school whenever possible. When it is absolutely necessary to administer medication at school, the following procedure **MUST** be followed:

1. Consent form completed and signed by the parent, one form for each medication must be provided.
2. Medication must be in the original container, properly labeled.
3. Doctor's note with all directions and information must be presented.
4. Any over-the-counter medications, including Tylenol and cough medicine, must have a doctor's note and consent form.
5. All medications and appropriate paperwork must be complete and on-site **BEFORE** the child can start school.
6. Medication must not be expired.

*Please make sure staff members are made aware of ALL MEDICATIONS. Changes in dosages or directions require a new note from the doctor. An adult must hand any and all medication to the Bus Driver, Teacher, or Assistant Teacher. It should **NEVER** be sent with the child or in the child's backpack.*

- Parents must make sure all medications are returned to them on the child's last day of school. Any medications left will be sent to Central Office for summer break and may be picked up. Medications which are left 30 days from the child's last day will be discarded.

## Sick Children

Even the healthiest child will have a day he or she is too ill to attend school. Please call the center before class begins and tell your bus driver/family worker/teacher whenever your child will be absent. Please inform center staff if your child is ill or injured. We want to know how they are doing so please keep us up-to-date. If a child comes to school sick, or becomes ill and must return home, you will be called and **prompt pick up is required.**

**Be sure all phone numbers, email addresses, and emergency contacts are up-to-date. You or an emergency contact must be available for any emergencies or illness at all times.**

## Doctor's Note

A doctor's note is required after hospitalization, surgery, any medical treatment related to an injury (casts, slings, stitches etc.) or extensive dental work. For COVID-LIKE Symptoms, see below for further instruction.

The Doctor's note must show:

1. The child is allowed to return to school.
2. It must clearly state if the child is returning without any restrictions to their activity or with restrictions to their activity. If there are restrictions to the child's activity, the doctor needs to clearly state what they are on the DOCTOR'S NOTE.

Providing a DOCTOR'S NOTE allows the staff to know exactly how to care for your child at the center after hospitalization, surgery, injury or extensive dental work.

### **Accident Reports**

In the event that your child is injured at Head Start and receives any basic first aid, an accident report will be completed and you will be notified by phone, during pick up, or a note in your child's backpack. If requested, a copy of the report will be made available to you.

### **Childhood Infections**

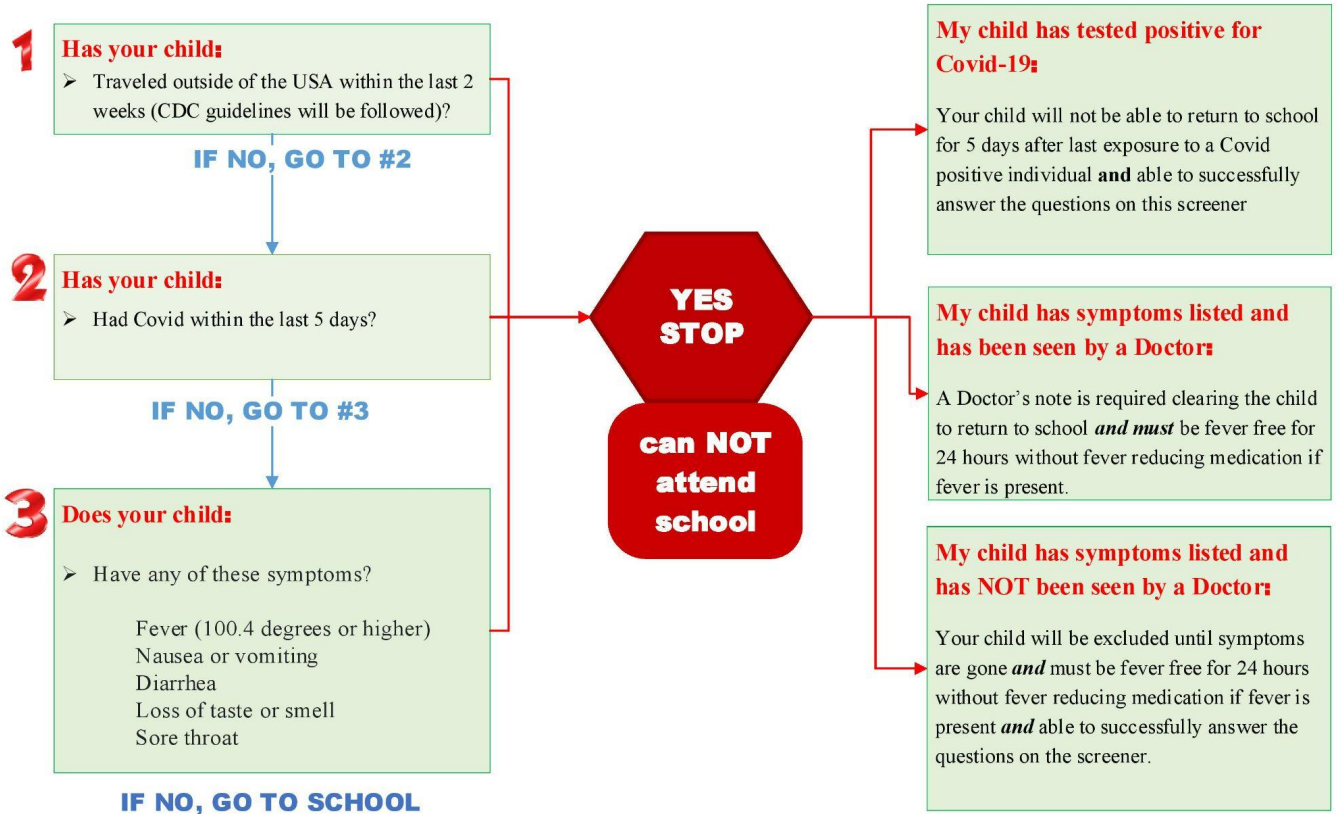
Children who are exhibiting possible symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness, (**PLEASE SEE STUDENT HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOL**) will not be able to attend school. If any of these symptoms occur during school, the parent will be notified and **prompt pick up is required**. Parents/guardians will need to contact the center AND REFER TO THE **Student Health Screening Protocol** regarding when the child can return to school. If a child is determined to be infected with COVID-19, PLEASE NOTIFY STAFF. All parents—will receive a copy of the Student Health Screening Protocol.

At LCHS, it is our priority to keep our staff and their families healthy. We will abide by Office of Head Start guidelines as we strive to balance public health concerns with the needs of our program. LCHS created a COVID-19 Task Force that is comprised of Direct Service Staff, Specialists, Administration, Parents, and Community Partners. This Task Force has worked to implement procedures and purchased supplies to create a safe environment for all.



## Student Health Screener

The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority. In order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 to the fullest extent, we will be following the guidelines of the PA Department of Health (PA DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Revised 7/28/22



If parents/guardians have any of the above symptoms, they are asked not to bring their child to the center.

| <b>Infectious Disease</b>   | <b><u>Return to Center</u></b>  |                           |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| Chicken Pox   | Remain home until sores are scabbed over (usually 6-8 days after onset of rash) Cases are milder with the vaccine   | No doctor's note required |
| Fever 100.4 or higher, or Nausea/Vomiting Or Diarrhea Or or loss of taste or smell or Sore throat                 | REFER TO STUDENT HEALTH SCREENING PROTOCOL  | REFER TO PROTOCOL         |
| Conjunctivitis Pink Eye-Bacterial conjunctivitis <b>with drainage</b> (red eyes with greenish or yellow drainage) | Contact Doctor for treatment recommendations.<br>No exclusion necessary   | No doctor's note required |
| Impetigo  | Return after on medication for 24 hours   | Doctor's note recommended |
| Influenza (flu)   | Confirmed diagnosis, fever must be less than 100.4°F without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours   | Doctor's note recommended |
| Ringworm  | See Doctor for diagnosis & treatment, return 24 hours after beginning of treatment. All areas must be covered.  | Doctor's note recommended |
| Scabies   | See Doctor for diagnosis & treatment, return after treatment completed  | Doctor's note recommended |
| Rashes  | New or undiagnosed must see a doctor  | Doctor's note REQUIRED    |
| Strep Throat  | See doctor for diagnosis & treatment, return 24 hours after starting treatment and child has no symptoms, feels well and is able to participate in activities | No Doctor's note required |

You can request information from your Health Staff member on childhood diseases or conditions. We may request that you have a doctor's note to return to school following an infectious/communicable disease.

Parents will receive a note only in the event of an unusual number of children with an infectious condition in the classroom.

### **Head Lice**

Anyone can get head lice, especially young children. This is not a serious health threat, but does need quick and proper treatment. The situation is easily managed if all instructions are followed. Anytime your child has head lice, it is important to let us know. We will work together as a team, offering assistance and additional information. If we discover live lice or a new case of nits, we will call you. Parents will have the option of picking their child up early or letting the child stay in school until the end of that school day. Children may return to school the day after treatment has been completed.

The treatment and cleaning process should begin as soon as possible. Remember, for best results follow the specific directions on the product. Check every family member, treat **ONLY** those with lice.

- Use an effective lice treatment, either prescription or over the counter.
- Remove nits daily with a lice comb and/or by hand.
- Wash clothes, bed linens, towels. Use hot water for washing and dry on hot for 20 minutes. Items not washable must be bagged for 2 weeks.
- Soak combs, brushes and hair items in hot water for 10 minutes.
- Vacuum everywhere—furniture, carpets, pillows, mattresses and car seats.
- Nit removal should be following treatment.
- Daily head checks for live lice or nits for 7-10 days after treatment is completed.

### **Bedbugs**

Bedbugs are reddish brown, oval, flat pests about the size of an apple seed. They bite the exposed skins of humans, and sometimes other living creatures, to feed on their blood. Although bedbugs are considered to be a public health pest, they are not known to transmit or spread disease.

A few simple precautions can help prevent bedbug infestation in your home:

- Check second hand furniture, beds and couches for any signs of infestations (eggs and eggshells, which are tiny and white; skins that are shed as bugs grow larger; rusty or red stains on sheets or mattresses; live bedbugs).
- Use good quality protective covers to encase mattresses and box springs.
- Reduce clutter in your home to reduce places for bedbugs.

Like head lice, bedbug infestation can happen to any family. It is important that you inform your family worker, family educator or teacher if you are experiencing a bedbug problem in your home so that we can be alert to any bugs being brought into or back to the centers. The center staff can also provide you with useful information about how to deal with the pests.

## Pet/Animals Policy

Safeguards are required to reduce the risk for infection and injury from animals to promote the health and safety of children.

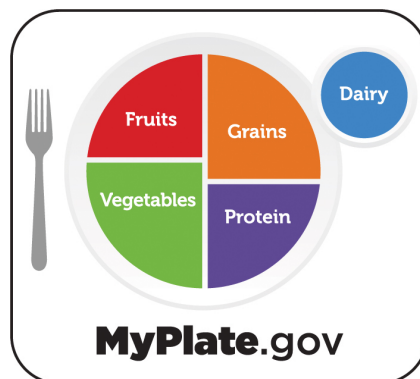
- Pets or visiting animals must have documentation from a veterinarian or animal shelter indicating that the animals have up-to-date immunizations and are free from conditions that pose a threat to children's health. This documentation must be given to the teachers prior to the visits.
- Classroom pets or visiting animals must appear to be in good health and child-friendly.
- All children, staff, and visitors must complete appropriate hand cleansing before and after contact with the animals.
- Parents/Guardian of any child with pet allergies, asthma, or compromised immune system must be notified prior to the animal visit or field trip. The parent must give written permission for the animal to be present or the child to attend the field trip.
- Parents must be notified in writing before any children are exposed to any animal.
- Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets.
- Parents will not be asked to care for classroom pets at any time throughout the year.

## Nutrition Consultation

If you have any concerns or questions with your child's height, weight, BMI, or diet, the Nutritional Specialist is available for consultation. You may contact your Health Staff member, Family Worker, or Family Educator to set up an appointment.

**Healthy Resources for Families:** *MyPlate* offers a visual reminder to make healthy food choices when you choose your next meal. *MyPlate* can help prioritize food choices by reminding us to make half of our plate fruits and vegetables and shows us the other important food groups for a well-balanced meal - whole grains, lean proteins, and low fat dairy.

Find additional information on healthier eating and physical activity, at [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov), which is an interactive website for all ages.



## **Food Allergies, Special Diet, and Religious Considerations**

Parents/guardians must notify the center in writing of any allergies or other medical conditions at enrollment, or as the parent becomes aware of them. Any special diet or food allergy requiring food substitutions at the center must be documented in writing by the child's doctor. For religious reasons, a note will be required from the parent and must be kept in the child's file. A Nutrition Specialist is available to work with the parent of any child who has special dietary requirements. We strive to ensure that all children in the program are well nourished.

The entire agency is peanut-free. Soy butter, sunflower butter or a peanut-free alternative is provided.

Head Start will honor food allergies and religious substitutions and provide the appropriate alternative. All food allergies/considerations will be posted in the Head Start classroom and in the Early Head Start Socialization room with parental permission.

## **Meal Service**

LCHS participates in and follows the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Meals are planned as part of the day's learning experience.

It is very important that children are present for all meals. On snow delays and early dismissals, breakfast and lunch will be provided for your child. If a child arrives late to the center, they will be offered a nutritious meal.

The menus for the program are created by the Nutrition Specialist, and are designed to be low in sugar, salt and fat. Menus are sent home to parents monthly and also are posted in the classrooms.

Children are introduced to a wide variety of healthy foods, but they are never forced to eat anything they do not want. Meals will be individually preplated, children may request second helpings if desired.

Portion sizes for adults will be the same as those for children. Classroom staff will sit with the children during mealtimes, model appropriate eating behavior, and initiate conversations, similar to a home setting. Classroom staff will also use this time for learning so that nutrition education is incorporated into the routine of meals. The menus follow the guidelines for CACFP (Child and Adult Food Program) and are generally as follows:

### **Breakfast**

6 oz. Skim Milk  
½ cup Berries  
¼ cup low-fat Yogurt  
½ cup Cheerios

### **Lunch**

6 oz. Skim Milk  
1.5 oz Baked Chicken  
¼ cup Steamed Broccoli  
¼ cup Brown Rice  
¼ cup Melon

## Child Passenger Safety

**NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN ANY VEHICLE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME!**

**CAR SAFETY SEATS – A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES:** The type of seat your child needs depends on several things including age, size, and type of vehicle. To be sure your child is using the most appropriate seat, read on.

### Types of Car Safety Seats at a Glance:

| Age Group             | Type of Seat  | General Guidelines  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Infants/Toddlers      | Infant Seats and rear-facing convertible seats            | All infants and toddlers are required to ride in a <b>Rear-Facing Car Safety Seat</b> until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car’s safety seat manufacturer.   |
| Toddlers/Preschoolers | Convertible seats and forward-facing seats with harnesses | All children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a <b>Forward-Facing Car Safety Seat</b> with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car’s safety seat manufacturer. |
| School-aged children  | Booster seats   | All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a <b>Belt-Positioning Booster Seat</b> until the vehicle seat belt fits properly - typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.                                 |
| Older Children        | Seat belts  | When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use <b>Lap and Shoulder Seat Belts</b> for optimal protection. All children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the <b>Rear Seats</b> of vehicles.   |

## EARLY HEAD START HOME-BASED PROGRAM OPTION

### Introduction

Early Head Start is a federally funded, community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers, and for pregnant women. The purpose of Early Head Start is to enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist parents in fulfilling their roles as their child's first and most important teacher; and help families move toward self-sufficiency. Through everyday interactions with your child, he/she will learn the basic skills needed to cooperate, get along with others, and be eager to learn - the foundations for school readiness.

In our agency, Early Head Start services are provided using an in-person HOME-BASED model. Families minimally receive a **90-minute home visit each week**, and will be provided with Socialization activities, also known as Family Days, offered at your child's EHS center approximately 2 times per month.

Women enrolled in the Prenatal Program receive in-person visits with a Nurse Educator and/or a Family Educator. The Nurse Educator or assigned Family Educator and the mother will meet weekly in person during a mutually decided upon for at least 90-minutes each week. Upon birth, the baby is enrolled in the Early Head Start program. A Registered Nurse is required to conduct an in person visit within the first two weeks after delivery.

The visits must be conducted with the enrolled child's parent(s) or legal guardians, who must be present for the entire visit. These are all program requirements mandated by our federal performance standards. Home visits are a time for you to engage with your child to reinforce your role as their primary teacher.

Early Head Start is a community-based program. Through a "partnership" between you and the Early Head Start staff, we help you to identify the services and resources in the community which your family might need, and help you work toward the goals you wish to achieve for yourself and your family.

Our services include child development, family support, family engagement, health, nutrition, transportation, mental health and disabilities services (if needed) family days, and transition at age three.

### Sample Schedule - Weekly Home Visit with Enrolled Child(ren)

- Greeting Time/Review of Previous Week
- Parent/Child Activities
- Review of Family Circumstances/Family Support/Resources
- Planning for Next Week's Visit
- Goodbyes

## **Transition from Early Head Start**

Planning for your child's transition into Head Start or other appropriate placement begins six months prior to the third birthday. Children who turn three during the program year while Head Start is in session may be able to begin attending Head Start at age three, depending upon availability of an opening in the program. A new application must be completed for the Head Start program, and families who are over the income guidelines do not automatically receive placement in Head Start. Details of the Transition process will be explained in detail by your Family Educator.

## **GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Emergency Information**

It is important that we know about your health needs and those of your child, so that we may assist with any community services and referrals which you may be in need of or eligible for. It is important that we have someone to contact in case of an emergency with you or your child. Please let your Family Educator know if there are any changes to your emergency contacts.

If an emergency arises concerning a Family Educator during a home visit, call 911, then immediately call the Central Office. This number appears in this handbook and on the name card magnet given to you at Orientation.

Nurse and Family Educators encourage parents to develop a list of names and telephone numbers of individuals to contact in an emergency. This guide provides you with a page you can print and complete for this purpose. If you are unable to print for any reason, notify your Family or Nurse Educator and they will get a copy to you. Post the list in an easy to access place in your home, and give a copy to a responsible person outside the home, such as a nearby relative or neighbor. If you do not have a phone, make a plan to use the phone of someone nearby in case of an emergency.

You are encouraged to develop an emergency evacuation plan for your home. The plan should include two exit routes. Practice the evacuation plan with your family at least monthly.

### **Clothing for Family Days and Home Visits**

While participating in home visits or group activities, both staff and parents should dress in a manner that is respectful of self and others. Messages or slogans that might be offensive to others should not be worn during socializations or home visits. It is unacceptable to be shirtless during a home visit or Family Day.

### **Smoking Awareness**

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. cares about the health and safety of our children, families, and staff. It is part of our mission to promote health and wellness. In addition, our Federal Performance Standards require us to provide information to our families regarding preventative health awareness, including environmental hazards and to provide information to our families on maternal and child health. Through our prenatal services, we are required to provide information on fetal development, including the risks from smoking.



If you or anyone in your household smokes, we hope you have decided not to smoke, while pregnant, if applicable, or around your child. Studies have shown that secondhand smoke and third-hand smoke are serious health hazards.

Even if you do allow smoking in your home, we ask that you refrain from smoking during home visits, and also that you ask others in your home to do the same. Smoking is prohibited in and around all Luzerne County Head Start sites and in agency vehicles. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.

Smoking presents more than the risk of cancer. The Pennsylvania Department of Health reports that children exposed to smoke experience frequent colds and ear infections, increased risk of developing asthma, higher risk of pneumonia and bronchitis, and weaker lungs. A recent study shows that 40% of children who have been exposed to secondhand smoke were more likely to experience breathing problems while under general anesthesia. Smoking during pregnancy can put a woman at risk for miscarriage, stillbirth, or premature birth, and can cause the baby to have less oxygen than needed, low birth weight, and respiratory problems. Smoke in the home has also been linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Did you know?

- Second-hand smoke and third-hand smoke can cause serious health problems.
- Invisible particles from smoke stay in a room 3-4 hours after a person has smoked a cigarette.
- Tobacco products contain over 4,000 chemicals.
- Even “third-hand” smoke, the chemicals that stay on clothes and furniture, is dangerous.

Our staff is aware that smoking is a personal choice, and that smoking is a powerful addiction. We will be happy to provide you with information and support if you should decide to quit. In the meantime, we offer these helpful tips for you and your children:

- Don't smoke when your child is present, especially in your car.
- If you must smoke, do so OUTSIDE of your home.
- Ask others not to smoke around you and your children.

***NOTE: Smoking is prohibited in and around all Luzerne County Head Start/Early Head Start sites and in agency vehicles, including our buses. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.***

### **School Readiness, Curriculum, Assessment, and Screenings**

Birth to Three School Readiness Goals-are agency goals that can help us measure your child's development gains throughout the program year. Your Family Educator will explain the goals and provide you with a copy of them as well as discuss the progress that your child is making while enrolled in Early Head Start.

“Curriculum” for infants and toddlers includes just about everything they do - playing, feeding, sleeping and communicating. Family Educators work with parents to develop a plan of activities you can do with your child aimed at enhancing his/her development so that he/she can be better prepared for school.

Early Head Start utilizes the Florida State University Partners for a Healthy Baby (PHB) curriculum, which is developmentally appropriate and research-based home visiting and parenting curriculum focused on prenatal services and children birth to three. The PHB curriculum includes suggested activities parents can do to promote their child's development, promotes secure parent-child relationships, promote the parent's role as their child's teacher, is individualized to meet each family's needs, includes resources pertaining to education, health, family engagement, disabilities, transition services and services to pregnant women, addresses appropriate supports for emotional well-being and nurturing, the importance of father engagement during pregnancy and early childhood and facilitates family partnership development.

**Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)** is a researched-based social and emotional curriculum that your Family Educator will introduce during the transition planning period. PATHS activities include songs and stories led by Twiggie and his friends. PATHS characters Twiggie the Turtle, Daphne the Duck, Henrietta the Hedgehog and Duke the Dog help to create socially acceptable expectations used through our program.



Hawaii Early Learning Profile (HELP) is an ongoing, family-centered, curriculum-based assessment process for infants, toddlers and their families. HELP domains include Cognitive, Language, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Social-Emotional, and Self-Help. These domains are broken down into 685 developmental skills and behaviors, providing a comprehensive framework for ongoing assessment, planning and tracking progress. HELP is also aligned with the Pennsylvania Infant and Toddler Standards and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. Using a HELP Strands booklet, we are able to track developmental levels, strengths, and needs within each traditional domain to determine what each child can already do, and what he/she is still working on. Your Family Educator will use this information to individualize your child's activities and families will take an active role in planning and carrying out the HELP at Home activities.

We will assist families in completing periodic developmental screenings using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) to track their overall development. Areas screened include communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem-solving and personal-social. Additionally, we will complete the Ages and Stages Social Emotional screening (ASQ:SE-2), focusing on your child's social and emotional development. If applicable, and with your permission, your Family Educator will be able to assist you with making a developmental and/or behavioral referral to Early Intervention or a Behavioral Health agency in order for your child to receive further evaluation. Early detection of possible delays is crucial for healthy infant and toddler development and, if needed, early specialized services can improve your child's overall development and social and emotional skills needed for school readiness.

Early Head Start staff assist parents in the use of the home as the child's primary learning environment. Early Head Start recognizes bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths and will support dual language learners. Staff will focus on the development of the home language, as well as provide experiences that expose the child to English.

## Family Day

Another important part of our program is Family Day, which is typically held at your child's EHS center twice each month. Family Days give Early Head Start parents a chance to get to know other parents with young children, and give children an opportunity to be around other children. Parents are able to observe other children at different stages of development. It helps to know you are not alone in facing the challenges of parenting!

## Sample Schedule - Family Day

- Welcome ("Welcome" song)
- Circle Time (book sharing, singing songs)
- Parent/Child Activity (directed and explorative activities)
- Resource Sharing (Health/Safety, Child Development, Community, etc.)
- Closing (Review activities, "Goodbye" song)



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

### Family Partnerships

The Head Start/Early Head Start vision for parent involvement and family engagement is to support parents as their child's first and most important teacher. **We Are Partners.** When your family is enrolled in LCHS, including Jump Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K Counts, we become partners. Our focus will be on identifying your own strengths and skills and using those toward setting and achieving goals. We will also support you in finding resources within the community to partner with for your success.

Our partnership with parents is fundamental to providing quality early childhood services. Four elements of our program that are key to parent and family engagement are:

- *Program environment* - families feel welcomed, valued and respected by program staff;
- *Family partnerships* - staff and families work together to identify and achieve goals and aspirations;
- *Teaching and learning partnerships* - families are engaged as equal partners in children's learning and development; and
- *Community partnerships* - communities support families' interests and needs and encourage parent and family engagement in children's learning.

### **Expectation of Mutual Respect**

Luzerne County Head Start ("LCHS") has an "Expectation of Mutual Respect" between staff and families. In the partnerships that we build, we develop an atmosphere of mutual respect in the provision of Head Start/Early Head Start services.

We understand that parents are their child's first and most important educator and we want to help parents be successful in that role. All expectations of respect are given to our families' values and culture. Head Start/Early Head Start staff will show respect to the families in our workplace, whether that is in a Head Start center or in a parent's home.

In return for families who are Head Start/Early Head Start participants, we look for the same mutual respect toward our staff.

Our agency is committed to providing a safe and respectful atmosphere for everyone who works or visits here. We provide an environment where children and their families are safe, enriched and empowered. To that end, there will be "zero tolerance" of acts or threats of violence in our workplace. LCHS is committed to maintaining a workplace that is free from violence, or the threat of violence. Together we will create and maintain a safe and mutually respectful working environment.

## **Family Engagement Opportunities**

### **Parent Training**

LCHS offers opportunities for parents to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge and offers the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children's learning and development. Information will be provided throughout the year. In addition to the parenting curriculum, various workshops and other activities are provided, based on parent interest and need.

### **Parent Cafes**

LCHS has partnered with Be Strong Families to be able to offer Parent Cafes across our agency. The Be Strong Parent Cafe model was developed in 2007 and focuses on the 5 Protective Factors - Resilience, Relationships, Knowledge, Support, and Communication. These protective factors are meant to keep children safe and families strong.

“The purpose of the Parent Cafes is to provide an environment in which parents and family members can build the protective factors through individual, deep self-reflection and peer-to-peer learning. The model is based on principles of adult learning and family support, and builds family member leadership.”

## **Family Literacy Program**

*What is Family Literacy?*

- (A) Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
  - (B) Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
  - (C) Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
  - (D) An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.
- As parents acquire new educational, social, employment and life skills, they are able to enhance the literacy skills of their children. Contact your Family Worker or Family Educator for details and to enroll in the Family Literacy Program.*

## **Father/Father Figures in Head Start**

In addition to specific programming designed to bring the father/father-figures together with the child, traditional ways of volunteering are also encouraged. Ways to be involved include attending Parent Committee meetings and parent workshops; serving on Policy Council, the Health Advisory Committee, the Transition Advisory Committee; the Family Services Advisory Committee; and Home Visits.

## **Program Governance**

A formal structure of program governance provides parents and other community representatives with the authority and opportunity to participate in shared decision-making concerning program design and implementation.

- **Parent Committee**

Parents are offered the opportunity to participate in shared decision-making on a center basis through Parent Committee groups. Every parent of an enrolled child is automatically a member of the Parent Committee. Parent Committee provides parents with an opportunity to assist in the development of activities that address their interests and needs, and that support the education and healthy development of their children. It allows parents to advise staff in developing and implementing program policies, activities and services. Through Parent Committee, parents can plan, conduct and participate in informal as well as formal programs and activities. Early Head Start meets six times a year. During the meetings, parents may be elected to serve on Policy Council.

- **Policy Council**

Opportunities for parents to participate in agency program governance happens through Policy Council. Policy Council is established and charged with specific functions outlined in the Head Start Performance Standards in order to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be involved in shared decision-making. Policy Council provides a method for parents to assume leadership roles in representing the collective interests of all families.

Policy Council meets monthly Membership consists of current and former Head Start parents and members of the community who share a common interest in the welfare of children and families. Representatives are elected from Head Start, PA Pre-K Counts, and Early Head Start.

## **Volunteering in Luzerne County Head Start, Inc.**

### **Parent/Guardian Volunteers**

The Head Start/Early Head Start vision for parent involvement and family engagement is to support parents as their child's first and most important teacher and to provide every parent with opportunities to be involved in all aspects of the program. Children benefit from this involvement, and so do their parents. Much of the success of the Head Start/Early Head Start program has been due to parent involvement. Children benefit when their parents know about and support what is happening in their education. Parents who are involved are more likely to continue that participation throughout their child's school years. Parents who are involved gain skills in decision making, teaching, management, and advocacy.

Volunteerism is an important part of the Head Start experience. Volunteer opportunities exist for parents, individuals, and organizations in the community to become involved in LCHS. Examples of volunteerism are - attending Parent Committee meetings, serving on Policy Council or Board of Directors, and working on assigned activities with your child in your home. Head Start programs are required to engage parents and the community in volunteerism and LCHS is required to track and document these volunteer hours.

## **Child Welfare**

### **Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect**

Head Start and Early Head Start staff, like other medical, social and educational professionals, contracted staff, bus staff, and volunteers are **mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect**. This means that we are required by law to report any *suspected cases* of child abuse or neglect to the Childline Abuse Registry of the state of Pennsylvania. It is important for families to keep in mind that a report is made in order to get help for a family experiencing an abuse or neglect problem, not to punish or embarrass the family. All child abuse/neglect reports are kept strictly confidential. For more information and helpful resources visit [www.keepkidssafe.com](http://www.keepkidssafe.com).

### **What is child abuse?**

Child abuse, according to the CPSL, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.

- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
- Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:
  - Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
  - Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
  - Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
  - Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
  - Interfering with the breathing of a child.
  - Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
  - Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

### **Megan's Law Policy**

Head Start/Early Head Start staff will be updated on a regular basis regarding any individuals registered under Megan's Law.

Additionally, if any Head Start/Early Head Start staff are aware of any individual (including biological parents) registered under Megan's Law, who is residing with an enrolled Head Start/Early Head Start child, it will be our obligation to report this situation to the appropriate Children and Youth Services office as well as the appropriate police department.

### **Family Records**

#### **Release of Confidential Information**

Any information you provide to us, or any information that we have concerning your child or family, will not be discussed or shared with anyone within the program unless it is for the purpose of providing services to your family. No information will be shared with anyone outside the program unless we have a parent's written permission. Parents are allowed to see their family's records, but are not allowed to see the records of other families, or to discuss other families' situations with staff or other individuals.

Primary Rights of Parents under FERPA:

- Right to inspect and review education records;
- Right to seek to amend education records;
- Right to have some control over the disclosure of information from education records.

“Parent” is defined as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. NOTE: FERPA affords full rights to either parent unless the school has been provided with evidence that there is a court order, state statutes or legally binding document that specifically revokes these rights.

“Education Records” are records that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.

### **Family Files**

Documents and records of all other contacts with families are kept in individual family files, and are part of our electronic data tracking system. Parents are able to review their family's files throughout the school year upon request.

### **Parent/Staff Agreement**

The Home Visiting Agreement is an agreement between the parent/guardian and the Family/Nurse Educator regarding the expectations of enrollment

Expectations for Home Visits:

As the Parent/Guardian, I will:

- Be present for the duration of the Home Visit.
- I will engage in the activities planned for us by my Family/Nurse Educator.
- I will work on the planned activities with my child during the week.
- I will notify my Family Educator of any cancellations I must make prior to our schedule visit time.
- I understand and will adhere to the ‘Expectation of Mutual Respect’.
- Complete the Family Health Screener prior to socializations and home visits.

As the Family Educator, I will:

- I agree to provide a weekly home visit and notify you of any changes in my schedule.
- I will support you in your role as your child’s first and most important teacher.
- I will assist you in planning weekly activities for you and your child.
- I will support you in working toward goals for yourself and your family.
- I will follow the ‘Standards of Conduct and Professional Ethics’, ‘Confidentiality Policy’, and ‘Expectation of Mutual Respect’.



## Attendance

The Early Head Start program is required to keep records of attendance. Families are expected to participate in person services to remain enrolled in our program; Parents/Guardians are expected to:

1. Have their child(ren) and parent/guardian participate in an in-person learning experience for 90-minutes each week.

**Regular** in-person **attendance of your child is both expected and mandatory.**

We want your family to have the best experience possible. Setting up consistent routines such as bedtimes and wake times through positive conversations with your child will help you set an early standard of on time, regular attendance, which is extremely important for your child and is also a requirement of our regulations.

2. Maintain communication with their Family Educator via phone or email.
3. Explain the reason for lack of participation.

**Any plans for an extended absence (i.e. due to a family trip or emergency) must be discussed with staff.** The situation will be evaluated to determine if the enrollment slot can be held during the absence. There must be an expected date of return no more than 30 calendar days from the first day of absence. If the child does not return by the deadline, the slot will become a vacancy. You may be asked to sign an agreement indicating your understanding and expected date of return.

4. Know that lack of participation could result in termination from the program.
5. Lack of contact for 30-days can result in termination from the program.

When families do not participate and no contact is made by the parent, our staff are required to contact the parent. If contact is not made for two consecutive weeks, a letter of concern will be sent by the Program Manager, via both mail and e-mail. If unsuccessful, the ERSEA Specialist will send a second letter. A third letter will be sent by the Family Engagement Specialist if the second letter was also unsuccessful. If no resolution is agreed upon, the slot will become a vacancy and filled with the next eligible child on our waiting list in order to maintain full enrollment in our program.

## HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND SAFETY

### Healthy Children are Ready to Learn and Have Fun

Staff and healthcare professionals work closely with our families to identify health and developmental concerns and referrals can be made to address those concerns. Our goal is to ensure that every family has ongoing access to a medical and a dental provider. Additionally, staff will provide assistance, as needed, with appointments, follow-up and treatments. Staff will also conduct Health Literacy workshops that will educate families on becoming self-sufficient within the healthcare system and answer any questions parents and/or guardians may have.

Early Head Start requires that every child have completed and a copy on file:

- Well Baby/Child Checks according to the EPSDT schedule or as scheduled by your medical provider
- Dental Exams - Every 6 months following first birthday
- Hearing and Vision Screenings, including follow-up with Specialists, if recommended
- Lead Screenings
- Hemoglobin and Hematocrit levels
- Health, Safety and Nutrition screenings

The Family Educators will assist with obtaining the above and will offer reminders when each is due. The Early Head Start Health Specialist will also be available to help obtain these or to offer information.

### **Dental Exams and Treatment**

Healthy teeth and gums improve appearance and self-esteem. They allow children to eat a variety of healthy foods, speak clearly and promote healthy placement of secondary teeth.

- Have a dental exam by age 1 then every 6 months as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Brush teeth after meals and at bedtime.
- Floss after brushing when teeth are present.
- Replace toothbrushes when worn, every 3 months or as directed by your doctor or dentist.
- Use fluoride supplements as instructed by your dental health or medical health provider.
- Obtain immediate care for broken or knocked-out teeth, tooth pain, or decay.
- Avoid sugary food and drinks.

In Early Head Start we track well baby/child checks and immunizations, as well as prenatal and postpartum visits. Each time you visit the doctor, please ask to have a copy of the completed physical. We can accept either the Head Start Physical form, your doctor's form, or the computer printout from the visit. We follow the state EPSDT (Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment) and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) schedules as required by our Federal Performance Standards.

**Head Start/Early Head Start requires all children to have a professional dental exam every 6 months. This should include cleaning and fluoride and treatment, as needed.**

### **Health Screenings**

The Family Educator will go over paper assessment screenings with you about your child. The screenings will go over hearing milestones, vision milestones, oral health, safety and nutrition. From these screenings, and with your permission, your Family Educator will be able to make referrals either to a specialist or your Primary Care Physician. Your Family Educator will also encourage you to have a routine diagnostic test for hearing and vision completed at your primary medical provider. We will also complete nutrition questionnaires and provide you with information about nutrition, meal preparation, and will complete fun nutrition activities in your home.

The Nurse Educator will also complete prenatal nutrition questionnaires, oral health surveys and discussions about your overall health during this important time. The Nurse Educator will encourage you to attend prenatal medical visits and get oral health exams.

### **Food Allergies, Special Diet, and Religious Considerations**

Your Family Educator will discuss with you if your child has any allergies or medical conditions at enrollment. Please notify your Family Educator as soon as you are aware of any allergies. Early Head Start will occasionally offer a nutritious meal or snack to your family and need to be aware of any allergies, special diets or religious considerations which may be in your home. We strive to ensure that all children are able to participate and are well nourished.

The entire agency is peanut-free. Soy butter, sunflower butter or a peanut-free alternative is provided.

Luzerne County Head Start, Inc. and Early Head Start participates in and follows the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.

### **Nutrition Consultation**

A Nutrition Questionnaire will be completed by your Family Educator according to your child's age. If you have any concerns or questions with your child's height, weight, or diet, the Nutrition Specialist is available for consultation. You may contact your Family Educator or the EHS Health Specialist to set up an appointment.

### **Choosy and MyPlate**

*MyPlate* offers a visual reminder to make healthy food choices when you choose your next meal. *MyPlate* can help prioritize food choices by reminding us to make half of our plate fruits and vegetables and shows us the other important food groups for a well-balanced meal - whole grains, lean proteins, and low fat dairy.

If you would like additional information on healthier eating and physical activity, [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) is an interactive website for all ages.



## CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

**NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN UNATTENDED IN ANY VEHICLE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME!**

**CAR SAFETY SEATS – A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES:** The type of seat your child needs depends on several things including age, size, and type of vehicle. To be sure your child is using the most appropriate seat, read on.

### Types of Car Safety Seats at a Glance:

| Age Group             | Type of Seat  | General Guidelines  |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Infants/Toddlers      | Infant Seats and rear-facing convertible seats            | All infants and toddlers are required to ride in a <b>Rear-Facing Car Safety Seat</b> until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car's safety seat manufacturer.   |
| Toddlers/Preschoolers | Convertible seats and forward-facing seats with harnesses | All children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a <b>Forward-Facing Car Safety Seat</b> with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car's safety seat manufacturer. |
| School-aged children  | Booster seats   | All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a <b>Belt-Positioning Booster Seat</b> until the vehicle seat belt fits properly - typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.                                 |
| Older Children        | Seat belts  | When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use <b>Lap and Shoulder Seat Belts</b> for optimal protection. All children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the <b>Rear Seats</b> of vehicles.   |

## **SAFE SLEEP FOR YOUR BABY**

### **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):**

- Always place your baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.
- Place your baby on a firm sleep surface, such as on a safety-approved crib mattress, covered by a fitted sheet.
- Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area.
- Do not allow smoking around your baby.
- Keep your baby's sleep area close to, but separate from, where you and others sleep.
- Do not let your baby overheat during sleep.
- Avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS, including but not limited to commercial apnea monitors.

– National Institute of Child Health & Human Development

### **SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME PREVENTION**

Shaking a baby or small child can cause serious injuries and even death. Babies and young children have large heads compared to the size of their bodies; and, if they are shaken, it can cause the head to snap back and forth. This can cause serious head injuries, referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome. Most times these events happen when a baby will not stop crying and caregivers become frustrated. It is important to remember to stay calm and remember that babies will cry, even when they don't need anything and everything is okay. If you can't get the baby to stop and you have tried everything, keep these things in mind:

- Lay the baby down and take a break.
- Go to another room.
- Listen to music or read.
- Exercise.
- Call a friend or family member.
- **Call for help:** 24-hour crisis hotline - 1-800-4ACHILD (1-800-422-4453)

For more information or additional resources, contact the PA Department of Health at 1-877-724-3258 or the "Calm A Crying Baby" network at [CalmACryingBaby.org](http://CalmACryingBaby.org).

## **Head Start's role in helping children to be ready for school -**

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>Support communication skills and language development</i></li><li>● <i>Help to identify early learning disabilities</i></li><li>● <i>Assist in social and emotional growth</i></li><li>● <i>Teach socialization and gross/fine motor skills</i></li><li>● <i>Help children to develop independence</i></li><li>● <i>Help parents to identify safety issues</i></li><li>● <i>Instill confidence</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <i>Teach basic skills such as the alphabet and colors, songs, nursery rhymes, writing names, verbal and language skills</i></li><li>● <i>Help children to get to know their surroundings and neighborhoods</i></li><li>● <i>Help families prepare for kindergarten</i></li><li>● <i>Support school to home learning</i></li><li>● <i>Work on conflict resolution - share PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)</i></li></ul> |
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