

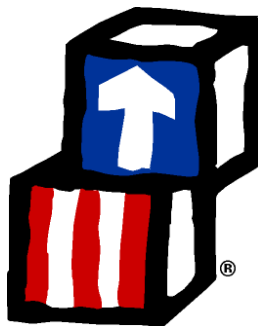
MERCER COUNTY HEAD START / EARLY HEAD START / PA PRE-K COUNTS PROGRAMS

-----Since 1965-----

Serving children birth to age five, and pregnant women.

PARENT / COMMUNITY RESOURCE HANDBOOK

2016 / 2017



Main Office

1901 Memorial Drive

Farrell, PA 16121

724-346-4482

Toll Free # 1-866-284-1059

Fax # 724-346-4431

Website: www.mchs-ehs.org

E-mail: info@mchs-ehs.org

A Community Action Partnership of Mercer County program;
Delegate agency is Farrell Area School District

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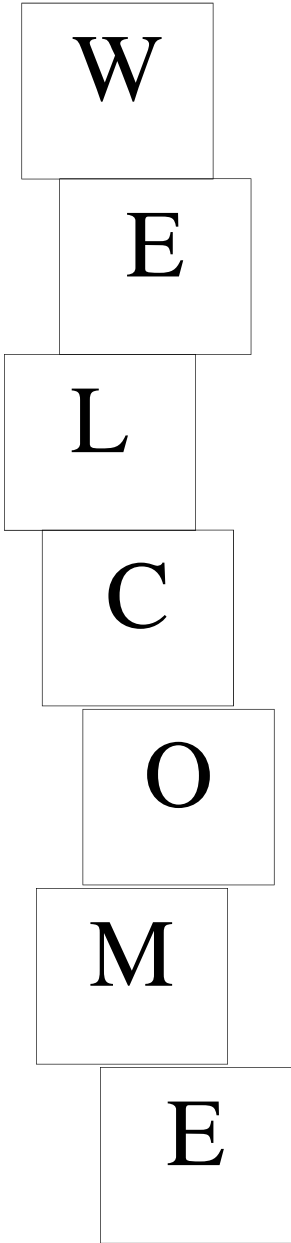
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W

elcome to the Mercer County Head Start/ Early Head Start & PA Pre-K Counts Programs



Dear Parents:

We welcome you to our programs, whether your child will be attending Head Start, Early Head Start or the Pre-K Counts program, we recognize that you will always be your child's first teacher and we thank you for entrusting them into our hands for this next school year.

We also recognize that every child is unique with different abilities and needs and the educational program must objectively assess those abilities and needs and work with the parents to meet them so that children will be successful.

We promise:

- To love and respect your child as our own.
- To put your child first and above ourselves.
- To provide a safe and healthy learning environment for your child.
- To provide an inviting, educational environment full of wonderment.
- To respect and treat you with dignity and honor.
- To maintain open and honest communication with you.
- To maintain confidentiality at all times.

We ask you to share of yourself by volunteering in the classroom, completing projects at home, reading to your child at home and being the best parent you can be.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts, an affiliate of Community Action Partnership of Mercer County, an Equal Opportunity Employer, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex or disability, or veteran's status in the administration of any of its educational programs or activities in accordance with applicable Federal Statutes and Regulations.



Mission Statement

"Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts connects children, families, and communities by partnering quality education with caring support services today for a better tomorrow"

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

CENTER/SITE: _____

FAMILY ADVOCATE / HOME VISITOR: _____

PHONE NUMBER (FAMILY ADVOCATE/HOME VISITOR) _____

TEACHER: _____

CLASSROOM ASSISTANT: _____

CENTER/SITE'S PHONE NUMBER: _____

HOURS/DAYS OF OPERATION: _____

ENROLLMENT DATE: _____

STAFF DIRECTORY

724-346-4482

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Wendy King.....ext. 1335

PROGRAM OPERATIONS DIRECTOR: TBA.....ext. 1381

Service Area Managers

Toni George	Family & Community Engagement	ext. 1351
Brandon Mirizio	Fiscal	ext. 1326
Lacey Mangino	Disabilities/Mental Health	ext. 1330
Nancy Guiler	Health/Safety	ext. 1342
Kelly Rodriques	Nutrition	ext. 1321
Ron Viglio	Network Administrator	ext. 1322
Jennifer Zilla	Education	ext. 1345
Joe Berringer	Human Resources	ext. 1341
Michelle Comstock	Early Head Start	ext. 1331
Patricia Strosser	PA Pre-K Counts	ext. 1347

Supervisors

Julie Reardon	Education	ext. 1338
Debra Bobish	Education	ext. 1344
Michelle Ostheimer	Education	ext. 1394
Carrie Morrison	Education	ext. 1323
Melissa Strausser	Health Assistant	ext. 1358
Elizabeth Ellison	Health Assistant	ext. 1356
Ron Shadd	Family & Community Engagement	ext. 1350

MAIN OFFICES

Head Start / Early Head Start / Pa Pre-K Counts

(John Hetra Bldg Farrell)....724-346-4482

Toll Free.....866-284-1059

Fax.....724-346-4431

HEAD START/PA PRE-K COUNTS CLASSROOM DIRECTORY

Head Start Classrooms

Case Ave	724-983-4015 x5104
Commodore Perry.....	724-253-2054
Farrell 1 AM/PM.....	724-346-4482 x1343
Farrell 2 AM/PM.....	724-346-4482 x1325
Greenville 1.....	724-977-1592
Greenville 2 AM/PM	724-699-4302
Grove City.....	724-458-4944
Hermitage 1	724-977-1596
Hermitage 2	724-301-1597
Jamestown.....	724-932-5657
Lakeview.....	724-376-2347
Mercer.....	724-662-5102 xTBA
Musser 1	724-866-4922
Musser 2	724-977-6074
Musser 3	724-372-2669
Reynolds.....	724-646-3041
Sharpsville (Elementary).....	724-962-7168 x9-3112
Seventh Street (Sharpsville)	TBA
West Hill 1	724-301-4823
West Hill 2.....	724-301-4635
West Middlesex.....	724-528-1502

Pre-K Classrooms

Case Ave	724-983-4015 x5105
Grove City.....	724-877-0259
Hermitage	724-977-1593
Mercer.....	724-662-5102 xTBA
Reynolds.....	724-646-0088

HEAD START FAMILY ADVOCATE DIRECTORY

<u>Family Advocates</u>	724-346-4482 or 866-284-1059
(Fax).....	724-346-4431
Ethel Gueye.....	Ext. 1364
Amanda Marsteller.....	Ext. 1332
Carrie Peluso.....	Ext. 1349
Shirley Reagle.....	Ext. 1359
Hannah Snider.....	Ext. 1333
Michelle Sparrow.....	Ext. 1360
Christine Stabile.....	Ext. 1352

EARLY HEAD START DIRECTORY

<u>Home Visitors</u>	724-346-4482 or 866-284-1059
Fax.....	724-342-3771
Doran Ellebie	Ext. 1328
Sharon Emmett.....	Ext. 1336
Tashinia Lowe.....	Ext. 1362
Marty Marshall.....	Ext. 1334
Doddy Robison	Ext. 1363
Marlene Roch.....	Ext. 1361
Mary Svirbly	Ext. 1354

Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts

PARENTS' PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

By enrolling your child in the Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts program this fall, you have shown that you are a concerned parent who desires the best possible start in life for your child. This commitment carries the following responsibilities:

As this child's parent/guardian, I will:

- Spend quality time daily with your child and especially doing home projects.
- Set a consistent morning and bedtime routine.
- Attend Parent Meetings/Family Activities.
- Participate in scheduled parent meetings and male involvement activities.
- Set realistic individualized goals for your child with your child's teacher/home visitor.
- Call the classroom before class start time to let staff know if my child will be late or absent so the meal count will be accurate.
- Maintain regular attendance
- Provide a written excuse when a child is absent from school. A doctor's excuse is required if a child had a contagious illness or was absent for surgery.
- Provide current physical, dental exams, and immunization records for each child.
- Drop-off and pick up the child at the scheduled classroom times.
- Notify the classroom teacher/home visitor of any updates to child release authorization form.
- Abide by MCHS/EHS policies and procedures.

Head Start requires all classroom parents/guardians to:

- Develop a Family Advancement Plan, assisted by staff (within 45-60 days of enrollment) and update as needed.
- Attend monthly Center Committee Parent Meetings and keep current on Head Start activities and opportunities.
- Keep scheduled home visits with teachers and family advocates.

Early Head Start requires all home-based parents/guardians agree to:

- Develop a Family Advancement Plan, assisted by staff (within 45-60 days of enrollment) and updated as needed.
- Attend monthly Center Committee Parent Meetings and keep current on Early Head Start activities and opportunities.
- Plan 90 minute weekly home visits with the home visitor.
- Follow through with the home activities planned for the upcoming week.
- Schedule the date and time of the next home visit with the home visitor before the visit is completed. If unable to keep the appointment call and reschedule with your home visitor.
- Attend two (2) monthly scheduled socializations per month as they are very important for you and your child to receive the most benefits from the program.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

All Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Staff will:

- Abide by the Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts confidentiality policy.
- Report any child abuse, whether suspected or verified, following Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Count's policies and procedures.
- Be knowledgeable of all community resources and refer families as necessary.

Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Classroom Staff will:

- Notify parents of field trips taken during the school year.
- Notify parents whenever their child is injured in the classroom.
- Complete a minimum of two (2) home visits each year. (Teacher) (Head Start Only)
- Complete a minimum of three (3) social service home visits each year. (Family Advocate) (Head Start Only)
- Complete a minimum of two (2) parent-teacher conferences per year.
- Create a high quality learning environment that meets yet challenges the developmental, cognitive, physical and social-emotional skills of the children in their care.

Early Head Start Home-Based program staff will:

- Plan the date and time of the next (weekly) home visit with parent.
- Plan weekly home visits lasting 1 ½ hours with parent and child.
- Plan socializations.

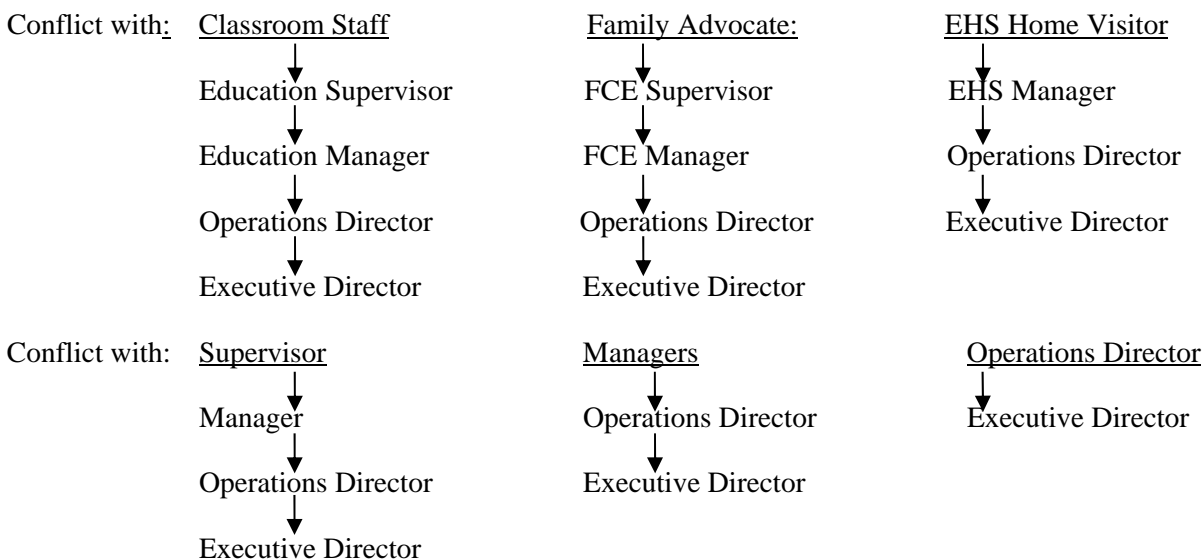
Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts recognizes the principle of fair and respectful treatment among staff and families. Everyone has a responsibility to set a positive example and behave in a manner which will not offend, embarrass, humiliate, harass, or bully others, whether by deliberate or unintentional actions. Positive communication between people, courteous conduct, mutual respect and fairness, and collaborative working relationships will ensure a valuable experience for all involved.

Confidentiality

The Mercer County Head Start / Early Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts Program believes in the integrity of all our clients and will do everything possible to ensure that all information obtained on the families enrolled in the program will be kept in the strictest confidence. You will be asked to sign a confidentiality statement at your child's parent orientation.

Complaints / Concerns

We would like to ensure that any concerns are addressed in a timely and fair manner. In the very best of situations, not everyone can always agree on every given issue. When a problem arises, we ask that you first discuss it with that individual to come to an amicable and agreeable resolution. In the event that you cannot resolve your conflict by first discussing the concern with the individual directly involved please contact the following people:



Child Abuse

The Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts staff are mandated reporters according to the Child Protective Service Law. When any staff member has reasonable cause to suspect a child is being abused or neglected, Childline will be called. Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts encourages parents who suspect child abuse to contact Childline at 1-800-932-0313.



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

You Can Become An Active Partner

Partnership with parents has always been the cornerstone of Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts. It is only through the active participation of parents and guardians, like you that the Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Program and your child will continue to grow.

Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts staff and parents frequently refer to themselves as the Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Family or Community. As with all families and communities, many day-to-day activities require our individual attention. So you might ask, “How Can I Volunteer?” The answer is there are many ways you can volunteer your services. Some examples include:

- Volunteer to spend the day with your child in the classroom (see pg. 14, IV: Volunteer Clearances)
- Attending parent meetings/socializations
- Becoming a member of Policy Council (Head Start/Early Head Start Only) or other committees
- Participating in male involvement activities
- Being a classroom or field trip volunteer
- Participating in home visits
- Attending workshops, trainings, and informal “get-togethers”
- Preparing for education / employment opportunities
- Participating in the annual Program Self-Assessment
- Represent Head Start / Early Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts at a community event
- Become a classroom substitute (see below for information)

Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts provide large group family activities throughout the program year.

Policy Council

(Head Start/Early Head Start Only)

The Policy Council is composed of representatives from parent committees, community agencies and past parents. At least 51% of the Policy Council must be a parent of children currently enrolled in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. By becoming a member of this Council, you will be a part of the decision making process for the entire program. Your delegate will attend the meetings and keep you informed of all developments. Additionally, this person is the voice of your center or home base. They are able to carry forward your ideas or concerns to the Policy Council. The Policy Council meets on the First Tuesday of each month at 10:00 am. Meetings will be held at the John Hetra Child Development Center, Farrell, PA. Mileage for attending Policy to and from the meetings will be paid to the parent representative.

Policy Council Representative

Are the voice of their Head Start/Early Head Start Program
Assist with decision making for the Head Start/Early Head Start Program

Policy Council Alternate

Are welcome and encouraged to attend ALL meetings
Alternates substitute if the Representative is unable to attend meetings
Have no voting privilege unless they are substituting

PARENT CENTER COMMITTEE MEETINGS

HEAD START / EARLY HEAD START ONLY

Parent meetings are held monthly. Attending these meetings provide all parents with the opportunity to work with staff, develop activities for both children and parents, to learn more about the Head Start/Early Head Start Program and develop strong leadership skills. The Parent Committee is most effective when all parents attend the meetings and become involved.

The officers for the Parent Committees are the Chairperson, and Vice-Chairperson. A brief outline of their responsibilities are listed below:

Chairperson

Maintain order throughout the meeting
Call the meeting to order
Introduce speaker

Vice-Chairperson

Move into Chair position, should the chairperson resign or is absent
Make every attempt to attend ALL meetings
Assist Chair as needed

The Family Advocates and/or Early Head Start manager assist with arranging for guest speakers and activities. If you are interested in a specific topic or speaker let your Family Advocate or Early Head Start manager know.



NOTE: PARENTS CAN BECOME A PAID SUBSTITUTE. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, CONTACT THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER AT 724-346-4482 EXT. 1341

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

I. Attendance ~

Head Start /PA Pre-K Counts Center Based (Classrooms)

It is very important for your child to attend school on a regular basis for several reasons.

- 1.) It allows your child to become familiar with routines.
- 2.) To learn new skills and develop the ability to work and communicate their thoughts and ideas.
- 3.) Play with other children individually and in a group.

Your child's attendance **should** be kept above 85%. If your child is absent, please send in an excuse to your child's classroom teacher. Should your child's attendance fall below 85% your child's Family Advocate will be contacting you to create a plan to help you improve your child's attendance. Failure to do so MAY result in your child being withdrawn and placed on the waiting list.

Early Head Start Home Based

Participation on a weekly basis is important for your child to receive the most benefits from the program. Families that frequently miss home visits will be asked to create a plan to help improve their participation.

II. Custody ~

Custody paperwork is your responsibility. Custody agreements and court orders must be on file at the center in order for Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts to abide by the agreement. Please give a copy of all current custody orders to your Teacher, Family Advocate or Home Visitor.

III. Family Support Staff ~

Family & Community Engagement staff will be available to:

- Discuss your participation in program activities.
- Help you identify strengths and establish goals by developing a Family Advancement Plan (Head Start/Early Head Start Only).
- Offer information and referrals to community agencies based on the family needs.
- Provide literacy information and materials for the child and family.
- Serve as a support person for your family.

The Head Start **Family Advocate** will meet with you a minimum of three times during the year.

The Early Head Start **Home Visitor** will visit you weekly, which is a requirement in the Early Head Start home-based option.

If you are unable to keep a scheduled home visit, please contact your family advocate or home visitor as soon as possible to arrange another time.

IV. Home Visiting Safety (Head Start/Early Head Start Only) ~

Staff will always schedule home visits with you in advance. If an emergency or unforeseen situation would occur, please notify the staff immediately if you are unable to keep your home visit. Please maintain an accessible pathway to the home, such as clearing the walkway of snow. Please secure pets so they are not running loose in the yard or house. If a home visit is scheduled in the late afternoon or evening, please leave a porch light on for staff.

V. Smoke & Tobacco Free Environment Policy ~

To promote a healthy environment for families, and in compliance with federal regulation, Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start provides a smoke and tobacco-free environment, designed to eliminate smoke and tobacco exposure to children, parents, and staff in our program.

- Smoking or use of any tobacco product, by anyone is NOT PERMITTED on program property.
- We ask that parents set an example by NOT smoking or using any tobacco product within sight of the children, such as pick-up and drop-off locations, and family events.
- We also ask that cigarettes and other tobacco related items not be visible during home visits.

We appreciate your cooperation in supporting this initiative and joining us in providing the healthiest environment possible for everyone involved in our program.

IV. Volunteer Clearances – Background Checks ~ IT’S THE LAW

Under the Child Protective Services Law, classroom volunteers are required to obtain background checks **before** volunteering in the classrooms, this includes parents, interns, student teachers, etc. There are two clearances that all volunteers must obtain 1. Child Abuse History Clearance issued by the Department of Human Services and 2. Criminal History Record Check issued by the Pennsylvania State Police Department. The clearances fee has been waived by the Governor and is **FREE** for volunteers.

If you have not lived in the State of Pennsylvania consistently for the past 10 years you will also have to acquire an FBI Criminal Background Check, which cost \$27.00. You must register on line or by phone at www.pa.cogentid.com or 1-888-439-2486 **before** you go to get fingerprinted at Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4 453 Maple Street, Grove City, PA.

You can request copies of the Clearances Forms from your teacher, or contact our offices at 724-346-4482 and we can mail you copies or for more information about clearances required under the Child Protective Services Law please visit www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov. If you are seeking clearances go directly to www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis to create an individual account and apply for your child abuse clearances electronically. For Criminal History Check go online to <https://epatch.state.pa.us>.

All clearances are to be submitted to:

Joe Berringer, Human Resource Manager
Mercer County Head Start Administrative Office
1901 Memorial Drive
Farrell, PA 16121

Once both of your clearances are submitted to the Human Resource Manager, it will be reviewed and a fitness determination will be made regarding your ability to volunteer. You and the teacher will be notified in writing regarding your ability to volunteer and a date you can start. If there is an issue with your clearance determination, you will be contacted directly by the Human Resource Manager.

Please allow 30 days after submission of both of your clearances to Human Resources for a determination to be made.

No parent, relative, guardian, student teacher or other person will be permitted in the classroom without clearance determination and approval from the Human Resource Manager.

Please note, the Head Start and Pre K Counts programs are guest of the school districts in which your child is attending, each school district has a right to request a copy of your clearances. We are permitted to share your fitness determination to volunteer with the school district but we will not share the actual clearance documents nor give a hard copy of the clearances without your signed written permission.

EDUCATION

I. Curriculum ~

Mercer County **Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts** classrooms utilize the *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* a nationally recognized curriculum for 3-5 year old children.

This curriculum allows for a variety of developmentally appropriate experiences in the classroom setting, while maintaining the flexibility required addressing the individual needs of each enrolled child. Your child will have the opportunity to participate in whole group, small group and individual learning activities daily. Additionally, he/she will experience both teacher led and child initiated learning opportunities. Each parent is invited to volunteer in their child's classroom often, which is the best way to learn about and understand our curriculums. You will also be a vital part of setting and updating individual goals for your child throughout the year.

Early Head Start home-based curriculum is *Parents As Teachers (PAT)*. It is based on the philosophy that a parent is their child's first and best teacher. It provides information to the parent on child development, including learning materials that can be made at home for play time to encourage development. *PAT* also has topics in the areas of health, safety and nutrition.

Partners for a Healthy Baby is a comprehensive curriculum that is used with **pregnant woman** in our **Early Head Start** program. The home visitor meets with the pregnant woman every other week to support the family with prenatal health, baby's development, self-esteem and self-sufficiency, pregnancy concerns, preparation for baby's arrival, etc.

II. Assessment ~

The assessment tool used for all programs is Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts – Ongoing observation and assessments are completed on each child throughout the year. Assessment results are shared with parents at two parent/teacher conferences per year and at other times upon parent request. Child assessment information will only be shared with the parents or legal guardians of each child.

Early Head Start - Ongoing observation and assessments done in conjunction with family are completed on each child throughout the year. This aligns with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Assessment results are shared with families during home visits and strategies are discussed to support children's developmental progress. Child Assessment information will only be shared with the parents or legal guardians of each child.

III. Daily Schedule ~

Throughout the day no matter what preschool program option your child is enrolled in, the daily schedule will include these types of activities but following a specific schedule that fits the classroom's individual needs. Please refer to your classroom for your child's daily schedule. The schedule reflects key learning components, activities and groupings that align with state and federal standards.

You will find:

- Child initiated experiences
- Include quiet and active times
- Independent and guided activities
- Large and small groups
- Individual activities
- Reading to children
- Breakfast and lunch
- Gross motor skill and outdoor playtime

IV. General Information ~

Clothing: Please choose comfortable clothing which allows your child to play and create without being afraid of "getting dirty." Going outside is part of our daily curriculum. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather, including hats, gloves and boots, when necessary. Rubber soled shoes,

preferably sneakers, are recommended. A backpack or book bag is beneficial but not required. Please send in an extra bag of clothing in case your child needs to be changed during the day.

Field Trips: Mercer County Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts classrooms schedule field trips periodically throughout the year. Program staff depends on parents to assist in planning field trips and accompanying the children and staff when possible. Clearances are needed to be able to go on field trips with your child.

TRANSITION

Transition is the process of moving your child successfully from one program to another.

I. Early Head Start ~

At two years, six months of age, each Early Head Start child will begin the transition process to move them from Early Head Start to the next appropriate placement. Staff will work closely with families to ensure a smooth transition working on an individualized plan which includes parent input, available options and resources.

II. Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts ~

Children begin their transition to Kindergarten the very first day of enrollment. Visits to Kindergarten classrooms, classroom activities, kindergarten registration, parent meetings and school district meetings help make this a smooth transition.

III. Kindergarten School District Meetings ~

Meetings are scheduled in the spring with each school district to help make this a smooth transition for not only the children but the parents as well.

For children who will enter kindergarten the following school year:

Parents will be asked to sign transition permission forms. This will allow classroom staff to gather transition information to share with the receiving school. The information that parents have given permission to share will be collected and reviewed with the school district in the spring at the annual transition meeting.

Head Start/Pre-K teachers create an environment that guide and support the children to learn and adjust to various transitions that occur during the day. These transitions prepare the children to further gain skills for kindergarten readiness. The teachers work with kindergarten teachers to plan activities with kindergarten friends.

TRANSPORTATION

I. Releasing a Child from Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Program ~

When your child is picked up at the classroom it MUST be by a person that is listed on the Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form. He/she must be 18 years of age or older and have **photo identification**. Staff will **NOT** release a child to any adult whose name is not on the Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form.

All additions/deletions must be made in writing to the Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form, by following these guidelines:

- **Head Start** parents/guardians should call their Family Advocate to make an appointment so a change can be made.
- **PA Pre-K Counts** parents/guardians should call their classroom teacher to make an appointment so a change can be made.
- Child Passenger Safety is very important! When transporting your child to/from the classroom everyday they should be in the back seat of the vehicle and in a car seat. It's The Law! Failure to do so could result in a report to Child Protective Services.

You MAY NOT call into the classroom to add and delete people

It is your responsibility to keep all phone numbers and addresses current for all persons on the Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form. Changing a phone number or an address CAN be done over the phone with the Family Advocate.

II. Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts Children Not Picked Up On Time ~

When children are not picked up by the designated time, the following procedure will be followed:

1. We will attempt to reach you by telephone. If we are unable to reach you, we will notify the individual(s) you have listed on your Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form to come and pick up your child.
2. If we are unable to reach you within one (1) hour of dismissal, or an individual who is listed on the Child Release Authorization/Emergency Contact Form, the local authorities and **Children and Youth Services** will be called.

III. Cancellations ~

In case of inclement weather or unforeseen emergencies Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts will follow your local school district. If your school district's classes are cancelled Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts will be closed. If there is a two-hour delay, Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts is on a two-hour delay also. Please listen to the following radio and television stations:

Radio: Y-103 102.9 (Sharon/Youngstown) 95.1 (Grove City) WGRP 107.1 (Greenville)

Television: Channels 21 NBC, 27 CBS or 33 ABC (Youngstown)

DISABILITIES AND MENTAL HEALTH

Enrollment opportunities in the Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts program are available for children with disabilities in need of related services. Related services include, but are not limited to speech therapy, specialized instruction, occupational therapy, etc. Placement options such as Dual Programming may also be available.

Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts currently has strong collaborations with county Early Intervention programs for the provision of evaluations and services. Parental permission must be obtained.

I. Screenings ~

Head Start / PA Pre-K Counts:

All Head Start and PA Pre-K Counts children will be screened within 45 days into the Program. Our program utilizes the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 and Ages & Stages SE-2. The screening tool Ages and Stages provides a brief synopsis of your child's developmental skills and behavior overview. The results will be mailed to parents/guardians of your child's performance with recommendations as needed.

Early Head Start:

All Early Head Start children will be screened in the following areas using the Ages and Stages-3 and Ages and Stages SE-2: developmental, communication, vision, behavior and hearing within 45 days of enrollment into the program and at regular intervals. These age appropriate screenings include activities related to gross motor, personal social, communication, fine motor, cognitive skills and behavior. The results will be discussed with parent/caregivers along with recommendations and referral information if needed.

Resources for follow-up of any identified concerns will be discussed with the parents/caregivers as necessary. With parents/caregivers permission, evaluations are coordinated with the appropriate outside agencies.

II. Behavior Management Policy ~

The Mercer County **Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts** Behavior Management Policy was created to ensure that all children enrolled in our program have the opportunity to learn in a safe, positive and nurturing classroom environment. This policy will be reviewed and signed at parent orientation, or with the Family Advocate upon enrollment, prior to the start of school. The policy is very specific and we ask that you read it carefully.

III. Mental Health Referrals & Resources ~

Mercer County Head Start/Early Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts currently has a strong relationship with a county mental health agency. If a family/child is in need of services or you would like to arrange a consultation with our Mental Health Consultant you can contact your Classroom Teacher, Home Visitor, Family Advocate or the Disabilities/Mental Health Manager.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

I. Physicals & Dental Exams ~

Completed Physical and Dental Examinations are required in order to maintain healthy children. A medical and dental “home” are the first steps to success for your child and family toward a healthy journey. Here at Head Start/Early Head Start/Pre-K Counts we are committed to helping make this an easy process for you and your family. Together we need to start your foundation to build and grow on the very first day of school. All programs require current examinations. If you need any assistance please contact the Health Manager at 724-346-4482 x1342. Completed examinations are due within 90 days of enrollment. Vision examinations are scheduled in the classroom. A letter of result will be sent home with your child.

Your **Head Start** child’s physical examination must include a current immunization record. With your child’s shot record please be sure that an anemia and lead level are done by your pediatrician as part of a complete physical.

A copy of your child’s physical/dental examinations can be turned into your Family Advocate, your classroom teacher, or call us at the Health Office. Please refer to the Community Resource section if you need assistance to establish a medical or dental home for your family.

PA Pre-K Counts ~ Your child’s immunization records are required within 60 days of enrollment, as well as a current physical and dental.

Early Head Start ~ A copy of your child’s most recent well baby examination or doctor’s visit is needed within one month of program enrollment. Your child’s immunizations and completion of lead and anemia level are important steps and records for your child’s program participation.

II. Dental Hygiene ~

All Head Start/Pre K Counts programs support the importance of good dental care. Your children will learn how to brush their teeth and care for their toothbrush during school hours. We encourage healthy eating along with Cavity Free/Healthy Smiles Dental Programs in our Health Program. Decaying or lost teeth can affect a child’s overall health, nutrition, and speech. Follow up dental care is crucial to the child’s overall well-being. Good tooth brushing is practiced after each meal and snack.

III. Illness ~

Ask yourself: Is my child too sick for school? This can be a tough call to make first thing in the morning. Here are some guidelines from your Head Start Health Office to make the right decision.

Does your child have a **Fever**? A child who has a **fever of 99° degrees or more** is better off at home. Your child should be fever free **without medication for 24 hours** before you send them back to school.

Does your child feel **well enough to take part in class**? A mild cough or runny nose does not mean a child can’t focus in school. But children who are in pain, coughing continuously, or worried about going to the bathroom will **not** be able to focus.

Does your child have a **contagious illness**? This child must stay at home to avoid getting the other children ill and to promote faster recovery for your child. Examples of contagious illness that would fall into this category:

- Pink Eye
- Ringworm
- Poison Ivy
- Whooping Cough
- Mono-nucleosis

Many of these are short-term illnesses and once treatment is started by your Doctor we can bring your child safely back into school. With any contagious illness **a call, doctors excuse or appointment with the Health Office** is required for clearance back into our Head Start/Pre-K classroom.

LICE – **Children with eggs (nits) or live lice will be sent home immediately.** Head Start/Pre-K follows the “**Zero Nit Policy**”. The Head Start Health office will help you with any information you may need on how to rid your-child and house of lice. Once treatment is complete your child may return to school once checked by the **Head Start Nurse**.

BED BUGS – If eggs or bugs are discovered on a child or a child’s belongings, the child will be sent home. The parent/guardian will be instructed to contact the health office. The health staff will work with the family to eradicate bed bugs in the home setting and prevent further spread into the school setting. The child must be re-evaluated by the health staff prior to returning to the classroom. Early Head Start home visits will resume visits once home is cleared.

IV. **Medication** ~

Medications rarely need to be given during the Head Start/Pre-K day, most can be given before or after school hours. If a medication must be given during the school day the parent/guardian is **required** to set up an **appointment with the Health/Safety Manager to complete a plan of care** for this medication to be given **in a safe manner at school**. Paperwork from both parent and physician are reviewed prior to any medication (either a **rescue medication ~ as in Asthma Inhaler or Epi-Pen or a prescribed medication** that requires Head Start/PA Pre-K staff to administer) given to your child.

****NEVER SHOULD ANY MEDICATION BE SENT TO SCHOOL WITH YOUR CHILD IN THEIR POCKET OR BACKPACK****

V. **Meals** ~

All Head Start/PA Pre-K Counts children will be offered breakfast and lunch at no cost to the family. These meals are served family style and children are encouraged, but never forced, to try new items. Meal time at Head Start/Pre-K is an important teaching tool used to discourage picky eating and to educate children on how to make healthy food choices. Children will often try a new food if their friend, parents or teacher will try it too. Food is **never** used as a punishment or reward.

Breakfast is provided to children and adults attending Early Head Start socializations.

If your child has special dietary needs such as an allergy or intolerance this must be documented by a physician and accommodations will be made. Please let staff know if there are specific ethnic foods you would like to see served in the program. Concerns may be addressed with the Nutrition Manager.

The safety of children is our first priority. Due to known and unknown food allergies and necessary food accommodations for children we **DO NOT** permit any food (pizza, cupcakes, candy, etc.) wrapped or unwrapped to be brought in from the outside to the classroom or socialization sites.

All meals served to participants under the Child and Adult Care Food Program are served at no separate charge. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, call 1-866-632-9992 to request the form. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339; or 1-800-845-6136 (Spanish).