

# Family Handbook

## Home-Based Services



*The leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities.*

## Table of Contents

|                                                                                |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Welcome Aboard!.....                                                           | 1  |
| <b>Program Goals</b> .....                                                     | 2  |
| <b>Home Visiting</b> .....                                                     | 2  |
| <b>Socializations</b> .....                                                    | 2  |
| <b>Attendance</b> .....                                                        | 3  |
| CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT .....                                                | 3  |
| CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS .....                                                     | 4  |
| GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE .....                                                  | 4  |
| <b>When Head Start is Open</b> .....                                           | 4  |
| UNPLANNED CLOSINGS.....                                                        | 4  |
| <b>Support Services</b> .....                                                  | 4  |
| TRANSPORTATION.....                                                            | 4  |
| NUTRITION .....                                                                | 4  |
| Special Diets/Needs.....                                                       | 4  |
| HEALTH/ORAL HEALTH SERVICES .....                                              | 5  |
| Required Medical Documents.....                                                | 5  |
| Screenings .....                                                               | 5  |
| Immunizations .....                                                            | 6  |
| Oral Health Documents.....                                                     | 6  |
| Preparing Your Child to Visit the Doctor and Dentist.....                      | 7  |
| Healthy Habits .....                                                           | 7  |
| “Care for Their Air” .....                                                     | 7  |
| Communicable/Childhood Diseases .....                                          | 7  |
| MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT .....                       | 8  |
| Pyramid Model .....                                                            | 9  |
| EARLY HEAD START PRE AND POSTNATAL FAMILIES.....                               | 9  |
| FAMILY SERVICES .....                                                          | 10 |
| TRANSITIONING .....                                                            | 10 |
| <b>Parent Involvement</b> .....                                                | 10 |
| VOLUNTEERING .....                                                             | 10 |
| VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.....                                                   | 10 |
| Socializations .....                                                           | 10 |
| Policy Council .....                                                           | 11 |
| Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee.....                      | 11 |
| COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HOME VISITOR .....                                     | 11 |
| HEARING PARENT CONCERNS .....                                                  | 11 |
| <b>Family Code of Conduct</b> .....                                            | 12 |
| <b>Family and Program Responsibilities</b> .....                               | 12 |
| <b>Child Abuse, Neglect, and Domestic Violence</b> .....                       | 13 |
| <b>Notification of Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information</b> ..... | 14 |
| <b>Parent Resources</b> .....                                                  | 14 |
| <b>My Home Visitor’s Contact Information</b> .....                             | 15 |



3 West Broadway, Oneonta, NY 13820 **P** 607.433.8000 **F** 607.433.8013 **W** [www.ofoinc.org](http://www.ofoinc.org)

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We look forward to an exciting year and want to extend a warm welcome to you and your child as you begin your journey in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start.

You, as a parent or guardian, are your child's first and best teacher. You play the most vital role in your child's development and success. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start provides families opportunities for growth and support. The more that you participate, the more rewarding the experience will be for you and your child. We encourage you to interact in all aspects of your child's experience in the program and offer this handbook so you may become familiar with our procedures and expectations.

Our program adheres to the highest performance standards to ensure your child receives quality learning opportunities and life lessons to prepare them for a smooth transition to kindergarten. A primary program goal is school readiness and attendance is a critical part to its success. It is important that you keep scheduled weekly home visits, and engage with your child during these visits. We want to lay the foundation for good attendance habits for life.

Play is critical to the growth and development of children. Toys are tools that help children learn about themselves and the world around them. As children play, they learn how to get along with others, become proficient in problem solving, and develop their fine and gross motor skills. The best part is they will have a whole bunch of fun doing it!

We recognize that this experience will be new and different in most cases. You should never hesitate to ask any questions you have about your child or the program. Your child's Home Visitor is more than happy to field any suggestions, comments, or concerns that you may have.

As we embark on this journey together, we know that the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program will have a positive and meaningful impact in your child's life, and yours as well. We look forward to working with you and your family this year!

Sincerely,

Head Start Management Team

## Program Goals

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start provides educational and social activities to **promote your child's overall learning and development for school readiness**. The Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start home-based program offers weekly home visits and two socialization experiences each month. We believe the parent is the child's first and most important teacher, and through positive interactions and guidance from staff, you and your child will form a love of learning that will last a lifetime. School readiness is a key goal of the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program. All children develop at individual rates and learning in the early years is enhanced through exploratory play and social experiences.

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start knows the major responsibility of raising children rests with parents. The Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program is staffed with qualified individuals providing a program based on early child development needs. Young children learn best by using all their senses through play and "hands on" experiences. Parents and staff will plan activities for the child to explore and stimulate the following areas of development: fine motor skills, gross motor skills, thinking skills, language/literacy development, and social and emotional competence.

**Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start not only provides services to your child but to you – the caregiver – as well.** Home Visitors can help you find support to promote your family's overall health, lead you on a path to self-sufficiency, and help you reach your goals.

## Home Visiting

The home-based Early Head Start program serves pregnant individuals and children birth to 3 years of age. Home-based Early Head Start operates year-round (12 months), offering weekly home visits (for a total of 46 per year) and two socializations per month (for a total of 22 per year).

The home-based Head Start Preschool program serves children ages 3 to 5. Home-based Head Start Preschool operates September through June (10 months), offering weekly home visits (for a total of 32 per year) and two socializations per month (for a total of 16 per year).

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start are staffed with Home Visitors who provide services based on each family's strengths and goals. Home Visitors work with parents to nurture positive parent-child interactions, provide developmentally appropriate activities for infants and toddlers, and to promote healthy child growth and development.

Home Visitors can also help families meet their needs by providing referrals to community services, including but not limited to, medical providers, prenatal health specialists, and nutrition specialists. Home Visitors are available to discuss any questions or concerns a family may have.

Home visits are effective and most enjoyable when the family and the Home Visitor are prepared and organized for each home visit. In order to provide a healthy and focused learning experience, families are expected to turn off televisions/radios, refrain from smoking, and maintain active participation in the visit. Families may be asked to secure pets or move them to another room during the visit. Parents are expected to be involved in each activity, as well as the clean-up that follows. The next week's activities will be planned together by both you and your Home Visitor.

## Socializations

Socializations are a time for you, your child, and other parents and children to come together. Socializations are scheduled two times a month and are planned between parents and Home Visitors. Socializations promote parent-child interaction and can be a learning experience for both the parent and child. Through socializations, you will have the opportunity to build positive and supportive relationships with other parents. During socializations, children are to be supervised by their own parents through observation and active participation.

Socializations are provided in addition to weekly home visits and are not a substitute for them. Socializations give children the chance to be part of many new experiences through activities such as music and movement, books, finger plays, and

healthy meals and snacks. Hand washing and tooth brushing are healthy habits practiced at socializations. Informational handouts on nutrition and recipes are also available.

Like socializations, Fatherhood Initiative events encourage parent or family participation. These opportunities promote healthy relationships for the participating adult and child, and support all areas of the child's growth and development with long-term impact on positive outcomes for the child. Parents or other family members will not only provide the necessary supervision, but by learning along with the child, families will be ready to participate in a variety of expanded learning experiences which further enriches child development, family engagement, and program goals.

If needed, your Home Visitor can provide transportation to socializations or Fatherhood Initiative activities.

## Attendance

Home-based hours are determined between the family and the Home Visitor. If you need to cancel or reschedule your home visit, please call your Home Visitor to let them know with as much advanced notice as possible. In order for home visits to be effective, they will last a minimum of 90 minutes per week. It is the responsibility of the Home Visitor to keep home visits at scheduled times. If your Home Visitor is unable to keep a scheduled home visit, they will call to let you know and reschedule your visit. If you are not at home at the time of your scheduled home visit, the Home Visitor will wait 15 minutes for you to arrive.

If a visit is cancelled or missed by the Home Visitor, they will contact the family to arrange another visit within the same week or schedule two visits for the following week. If the family cancels or the child and parent are not home for a scheduled visit, the Home Visitor will make contact to determine the reason for the missed visit. In case of an emergency closing, due to inclement weather or any other unavoidable circumstance, home visits may be cancelled and parents will be notified. If you cannot be reached, your emergency contact persons will be notified.

Consistently missed visits may jeopardize your spot in the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program. If attempts at contacting the family are not successful, a letter will be sent by the program notifying the family their spot may be in jeopardy. If no contact is made by the family within two weeks of the letter being sent, the family will be withdrawn from the program.

## **CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start utilizes research-based curriculum and assessment tools to promote each child's individual growth and development.

The Early Head Start program utilizes the *Partners for a Healthy Baby Home Visiting Curriculum*, which is specifically designed for use by Home Visitors to support families with young children. The program also uses *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos* from Teaching Strategies to support learning and development of the child.

The Head Start Preschool program utilizes *Growing Great Kids*, which is an evidence-based home visiting curriculum that promotes parent-child relationships. The program also uses the *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* from Teaching Strategies to plan and implement content-rich, developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support active learning and promote children's progress in all developmental areas.

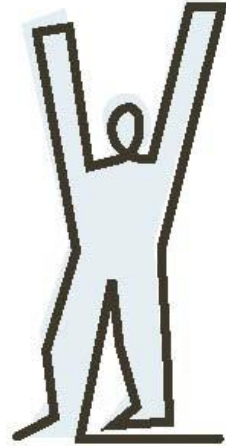
Every child in our program is an individual, and our goal is to plan with parents to guide learning and build on strengths. Home Visitors and parents use *Teaching Strategies GOLD*, an online assessment system, to track each child's learning and development over time through observations of activities and interactions during home visits and socializations. During the program year, parents and Home Visitors review the child's progress together and plan for the next steps in reaching developmental goals – in Early Head Start this occurs three times a year; in Head Start Preschool this occurs twice a year.

## **CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start welcomes and supports families in sharing their own culture, traditions, and celebrations. Please talk with your child's Home Visitor if you would like to schedule a special event during a home visit. Seasonal celebrations may be scheduled at socializations during certain times of the year.

## **GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**

We all learn best in a positive climate where we feel safe and supported. Positive guidance, such as reinforcing the behaviors we want to see, builds social skills, mutual respect, and self-esteem. The use of corporal punishment or verbal or emotional mistreatment is strictly prohibited in the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start policy FS8 – *Child Abuse and Maltreatment Policy* states in part, "This means no slapping, spanking, hitting, hair pulling, pushing, dragging, yelling or demeaning actions are allowed at any time. Alternative means of discipline or control must be used."



## **When Head Start is Open**

The home-based Early Head Start program operates as a 12-month program and is closed for recognized holidays, staff development days, and for one week in December.

The home-based Head Start Preschool program operates as a 10-month program and is closed for recognized holidays, staff development days, summer vacation, and for one week in December.

## **UNPLANNED CLOSINGS**

Snow Days - If Opportunities for Otsego closes for bad weather, the agency closure will be shared on the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start Facebook page and all scheduled home visits will be cancelled. If the school district in which you live is closed for bad weather, your Home Visitor may cancel the home visit for that day. Your Home Visitor will try to contact you (if possible) to share information about closures and to reschedule the home visit.

Notification of school closings will be announced on:

WZOZ (103.1FM or [www.wzozfm.com](http://www.wzozfm.com))

WSRK (103.9FM or [www.wsrkfm.com](http://www.wsrkfm.com))

WCDO (100.9FM or [www.wcdoonline.com](http://www.wcdoonline.com))

The Daily Star online ([www.thedailystar.com](http://www.thedailystar.com))

WDOS (730AM or [www.cnynews.com](http://www.cnynews.com))

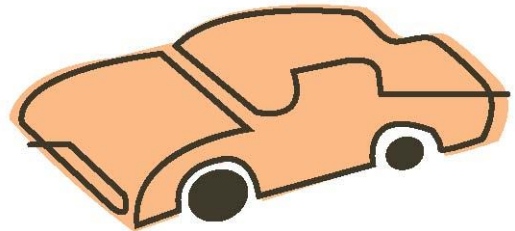
WKTV (Channel 2 or [www.wktv.com](http://www.wktv.com))

WBNG (Channel 12 or [www.wbng.com](http://www.wbng.com))

## **Support Services**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start will provide an appropriate car/booster seat for children transported in agency vehicles under special circumstances (e.g., doctor/dentist appointments, socializations). If one is not available, you may be asked to provide one.



### **NUTRITION**

Special Diets/Needs:

**It is your responsibility to inform Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start staff of any food allergies, special/medical dietary needs, or religious food preferences your child might have.** Children with special dietary needs will be served food at socializations appropriate for their individual needs. Documentation must be provided stating the special dietary/medical needs and alternatives. If your child's diet resumes "back to normal", or has any other changes, we require notification in writing from your child's health care provider.

## **HEALTH/ORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

We believe that parents are their children's most important teachers, and we strive to involve them in all aspects of the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program. The first five years of a child's life are important to emotional, physical, and social growth. Parents provide love, nutrition, health, and social growth to their child. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start provides education to parents on the importance of preventive health measures and assists to link them to an on-going health care system in their community. The Home Visitor is the primary contact with the family and supports them in seeking health services.

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start stresses the importance of identifying and treating health and oral health concerns early and strives to improve and maintain the health of your entire family. As part of program participation, your child is required to be up-to-date on recommended health care visits. These visits need to include height, weight, head circumference, hearing and vision assessment, hemoglobin (at age 9-12 months), lead (at age 12 and 24 months), and current immunizations. You will need to provide documentation of this care within 45 days of enrollment, or 90 days if you need assistance in securing a health care provider. Your child will also receive screenings by trained Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start staff to monitor their health and development. These small but important steps will ensure your child is in tip-top shape for learning.

As recommended by The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry, Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start requires that all children in the program receive their first oral exam by their first birthday. Prenatal mothers are required to receive an oral health exam during their pregnancy. Signed documentation of these oral exams is required. Home Visitors are available to connect families with a dental home and can provide transportation to scheduled appointments.

### **Required Medical Documents:**

Before your child can participate in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start activities or socializations, you must submit the following documents to the Health Specialist for review:

- A current physical that includes: head circumference (for children under 2 years old), blood pressure (for children over 3 years old), height, weight, a check of your child's development, hematocrit/hemoglobin (a blood test for anemia) completed at age 9-12 months or older, lead level results (a blood test for lead poisoning) completed at ages 12 and 24 months or older, subjective vision and hearing screenings.
- A copy of an up-to-date immunization record provided by your child's health care provider or a statement and schedule of immunizations "in-process" verified by your child's health care provider.

\*Physical exams and immunizations must be kept up-to-date as per the American Academy of Pediatrics Well Care Schedule (Newborn, 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months, 3 years, and 4 years.). \*

Should 30 days go by and an updated exam is not complete and forms submitted, your Home Visitor will notify you that your child will not be able to participate in any group activities or socializations. In this case, weekly home visits will continue with your Home Visitor. As soon as documentation of the physical and immunizations is submitted and reviewed by the Health Specialist, your child may return to full activities.

***Please talk to your Home Visitor if you need the name of a doctor or dentist, or need help getting health insurance coverage for you or your child.***

### **Screenings:**

As part of our program, we provide screenings to identify any issues with your child's hearing, vision, hemoglobin (non-invasive screening), physical, cognitive, language, and social and emotional development. We will talk with you and your child ahead of time and make it fun. Results of these screenings will be shared with you upon completion. If there are any concerns, we will help you find the resources to meet your child's needs.

### Immunizations:

Immunizations protect your child from preventable diseases. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start must keep a record of your child's immunizations on file. Below is the schedule of when and what immunizations your child will receive. We will be glad to help if you have any questions or need assistance.

## Recommended Vaccines for Young Children From the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

### Key

|                                                                                   |                                              |                                                                                   |                                                                                  |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | ALL children should be immunized at this age |  | SOME children should get this dose of vaccine or preventive antibody at this age |  | Parents/caregivers should talk to their health care provider to decide if this vaccine is right for their child |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| Vaccine or Preventive Antibody | Birth                                  | 1 Month | 2 Months | 4 Months | 6 Months                                | 7 Months | 8 Months | 12 Months                        | 15 Months | 18 Months | 19 Months | 20-23 Months | 2-3 Years | 4-6 Years |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| RSV antibody                   | Depends on mother's RSV vaccine status |         |          |          |                                         |          |          | Depends on child's health status |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| Hepatitis B                    | Dose 1                                 | Dose 2  |          |          | Dose 3                                  |          |          |                                  |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| Rotavirus                      |                                        |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3                                  |          |          |                                  |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| DTaP                           |                                        |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3                                  |          |          |                                  | Dose 4    |           |           |              |           | Dose 5    |
| Hib                            |                                        |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3                                  |          |          | Dose 4                           |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| Pneumococcal                   |                                        |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3                                  |          |          | Dose 4                           |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| Polio                          |                                        |         | Dose 1   | Dose 2   | Dose 3                                  |          |          |                                  |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 4    |
| COVID-19                       |                                        |         |          |          |                                         |          |          |                                  |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| Influenza/Flu                  |                                        |         |          |          | Every year. Two doses for some children |          |          |                                  |           |           |           |              |           |           |
| MMR                            |                                        |         |          |          |                                         |          |          | Dose 1                           |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 2    |
| Chickenpox                     |                                        |         |          |          |                                         |          |          | Dose 1                           |           |           |           |              |           | Dose 2    |
| Hepatitis A                    |                                        |         |          |          |                                         |          |          | 2 doses separated by 6 months    |           |           |           |              |           |           |

Updated June 20, 2025

For more [information](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules/child-easyread.html) visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-schedules/child-easyread.html>

### Keeping Appointments is Important:

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is a partnership. Keeping all doctor and oral health appointments for your child is a part of your responsibility in the partnership. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start will help by reminding you of appointment due dates and providing transportation if needed. If you are unable to keep an appointment, please reschedule it and inform your Home Visitor of the new scheduled date. Because many dental offices will cancel an appointment if you do not confirm that your child is coming, please be certain to have contact with the dental office to avoid unnecessary travel or inconvenience. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start will assist with making follow-up appointments as well.

### Oral Health Documents:

The Dental/Nutrition Specialist will need to review your child's oral health examination. Oral health exams are to be completed **prior to the first day of attendance** for children 6 months and older, and documentation of completed oral health exams needs to be submitted no later than 30 days after your child's first day in the program (for children 6 months

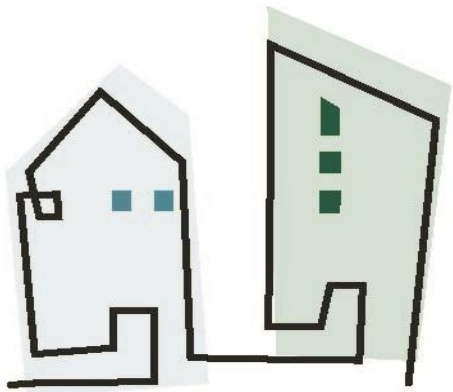
and older). Your child's health care provider can complete the 'Dentition' section of the physical examination form to be counted as an oral health exam. While this can be counted as an oral health exam, a dental home (a regular and ongoing source of dental care) will still need to be established for ongoing and follow-up care. Oral health exams are due each year or as recommended by your child's dentist. The expectation is that you will follow-up on any oral health treatment recommendations.

#### Preparing Your Child to Visit the Doctor and Dentist:

Before going to the doctor or dentist, please be sure you have a Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start child physical exam and/or oral health examination form, with the top portion filled out with your child's information. Your Home Visitor can provide you with the forms if needed. If you use Bassett, please let the health care provider know you are enrolled in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start and need the day care letter faxed to Head Start at 607-433-8066.

#### Doctor Visit:

1. Prepare your child by explaining the purpose of the visit. Explain that the doctor examines them to make sure their body is healthy and that all children go to the doctor for these visits.
2. Explain how the doctor/nurse will measure and weigh them, and how the doctor will look inside their mouth, eyes, ears, and listen to their chest and back with a stethoscope. Explain that the doctor may press on their tummy and listen and feel what is inside, tap on their knee, and may look quickly to see that the 'private area' is healthy. TIP: You can use a doll or a teddy bear to show your child what to expect during their doctor visit.
3. Above all, let your child know that you are okay and comfortable with what will happen when they visit the doctor, and that you will be right there.



#### Dentist Visit:

1. Prepare your child by telling them what to expect when they visit the dentist. Explain how the dentist will examine their teeth with a light and mirror to see if they are healthy.
2. It is important that you do not over-explain the oral health visit or pass your fear of the dentist onto your child.
3. When at the oral health visit, let the dentist talk to your child and allow your child to answer; this gives your child a sense of control. The dentist will address you directly for information that your child is not able to provide.

#### Healthy Habits:

At Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start, we believe in supporting your child's good health. Your child will experience healthy habits on home visits and at socializations such as healthy eating, washing hands, and brushing teeth.

#### "Care for Their Air":

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start promotes a national campaign called "Care for Their Air". Children are greatly affected by second hand smoke. It can cause asthma, ear infections, and is a cancer risk for later life. If you would like to pledge to have a smoke free car, smoke free home, or you would like to stop smoking, let your Home Visitor help you find the resources.

#### Communicable/Childhood Diseases:

If you, family members who live in the home, or your child has a communicable or "catchy" childhood disease such as those listed below, please let your Home Visitor know prior to a visit or an event. We care about the health of all Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start children. Letting us know when your child is ill will help prevent the spread of disease to others. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start home visits and group events are busy times and it is hard for your child to keep up if he/she is not feeling well. Please call to reschedule your visit and **do not** attend group events if anyone in your home has any of the following conditions:

- Chicken Pox – Not all of the lesions are crusted over or the child has a fever;
- Vomiting;
- Diarrhea – He/she has had two or more abnormally loose stools in the last 24 hours;
- Conjunctivitis (pinkeye) – White or yellow pus draining from the eye, often with matted eyelids after sleep, and including eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye. He/she has not completed 24 hours of antibiotics;
- Strep Throat – He/she has not completed 24 hours of antibiotics;
- Impetigo;
- Lice – He/she has live lice in the hair. The hair should be treated and free of live lice;
- Ringworm, Scabies;
- Fever – Temperature above 100.4;
- Excessive coughing;
- Rash – He/she has an undiagnosed rash or a rash caused by an illness or condition;
- A Contagious Disease – He/she has a contagious (catchy) condition as told by the doctor and has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others;
- Other – He/she cannot participate in the program with reasonable comfort, or he/she requires care limiting parent participation in the home visit/socialization.

**If your child is ill and a home visit is scheduled for that day, please call your Home Visitor to reschedule.**

### **MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

When talking about children ages 0-5, mental health is referred to as social and emotional development. Mental health in early childhood includes reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills, and learning how to cope and solve problems. All of these foundational skills are critical for school readiness and lifelong success.

Children with strong social and emotional skills are better able to:

- Form relationships
- Respond to and initiate interactions with adults and peers
- Participate and cooperate in social activities
- Regulate their behavior, problem solve, and manage and express emotions
- Show empathy
- Demonstrated knowledge of self and others
- Display positive self-esteem

One goal of Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is to help children cope with little problems and identify social and emotional concerns before they become bigger issues. Social and emotional problems can interfere with your child's learning and development; providing extra help with and education about managing emotions and behavior is simply another type of learning. This education helps prepare your child for a successful transition to Kindergarten and lays the groundwork for healthy social and emotional development throughout life.

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start employs a mental health professional who is available to assist and support children and families as needed. The Mental Health Specialist works with families and staff to support them in:

- Helping children show, manage, and talk about many different feelings
- Helping children build strong relationships with adults and other children
- Encouraging children to explore their environments
- Teaching children to problem solve
- Teaching children how to handle challenges

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start utilizes the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment to assess children's growth in meeting social and emotional developmental milestones. For children whose scores indicate they would benefit from additional support, the Mental Health Specialist is available to help teachers and parents work together to address the area of need. The aim is to build the adult's capacity to strengthen and support healthy social and emotional development of children, and enable parents to assist their child in building these skills.

Some of the mental health services available include:

- Individualized child and family focused observations and consultations (available in the home)
- Home observations
- Meetings with families and Home Visitors to provide information related to children's mental health, problem solve individual child challenges, identify appropriate supports, or provide recommendations (such as a referral for additional outside mental health services, evaluations, or treatment)
- Helping families connect with community mental health wellness providers
- Providing information on social and emotional strategies to support positive behavior

Parents are the most important teachers and nurturers in a child's life. If you are concerned about or would like more information on your child's social and emotional development, contact your Home Visitor about how to access or utilize our mental health services.

As the parent/guardian of a Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start child, your mental health and wellness is important too. A parent's mental health can have a significant impact on their child's mental and physical health, as well as their social, emotional, and behavioral development. Your Home Visitor can provide you with resources that are available to address any mental health concerns you may be experiencing. If you experience a mental health emergency that requires rapid response by your Home Visitor, they will provide support by contacting the Mobile Crisis Assessment Team (MCAT) to assist you with accessing immediate help, as stated in the *H4 – Health Emergency Policy*.

The full *H4 – Health Emergency Policy*, as well as all Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start health and mental health policies, are available upon request.

#### Pyramid Model:

To support children's behavioral health development, our program follows the Pyramid Model framework. The goal of the Pyramid Model is to create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. This is accomplished by designing classrooms that promote engagement in learning and by building positive relationships among children, families, and staff. In our use of the Pyramid Model, classroom staff will work together to ensure that all children understand behavior expectations, receive instruction in social skills, and those who are struggling receive individual support. We utilize a tiered approach to provide universal supports to all children to promote wellness, target services to those who need more support, and intensive intervention services to those who need them.

#### **EARLY HEAD START PRE AND POSTNATAL FAMILIES**

Your Home Visitor will work with you to complete prenatal health information forms and a Prenatal Nutrition Assessment at one of the first home visits. These forms assess what providers and/or services (medical, oral health, WIC) are being utilized and what other services might benefit you and your family.

To help you stay healthy both during your pregnancy and after, your Home Visitor will remind you to attend pre and postnatal health care provider appointments. Please share a copy of documentation from the visit with your Home Visitor for health services tracking.

If you are in need of assistance in locating a provider, referral provider lists are available and your Home Visitor will assist you with scheduling an appointment as needed.

Within two weeks of the birth of your child, your Home Visitor and our Health Specialist will schedule a visit with you, your family, and your newborn to identify any needs or concerns you may have.

## **FAMILY SERVICES**

Each family in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is assigned a Home Visitor whose role is to support your family during your time with the program. This staff is available to help with:

- Enrolling your child in the program/transitioning your child into center-based Head Start Preschool (if applicable)
- Communicating with program Specialists
- Setting goals and working towards them
- Providing referrals to community services
- Finding and accessing medical and oral health providers, including assisting with getting insurance and transportation
- Organizing parent education workshops and parent committee activities
- Emergency needs like food, housing, or clothing

In home-based programming, Home Visitors visit your home on a weekly basis.

## **TRANSITIONING**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start provides opportunities for you and your child to prepare for the transition to a different school setting (preschool, Kindergarten, etc.). Activities like visiting classrooms and reading books about preschool and Kindergarten are some of the ways children learn what to expect when they enter a new environment. You will have opportunities to participate in transitioning through various activities that support your role as your child's primary educator.

## **Parent Involvement**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start acknowledges that you know your child best, are your child's primary educator, and should be involved in all decisions about their education and health.

## **VOLUNTEERING**

You are an important part of Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start and are encouraged to participate in programming any way your schedule allows. Some people choose to work directly with children, others like to work on support activities (e.g., cutting, copying, coloring, etc.), or some may want to be involved in various parent committees.

Volunteering your time not only gets you more involved in your child's education, but it also helps the program meet funding requirements. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is required to match 20% of its Federal funding with local dollars and donations (also known as "in-kind"). Each time you or a community member volunteer your time, the program is able to claim an hourly rate towards meeting this requirement. **Donated time means Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start can continue to provide future services to children and families in our community.** Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start also welcomes other family members, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles, to volunteer. *\*Please discuss with your Home Visitor how to donate or volunteer in the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program.\**



## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Socializations:** Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start parents are invited to help plan activities and events for bi-monthly socializations. Parents can also volunteer at socializations by leading planned activities.

**Policy Council:** Policy Council is the governing body of Head Start and helps make decisions concerning the entire program. Policy Council approves budgets, funding applications, program policies, and participates in the annual self-assessment process.

Policy Council is composed of representatives from each Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start center, the Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start home-based program, and the community. Representatives are elected to Policy Council at the beginning of the program year by a majority vote. There are three parent representative membership slots on Policy Council to provide representation for the home-based Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start program.

**Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee:** The Head Start Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC) meets two times a year to discuss health issues (mental, nutrition, oral, and physical) that affect families in our community. The committee consists of the Health Specialist, Dental/Nutrition Specialist, Mental Health Specialist, professional members of the health community, and parents.

The HMHSAC strives to maintain primary intervention and health promotion measures for the families and community we serve. The committee reviews program policies and procedures to ensure compliance with state and Federal regulations and explores opportunities to provide health education and services to the community. If you are interested in participating on the HMHSAC, let your Home Visitor know or contact the Health Specialist or Dental/Nutrition Specialist.

### **COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HOME VISITOR**

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start offers many opportunities to discuss your child's education, growth, development, and any concerns you may have. Means of communication include:

- **In-person/Phone Calls:** Your Home Visitor is your best source for information and resources about the program and the community. Home visits are a great time to talk to your Home Visitor about questions or concerns you may have. Each Home Visitor has an agency cell phone should you need to contact them during program hours about an emergency or if you need to reschedule a visit. To the best of their ability, your Home Visitor will use the family's preferred mode of communication (phone calls, text messages, emails, etc.).
- **Notes and Flyers:** These will be distributed many times throughout the year to notify you of upcoming activities, announcements, and special events. Monthly calendars are sent home with information about special programming and monthly themes so you can plan to join scheduled activities.
- **Curriculum and Assessment Tools:** During each home visit, you will be asked to give input for the next week's plans. You will also be invited to participate in assessing your child through Teaching Strategies GOLD, an online program that allows parents and Home Visitors to work together to assess children on an ongoing basis. The Teaching Strategies GOLD online program also allows parents/guardians access to the same activities that staff utilize to promote child growth and development. You can access and choose an activity to include in your home visit, or you can do the activity at home on your own.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:** Conferences will be conducted three times a year in Early Head Start and two times a year in Head Start Preschool as a more formal way for parents and Home Visitors to review the child's ongoing progress and to include parent/family goals and activity ideas for the next steps in development.
- **GoEngage Parent Portal:** You can communicate with your Home Visitor, complete parent/child activities, and receive text message reminders and important program information/updates when you create a Parent Portal account. Use the following link to register and get started: <https://portal71.cleverex.com?VanillaBunny8Beaks>.

### **HEARING PARENT CONCERNS**

Should you have a concern about the functioning of the program, please follow the steps below:

1. Discuss the issue with the person/persons involved. If that does not resolve the problem...
2. Talk to the Home-based Manager. If the problem persists...
3. Additional steps may be made through the Head Start management team.

***Your opinion and viewpoint are important to us and we invite you to share your suggestions.***

## Family Code of Conduct

It is the role of everyone involved in Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start to treat all staff, families, and children with respect, dignity, and humanity. We understand that people come from different backgrounds, cultures, religions, races, and ethnicities, and we accept and support everyone. It is expected that all adults will conduct themselves in the following manner in all program settings:

- With courtesy
- With respect
- With patience
- By treating people the way you want to be treated
- By modeling how we want our children to treat others
- By acknowledging and celebrating the cultures and practices of other people and families
- By dressing appropriately

**Under no circumstances will the following behaviors be tolerated:**

- Belittling or degrading of anyone
- Physical or verbal punishment of children
- Threats to staff or parents/guardians
- Swearing or cursing
- Smoking
- Quarreling, verbal fighting, raising of voices with staff or parents/guardians
- Violation of center/program safety practices and policies
- Bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to centers or events

If these behaviors occur, the person in violation will be asked (privately if possible) by a staff person to stop the inappropriate behavior. If individuals continue to quarrel, verbally fight, or threaten, staff will call the police. Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start reserves the right to terminate service to any client who violates this code of conduct.

We encourage families to be part of daily and special activities and understand that parents/guardians may be taking photographs of their child during these times, however, we ask that you respect the confidentiality of other children attending the program by only taking photographs of your child.

## Family and Program Responsibilities

### **Responsibilities of Family:**

1. We are the primary educators of our children, and we will participate in and plan all home visits.
2. We will do activities with our children between visits and follow up at the next home visit.
3. We will avoid distractions (TV, radio, neighbors, phone calls, etc.) during our home visits.
4. Our family will attend and participate in group socializations whenever possible.
5. We will treat home visiting staff with respect and dignity.
6. We understand that Head Start staff are not permitted to discuss other families with us, and we will not ask Head Start staff to break this confidentiality.
7. We will maintain the confidentiality of all program matters and program participants.
8. We will be home for visits and other appointments with Head Start staff. If not, we will contact Head Start staff.
9. If Head Start staff are late, we will wait 15 minutes.
10. We will inform the staff if any family member is ill or has been exposed to a contagious disease prior to a scheduled home visit.
11. We will inform the program of any changes such as phone number, address change, or change in living situation.
12. We will inform the program and provide copies of court orders involving our child.

13. We will dress our child so that he/she may play comfortably and safely.
14. We understand that smoking and vaping (either tobacco or marijuana) are not permitted around children at Head Start functions. For the health and safety of staff, we will refrain from smoking and vaping during home visits and socializations/events.
15. We will keep walkways and driveways safe and turn on outdoor lights for night visits to help keep staff safe.
16. We will inform Head Start staff should we decide to withdraw our child.
17. We will adhere to the sick child policy.
18. We will get a dental exam within 30 days from the first day of Head Start services.

### **Responsibilities of Program:**

1. Home-based staff will provide 1 ½ hour weekly home visits.
2. We will keep home visits at scheduled times, or call when we will be late or need to reschedule.
3. If your family is late, we will wait 15 minutes.
4. We will inform your family of relevant program changes.
5. We will be organized and prepared for home visits.
6. We will help parents plan and introduce activities, using appropriate early childhood ideas.
7. We will assist and support the family to make use of community resources, and will provide relevant parent education resources.
8. We will treat your family and home with respect and dignity.
9. We will offer monthly parent meetings.
10. We will notify your family if bringing any other program staff to a visit.
11. We will keep all files and information regarding Head Start families confidential.
12. Upon request, we will provide the family access to their files (within 48 hours).
13. We will work with parents/guardians to assess or review developmental stages and provide information on growth and development.
14. We may provide information on developmental intervention strategies and services if necessary and will be able to provide parents/guardians with follow-up if needed.

## **Child Abuse, Neglect, and Domestic Violence**

It is the responsibility of Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start staff to help keep children safe. Sometimes a staff member may suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. Sometimes children will tell a teacher, other staff members, or other adults that they have been abused.

New York State Law requires that any Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start staff member who **suspects** that a child has been abused or neglected **must** report the circumstances to the proper authorities. Opportunities for Otsego's Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start employees are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. By law, a mandated reporter is required to report any suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. All reports are kept confidential.

Being a parent is a tough job and sometimes it becomes overwhelming. If you feel that you or someone in your family needs help to avoid abusing your child, or if you have issues of domestic violence in your home, talk to your Home Visitor who can direct you to someone who can help you.

If you or someone in your family has been reported to Child Protective Services and you feel that you need support, please contact your Home Visitor or the Family Services Specialist for assistance, information, and guidance.

If you are suspicious that a child is either being neglected, abused, or is present during a domestic violence incidence, it is your responsibility to call and make a report. Remember that all reports are kept confidential.

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start staff will offer training for parents in the area of child abuse and neglect.

## Notification of Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information

Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is required to collect personal information about yourself, your child, and other members of your household. The purpose of requesting this information is to determine program eligibility, identify household needs, satisfy state and Federal reporting requirements, and get needed services in place. There may be times the program is required to share personally identifiable information with outside parties. Typically, we seek written consent before disclosing information. Consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. Occasionally Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start may disclose information without parental consent to:

- Officials within the program or acting for the program to deliver necessary services
- Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a Federal or state entity to conduct program audits or evaluations, or for enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements of the program
- Officials within the program, acting for the program or from a Federal or state entity to conduct studies of child/family outcomes and improve the quality of programs
- Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk
- Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- The Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program
- A caseworker or other representative from a child welfare agency who is legally responsible for a child who is in foster care placement
- Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child abuse and neglect

To comply with Head Start privacy standards and federal confidentiality regulations, we do not confirm, disclose, or discuss any personally identifiable information about our enrolled children or families. This applies to all client records and status; including registry information, unless legally compelled or authorized by written consent.

## Parent Resources

For additional information pertaining to ensuring your child's safety, please see the resources listed below:

- New York State's Sex Offender Registry: <http://www.ny.gov/services/search-sex-offender-registry>
- Kidpower Stranger Safety – Assault and Kidnapping Prevention: <https://www.kidpower.org/stranger-safety/>
- Bullying Prevention: [http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/hrsa\\_guide\\_parents-and-caregivers\\_508v2.pdf](http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/training-center/hrsa_guide_parents-and-caregivers_508v2.pdf); <https://www.kidpower.org/library/article/cyber-bullying/?gclid=CIGbuYX2nscCFZVRHwod0f4Axw>
- Car Seat Recalls: <http://www.nhtsa.gov>
- New York State Office of Children and Family Services website: <https://ocfs.ny.gov/>
- Office of Children and Family Services Help, Empower, Reassure, and Support (H.E.A.R.S) Family Line: 1-888-554-3277 (Monday – Friday, 8:30am-4:30pm)
  - Assists parents and families by providing resources and referrals to a variety of services (including food, housing, clothing, medical and behavioral health care services, parenting education, and childcare)
- New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (OPDV) website: <https://opdv.ny.gov/>
- Prevent Child Abuse New York Helpline: 1-800-CHILDREN (Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm)
- United Way: 2-1-1 (24 hours, 7 days)
  - This confidential call center connects people with locally available help (including housing, food, transportation, and health care)
- Parent Handy Book (see QR code below)
  - This parent handbook provides information about the different community resources available in Otsego County



## My Home Visitor's Contact Information

Home Visitor: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home-based Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_