Parent Handbook
Center-Based Services

The leader in developing innovative solutions that promote healthy lives, thriving families, and caring communities.
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 Early Head Start/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. Early Head Start/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 your child attend Early Head Start/Head Start on time, every day. We want to lay the foundation for good attendance habits for life.

Play is critical to the growth and development of children. Toys and play materials 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 teacher 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 Early Head Start/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,

Amy Monacelli

Early Head Start/Head Start Director
Program Goals

Early Head Start/Head Start provides educational and social activities to **promote your child’s overall learning and development for School Readiness.** Programs are offered in caring and creative environments so children can explore freely and safely. Through positive interactions and guidance from staff, your child will also form friendships that will last a lifetime. School readiness is a key goal of the Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS) program. All children develop at individual rates and learning in the early years is enhanced through exploratory play and social experiences.

Early Head Start/Head Start knows the major responsibility of raising children rests with parents. To bridge lessons learned at school with home, **Early Head Start/Head Start welcomes and strongly encourages you to participate in your child’s education.** We hope you will volunteer in the classroom, join us on field trips, participate in parent/teacher conferences, or serve on the Early Head Start/Head Start Policy Council.

**Early Head Start/Head Start not only provides services to your child but to you – the caregiver – as well.** Classroom staff and Family Partners 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.

**Early Head Start/Head Start Classrooms**

**CLASSROOM TEAMS**

Early Head Start/Head Start has 14 classrooms in eight communities throughout Otsego County. A team that includes a Classroom Teacher, two Assistant Teachers, a Family Partner, and a Center Associate (as needed) leads each class. Educational programming is supported through transportation, nutrition, health, and family and community engagement services and activities. The child to adult ratio is 8:1 in classrooms where the predominant age is 4, 7:1 in classrooms where the predominant age is 3, and 5:1 in younger groups. In support of school readiness, staff will be addressed in Mr./Mrs./Ms. “Last Name” format to prepare our children for mainstream kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to do the same.

At times, Early Head Start/Head Start staff may utilize video to record activities occurring in the classroom. The purpose of the video is to allow staff to assess what the children are learning and to reflect on the interaction between the children and their teachers. The videos offer supervisors an opportunity to support their staff by providing training to increase their professional development. We welcome you to observe your child’s classroom and learn more about practices used to improve the delivery of program services.

Teaching Strategies (TS) GOLD is the online assessment tool that is used by teachers to plan and implement content-rich, developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support active learning and promote children’s progress in all developmental areas. Staff are trained to plan for each child’s individual learning and development through ongoing observations and documentation. Families meet with their child’s teacher to discuss and learn about their child’s progress and to help set goals for the child’s continued growth and development. TS GOLD is aligned with the NYS Foundation for the Common Core and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Birth to Five. With parent consent, a child showing areas of concern may be referred for additional services or further developmental evaluations.

**DAILY ACTIVITIES**

Early Head Start/Head Start Performance Standards provide a guide for teachers to follow that ensure all classroom activities are appropriate for children of all ages. When you visit your child’s classroom, you will see:

- Many hands-on activities such as blocks, dramatic play, painting, writing, sand and water play, puzzles, cutting, etc. Young children learn best when allowed to explore and create within carefully planned intentional environments and learning experiences.
- An opportunity for children to make choices. During free exploration/center time, children choose the timing and location of their activities. Children learn more when they have some choice in the activity.
• Skill development and supported learning. Play activities are designed with a definite goal for the child’s skill development. A variety of materials and activities are offered to support each child’s individual development.

• Children participating in circle activities as a group. These activities give children an opportunity to learn how to function in a group, share ideas, and learn listening and cooperative learning skills.

• Health habits and safety-based instruction and modeling, such as hand washing, fire safety, safe toys, tooth brushing, and hygiene.

• Children resting/napping on an individual mat/cot in the classroom or designated rest/nap area (at full-day centers).

• Every family, including families for who English is a second language, are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the program. Classroom teams use a variety of resources to support the home language and build the child’s acquisition of English through stimulating and individualized language experiences.

**FIELD TRIPS**

Several times a year, Early Head Start/Head Start classes will go on a field trip. Most trips are within walking distance from the center, while others may require children to be bused or self-transported by parents. Parents are encouraged to accompany their child on field trips.

Field trips offer some of the most meaningful educational experiences for children, exposing them to environments that provide opportunity for exploration and choices. In order to assure direct and proper oversight of children in new environments and effective transitions, we strive for each child to be supervised by a designated adult, or a maximum of two children to one adult. For this reason, parents are highly encouraged to accompany their child on field trips.

Parents, family members and community members are encouraged to participate in field trips to provide the additional supervisory support needed to create a true learning environment where curriculum goals and objectives are offered to the children as they would be in the classroom environment.

Like field trips, 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.

**CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS**

Any special events need to comply with established program guidelines and be organized to allow enough time for required approvals to be obtained. Early Head Start/Head Start may include seasonal/holiday classroom activities that reflect the culture, ethnicity, and backgrounds of children and families enrolled in programming. In planning activities, each center/class determines if activities might exclude any children. In such a case, staff will plan and offer other options.

Occasionally, Early Head Start/Head Start is invited to join in community holiday/cultural activities or special events. Staff may accept the invitation and participate as appropriate.

Other celebrations:

• Family Traditions/Culture: Early Head Start/Head Start welcomes families to share their culture, traditions, and celebrations. Please talk with your child’s teacher if you would like to schedule a special event.

• Birthdays: Parents may celebrate their child’s birthday with a healthy, commercially prepared snack or a pre-approved food activity in the classroom. This must be discussed with the classroom teacher in advance to ensure
the required approval process is followed (see N4 – Food Brought into Centers and Alternative/Emergency Menus Policy). All food brought into the center or served during program hours must meet the minimum nutrition standards described in Policy N4.

**GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE**
We all learn best in a positive climate where we feel safe and supported. Early Head Start/Head Start uses positive forms of guidance and discipline to help young children learn safe and cooperative behaviors. Positive guidance, such as reinforcing behaviors we do 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 Early Head Start/Head Start program. Opportunities for Otsego Policy FS 6 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. Physical restraint may be used to control a child only if the child is endangering him/herself or another child or to restrict a child from sustaining serious injury to him/herself or another child.”

**SUPPLIES PROVIDED BY PARENTS**
Early Head Start/Head Start will provide all supplies needed for the day, except:

**Clothing:** Although efforts are made to keep your child’s clothes clean (e.g., art smocks, bibs), we cannot guarantee clothing will not become soiled or stained. Please dress your child in comfortable, washable play clothes each day they attend. Children should also wear safe, non-slip shoes – sneakers are best. Additional clothing items:

- A complete change of clothing (including underwear). Extra clothes are kept at the center. Please label clothing with your child’s name so they do not get accidentally misplaced.
- Seasonally appropriate outdoor wear (e.g., raincoat, winter jacket, hat, mittens, and boots). Please talk to your Family Partner if you need help accessing these items.
- A child-sized bed covering/blanket for naptime only (at full-day centers).

**Medication:** Children who require regularly prescribed medication and/or emergency medication (e.g., EpiPen, rescue inhalers). See Medication Administration Section.

Please do not send in any non-essential food or toys to the center.

**When Early Head Start/Head Start is Open**
Early Head Start runs a 12-month program and Head Start runs a 10-month program. Both programs attempt to follow the school calendar of the district in which it operates as closely as possible. HS classrooms close for recognized holidays, breaks, superintendent/parent-teacher conference days, and staff development days; the EHS classroom closes for recognized holidays, some school district breaks, and staff development days. A calendar of events, including planned activities and closings, is sent home monthly so you may plan accordingly.

**UNPLANNED CLOSINGS**
- **Snow Days:** Early Head Start/Head Start centers will not open if the school district in which it operates remains closed for bad weather. Please listen to the local radio stations for announcements.
- **Two Hour Delays:**
  - Part-day programs - When there is a two-hour delay in the school district where your child’s center operates, Head Start morning classes will be cancelled, with the exception of Richfield Springs, which will follow regularly scheduled hours beginning at 10:45.
  - Full-day programs – When there is a two-hour delay in the school district where your child’s center operates, Early Head Start/Head Start classes will begin at 10:00am, with the exception of SUCO’s UPK/Head Start
program, which will begin at 10:30am. A small breakfast will be available at the start of the program day; subsequent meals will be provided according to the regular daily schedule.

- Facility Problems: Centers may close for mechanical problems (e.g., broken water pipe, electrical issues). An announcement will be made on the local radio stations if the center must close for the day. If problems arise while your child is at the center, the early dismissal procedure will be followed.
- Early Dismissal: Early Head Start/Head Start will close early for emergencies. If classrooms dismiss early, center staff will contact you – please be sure your contact information and emergency contact information is up to date. Children will be transported back home by their usual means of transportation (bus or self-transport).
- Illness: Early Head Start/Head Start centers will not open (or may close early) if instructed by the Department of Health or if illness of staff creates a supervision/ratio issue. Please listen to local radio stations for announcements. If a situation occurs while your child is at the center, early dismissal procedures will be followed.

Notification of school closings will be announced on:

- WZoz (103.1FM or www.wzozfm.com)
- WDOS (730AM or www.cnynews.com)
- WSRK (103.9FM or www.wsrkfm.com)
- WKTV (Channel 2 or www.wktv.com)
- WCDG (100.9FM or www.wcdgonline.com)
- WBNG (Channel 12 or www.wbng.com)
- The Daily Star online (www.thedailystar.com)

PESTICIDES
Early Head Start/Head Start uses preventive pest control in our centers and takes precautions to prevent the possible harmful effects of pesticides to children. Scheduled pesticide treatments occur after children have left the building for the day. Parents are welcome to request Pesticide Application Notification by submitting a written request to their Center Director, which must include the child’s name, the parent name and signature, and date of request.

ATTENDANCE
Early Head Start/Head Start expects your child to attend programming daily, as scheduled and on time. In the case of illness, medical appointments, or other situations that prevent your child from attending, it is mandatory you call the center and let them know of the absence within 1 hour of program start time. If you do not report your child’s absence, center staff will call you that morning. Our expectation is that your child attends a minimum of 85% of the scheduled school days. Families are encouraged to plan vacations/travel while school is not in session. School success goes hand in hand with good attendance. Our efforts to promote School Readiness for all children depends on each child’s regular attendance and interaction with the teaching staff, peers, and the learning environment created within each classroom. Young children succeed in building academic and social skills over time when they feel confident and secure. A consistent, predictable routine that includes regular attendance at Early Head Start/Head Start is one of the best ways for parents to support their children’s growth and development.

Of special note:

- Parents must let Early Head Start/Head Start know of extended absences such as family vacations.
- Excessive absences may result in a letter outlining your child’s attendance record and/or your child being withdrawn from the program.

DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES
For the safety of all children, only authorized individuals can accompany your child to and from school each day. In addition to yourself, you need to provide the name and contact information of emergency contacts. Only these people will be able to pick-up your child.

Early Head Start/Head Start will not release your child to anyone not listed on the emergency contact list without prior approval from you. If your child must be picked-up by someone other than an authorized individual, you must provide written permission.
Staff will request photo identification to confirm the identification of the person picking up your child. The person designated to pick up your child must be at least 16 years of age.

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures:

- Children must be dropped off/picked up at the established times.
- Non-bused children must be signed in and out by yourself or an authorized individual upon arrival and dismissal.

If you are delayed picking-up your child, it is expected that you will contact the classroom staff immediately. If the appointed pick-up time passes with no contact, staff will:

1. Attempt to contact you through the phone numbers provided.
2. Attempt to contact individuals listed on the emergency contact list.
3. Contact Child Protective Services and/or the police if there has been no contact/communication with you or anyone on the emergency contact list within 30 minutes of the program ending.

If late pick-up is chronic, staff will meet with you to discuss addressing barriers to picking-up in a timely manner. If there are three late pick-up incidents within a two-week period, your child may lose his/her slot in the program.

Support Services

**MEALS & NUTRITION**

Children receive ⅔ of their minimum daily nutritional requirements through meals and snacks each day they attend Early Head Start/Head Start. Menus are reviewed by a Nutritionist to ensure all meals are nutritionally balanced and offer a variety of tastes and textures for your child to enjoy. Menus are sent home each month for your reference.

Special Diets/Needs:

- **It is your responsibility to inform Early Head Start/Head Start staff of any special dietary needs due to food allergies, medical conditions, or cultural requirements your child might have.**
- Children with special dietary needs will be served food appropriate for their individual needs.
- A signed Special Diet Request Form must be provided stating the special dietary/medical needs and substitutions. Any special diet needs associated with a medical condition will require documentation from your child’s Health Care Provider. 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 to resume a regular diet. Special diet documentation must be updated annually.

Food Brought into Centers Policy:

- Parents who want to bring in a healthy food/nutrition activity for the class must get prior approval through the classroom teacher. There is a 2-week approval process for any food activity not part of the regular daily menu.
- **All foods must be commercially prepared, packaged, and contain a food label. No home-prepared foods may be served at any Early Head Start/Head Start function where children are present.**
- Parents are welcome to use the licensed center kitchen where available to prepare food for the class with the assistance of a ServSafe certified staff member. Classrooms in school settings can also arrange to utilize school kitchens. Contact center staff to arrange the best time and day for this activity. Staff can provide recipes and nutritious suggestions to parents for the children to enjoy that are fun and delicious.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Families who have transportation are expected to drop-off/pick up their child each day. For families who do not have transportation, Head Start may be able to bus your child to the center. However, due to limited space and/or long travel times, your child may be placed on a wait list. You may be asked to transport your child to a common pick-up point.
Please remember to bring photo identification with you when getting your child off the bus to ensure children are released to the correct pick-up person. Bus service is not available to children enrolled in Early Head Start.

**Any request for route changes must be submitted in writing to the classroom teacher at least 3 days in advance. The Transportation Specialist will evaluate the new route for safety and time considerations. Your child’s teacher will notify you if the change can be made.**

**Bus Monitors:**
Head Start must follow NYS Day Care Regulations regarding adult:child ratios when transporting children. To do so, Head Start relies on the support of bus monitors. **Parents are highly encouraged to volunteer as bus monitors.** If proper ratios cannot be met, Head Start must cancel the bus run.

**Safety:**
Per Federal law, every Early Head Start/Head Start child must sit in an approved child safety restraint system. Early Head Start/Head Start has harness assemblies in all buses and ensures each seat meets the standards for your child’s height and weight.

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

**HEALTH SERVICES**
Early Head Start/Head Start stresses identifying and treating health problems 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, screenings, and immunizations. Your child will also receive regular screenings by trained Early Head Start/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.

**Required Medical/Dental Documents:**
Before your child can participate in Early Head Start/Head Start, you must submit the following documents to the Health Specialist for review:

- A current physical** (including blood pressure – at age 3 years and older; hematocrit/hemoglobin – completed at age 9 months or older; and lead results – completed at age 12 and 24 months or older).
- 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.
- A Written Medication Consent form for a child who may require medication while at Early Head Start/Head Start (see Medication Administration section).

Additionally, the Dental/Nutrition Specialist will need to review your child’s dental examination within 90 days of enrollment. Dental exams are due each year, or as recommended by your child’s dentist. It is expected follow-up on any preventive and treatment recommendations will be completed.

**Physical exams and immunizations must be kept up-to-date as per the American Academy of Pediatrics Well Care Schedule (18 months – 24 months – 3 years – 4 years – 5 years).**

*Please talk to your Family Partner if you need the name of a doctor or dentist or help in getting health insurance coverage for you or your child.*
Preparing Your Child to Visit the Doctor and Dentist:
Before going to the doctor or dentist, please be sure you have an Early Head Start/Head Start child physical exam and/or dental examination form, with the top portion filled out with your child's information. Your Family Partner or other classroom staff can provide you with the forms if needed.

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 dental visit or pass your fear of the dentist onto your child.
3. When at the dental 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.

Health & Developmental Screenings:
Early Head Start/Head Start staff complete regular health and developmental screenings to make sure your child is developing as expected. You will be notified and invited when screenings are scheduled, and provided a copy of the results. If a screening result needs further action, Early Head Start/Head Start staff will contact you.

Screenings completed by program staff may include:

- Vision/Hearing: This is a quick screening to identify any vision or hearing concerns.
- Blood Pressure: If not provided by your child's Healthcare Provider (for children age 3 and older).
- Non-invasive hemoglobin: If not completed at 9 months of age and/or results not provided by child's HCP or WIC.
- Growth Screening: This screening monitors each child's individual growth patterns and is conducted 2 times a year.
- Developmental Screening: This screening is a quick look at the following developmental areas: personal, social, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive (thinking, reasoning, and problem solving), and language.
- Devereux Early Childhood Assessment: A strength-based assessment of children’s social/emotional development completed by staff and parents that also screens for behavioral concerns. Program staff and/or the Early Head Start/Head Start Mental Wellness Consultant can address any mental wellness or social and emotional concerns you may have about your child. A list of community Mental Health Providers is also available.

Behavioral Health:
One goal of Early Head Start/Head Start is to help children cope with little problems and emotional concerns before they become bigger issues. Staff recognizes that behavioral and emotional problems can interfere with your child's learning and
development and believe that extra help in learning to manage emotions and behavior is simply another type of education. This education gives your child greater opportunities and prepares him/her for learning when they reach kindergarten.

Early Head Start/Head Start has a Mental Health Consultant who visits each classroom during the year. The Consultant observes children in the classroom and then talks with teachers and parents about any behaviors or interactions that may need some extra attention. As a parent, you may also have questions or concerns about your child's behavioral health. Your child's teacher or the Mental Health Consultant can help with setting goals/strategies, provide information, and assist in accessing resources or referrals.

Exclusion Policy (refer to Sick Child Exclusion Guidelines): It is important to ensure the safety and health of all of the children attending Early Head Start/Head Start. For this reason, it is important for parents to know and understand the policy to temporarily dismiss a child from the classroom. It begins by determining if their condition poses a health hazard to other children and staff. A list of cases where a child would be temporarily excluded from class is noted in the Sick Child Exclusion Guidelines.

Is Your Child Well Enough to be in School Today? As a quick reference, use the traffic light below.

- Fever over 100° accompanied by behavioral changes or signs of illness
- Vomiting two or more times in 12 hours
- Diarrhea
- Red eyes with colored discharge
- Sores that are open draining or appear infected
- Live lice
- Not feeling well enough to participate in school activities
- Suspicious rash

- Runny nose
- Cough
- Rash
- Is not acting like himself or herself
- Been to the doctor, hospital or emergency room recently
- Family member who is ill with a contagious condition

- Feeling well today
- Has been well for the last 24 hours

If you think/know your child has an illness that can be spread to others, please keep them home. Call your child's teacher to let him/her know that your child will be absent and why. The decision to phone a parent and ask them to have their sick child removed from class is based on both the needs of the child and the need to protect the other children in the classroom from any exposure.

Parents will be called to pick up their child if:

- Child’s illness prevents him/her from participating in activities offered.
- Illness requires more care than staff can provide without compromising others.
• Keeping the child at school poses an increased risk to the child or to the other children and adults with whom the child comes in contact.

We must all work together to keep our children, families, and staff healthy!

Health Emergency Policy:
As a parent, feeling confident in the safety of your child or children at the center they attend is extremely important. Early Head Start/Head Start maintain a Health Emergency policy to strengthen your confidence.

Each center has staff that are knowledgeable and well trained to respond quickly to health emergencies to ensure the health and well-being of the child and will be prepared to protect the children in their care.

Center-based staff possessing current certification in infant and child CPR and First Aid will provide first aid in health emergencies and will be on-site during the hours that the program serves children. Designated staff will possess Medication Administration Training (MAT) certification and will be on site at any time that a child with a medication order is in attendance unless alternate coverage has been arranged for by the family. A list of CPR, First Aid, and MAT certified staff is posted at each center.

Emergency first aid procedures and pertinent emergency phone numbers are posted prominently at each center.

The program relies on parents to share updated emergency contact information whenever there is a change to ensure that staff are able to contact you in an emergency.

In the event of an emergency:

1. Staff will call the child’s primary emergency contact person.
2. If the primary emergency contact cannot be reached, the secondary contact will be called.
3. Center staff will continue to call the parent(s)/emergency contacts until someone is notified of the emergency.

Staff will call 911 for professional medical emergency assistance and will notify parent(s)/emergency contact(s). If necessary, a designated staff person will accompany a sick/injured child on an ambulance ride and will stay with the child until a parent/guardian or parent-designee arrives. A copy of the Consent to Secure Appropriate Medical Treatment form will accompany the staff and child to the hospital.

The Mental Wellness Consultant is available to children, families, and staff affected by the incident as needed.

The full Health Emergency Policy, as well as HS/EHS Health Policies, are available upon request.

FAMILY SERVICES
Each family in Early Head Start/Head Start is assigned a Family Partner, 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 Head Start/kindergarten.
• Communicating with classroom staff and program Specialists.
• Setting goals and working towards them.
• Providing referrals to community services.
• Finding and accessing medical and dental providers, including assisting with getting insurance and transportation.
• Organizing parent education workshops and parent committee activities.
• Emergency needs like food, housing, or clothing.
In Early Head Start/Head Start, Family Partners visit your home at least twice a year, but are available if you would like more support.

**TRANSITIONING**

Early Head Start/Head Start provides opportunities for you and your child to prepare for the transition to Head Start and/or kindergarten. Activities like field trips to a Head Start or kindergarten class and reading about kindergarten are some of the ways children learn what to expect when they enter public school. You will also have opportunities to participate in the transition process through meetings and activities that support your role as your child’s primary educator. Parents are encouraged to participate in Early Head Start/Head Start Parent Groups and P.T.O. as they enter the school system.

Children participating in the center-based Early Head Start classroom will transition to a Head Start classroom when they turn 3 years old, providing there is a space available. If a child in the center-based Early Head Start classroom turns 3 when Head Start is not in operation, that child will be withdrawn from the Early Head Start classroom at the end of July to prepare them for a transition to Head Start or another pre-Kindergarten program.

**Parent Involvement**

Early Head Start/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. Early Head Start/Head Start wants you to be involved in your child’s education and encourages you to communicate regularly with the classroom team, participate in classroom activities, and to volunteer.

**VOLUNTEERING**

You are an important part of Early Head Start/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 classroom support activities (e.g., cutting, copying, coloring, etc.), and others 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. Early Head Start/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 Early Head Start/Head Start can continue to provide future services to children and families in our community.** *Please see your center or classroom team on how to properly document your volunteer time.*

Early Head Start/Head Start also welcomes other family members, such as grandparents, aunts, or uncles, to volunteer. Each center can provide training to help volunteers learn about the classroom and how to appropriately interact with children in that setting. Please talk with your center’s Teacher/Center Director to learn more about volunteer opportunities and on-site training possibilities.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Parent Groups:** You will automatically become a member of a center’s parent group once your child is enrolled in Early Head Start/Head Start. Parent groups, with support from the Family Partner, plan activities and events that are of interest to families, and elect parent and community representatives to serve on Policy Council. Only parents/guardians of currently enrolled children are eligible to be members of that parent group; however, invited guests may attend.
Parent Group Fundraising: Parent groups may choose to engage in fundraising activities that result in cash and non-cash donations to the HS/EHS program. HS/EHS cannot, in any way, be involved in fundraising, including, but not limited to, posting fundraisers on the agency Facebook page or using the agency logo. Parent groups are excluded from using OFOs Federal Identification Number and New York State Sales Tax exemption for fundraising purposes unless their center’s parent group elects to hold money raised in an OFO account. All fundraisers must be presented to and approved by Policy Council prior to the fundraiser taking place.

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

Policy Council is composed of representatives from each Early Head Start/Head Start center, both program options, and community members. Representatives are elected to Policy Council at the beginning of the program year by a majority vote through each center’s parent group. It is expected that Policy Council will have parent representatives and a community representative for each center and program option.

Health and Nutrition Advisory Committee: The Early Head Start/Head Start Health and Nutrition Advisory Committee (HNAC) meets three 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, Health Consultant, Mental Health Consultant, Nutrition Consultant, professional members of the health community, and parents.

The HNAC 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 HNAC, let your Family Partner know or contact the Health or Dental/Nutrition Specialists at Early Head Start/Head Start.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE CLASSROOM TEAM
Early Head Start/Head Start offers many opportunities to discuss your child’s education, growth, development, and any concerns you may have. Ways of communication include:

- Early Head Start/Head Start Staff: Teachers and Family Partners are available to answer questions and to offer you and your family support. This may require scheduling an appointment with staff in order to ensure they are providing you with their undivided attention and can secure a quiet space to discuss matters confidentially.
- Notes and Flyers: These will be distributed many times throughout the year to notify you of upcoming activities, announcements, and special events.
- Lesson Plans: Teachers will post weekly planning forms in the classroom. You will also be invited to participate in planning lessons for your child through Teaching Strategies GOLD, a web-based program that allows parents and teachers to collaborate for curriculum development.
- Newsletters: Each center distributes a monthly newsletter with ideas/activities to do with your child to reinforce learning at home. The newsletter also contains information about the classroom, activities, upcoming events, and menus.
- Parent Boards: Be sure to check the parent board in the classroom for important news and other information such as:
  - Weekly menus;
  - Job openings within Opportunities for Otsego, including Early Head Start and Head Start;
  - Policy Council and Parent Group meeting minutes.
- Home Visits: Family Partners and teachers will each arrange home visits two times per year. Meeting in the home allows your family and staff to build rapport and work together to establish/discuss your family and personal goals in a comfortable setting.
• Parent/Teacher Conferences: Conferences will be conducted two times a year at your child’s center. During the conference, Teachers will share information about your child’s development and ask you to help set goals for the next period. Teachers may also share samples of your child’s work and observations from the classroom.

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 (ex., if you have a concern about the classroom, talk to the classroom teacher first). If that does not resolve the problem…
2. Talk to the Center Director. If the problem persists…
3. Additional steps may be made through the Early Head Start/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 every person involved in the Opportunities for Otsego Early Head Start/Head Start program to treat staff, families, and children with respect and dignity. 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:

• 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. Early Head Start/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.

Behavior Management Procedures
Rationale for Early Head Start/Head Start Behavior Management Procedure:
Early Head Start/Head Start recognizes that children are learning how to function in a classroom setting. They need opportunities to learn what appropriate behavior for school is. School should supplement parents’ efforts in teaching
children how to behave. Cooperation between home and school is critical. The following procedures are aimed at creating an ideal atmosphere in which your child can learn.

Each classroom implements these three rules:

1. We keep ourselves safe.
2. We keep friends safe.
3. We keep our things safe.

The classroom team, along with the children, will give examples of behaviors for each rule that support a cooperative, safe classroom.

If a behavior for a specific child interferes with learning or safety for the child or others, an individual behavior plan will be implemented through a meeting between Early Head Start/Head Start staff and the parents/guardians to address the areas of concern. The staff will monitor and reinforce appropriate behaviors on an individual basis in the classroom. The staff will strive to teach the child age appropriate behavior and social skills to get along with other children and adults, and maximize learning. Additional resources, such as a Wellness Consultation, will be offered to support the child and family.

Should a child engage in a behavior that is too dangerous for staff to safely manage, the child may be sent home, as a last resort, and temporarily excluded from school until a behavior plan is developed with input from parents/guardians, the Mental Wellness Consultant, and relevant Specialists. Parents will be called immediately, and may be required to come and pick up the child. Behavior that may result in a child being sent home may include, but is not limited to, excessive physical aggression towards adults or children such as hitting, biting, choking, spitting, throwing things that may injure someone, or endangering him or herself by running away from a supervised area.

**Child Abuse and Neglect & Domestic Violence**

It is the responsibility of the Early Head Start/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.

NYS Law requires that any Early Head Start/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 Early Head Start/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 a member of your classroom team or to your Family Partner 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 Family Partner 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.

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

**Medication Administration**

Whenever possible, medication is to be administered at home. In the event that medication needs to be administered while your child is at Early Head Start/Head Start, please speak with your child’s classroom teacher or Family Partner prior to bringing in the medication for your child. NYS Daycare Regulations and Early Head Start/Head Start Program Performance
Standards have **specific requirements** that must be completed **prior** to administration of any medication (including over the counter medication). These requirements **MUST** be met in order for your child to attend programming.

**Notification of Disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information**

Early Head Start/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 Early Head Start/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.

**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](http://www.ny.gov/services/search-sex-offender-registry)
- Kidpower Stranger Safety and Kidnapping Prevention Skills: [https://www.kidpower.org/stranger-safety/](https://www.kidpower.org/stranger-safety/)
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention: [http://americanspcc.org/parenting-caretaking/positive-parenting/?gclid=CKSsr7X77nscCFQoTThwodiuUAzw](http://americanspcc.org/parenting-caretaking/positive-parenting/?gclid=CKSsr7X77nscCFQoTThwodiuUAzw)

**My Center’s Contact Information**

Center: __________________________________________________________________________

Teacher/Center Director: __________________________________________________________________________

Classroom Teacher (if applicable): __________________________________________________________________________

Family Partner: __________________________________________________________________________
Program Hours: ________________________________________

Phone Number: _______________________________________