

COMMUNITY PROGRESS COUNCIL, INC.

HEAD START
OF
YORK COUNTY



Parent Handbook

2009-2010

www.headstartofyorkcounty.org

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Welcome to Head Start!

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of the entire Head Start staff, I would like to welcome each of you! Now is the time to invest in your child's future. Research has proven that a quality early education program can make a difference in children's lives. You are the first and most important teachers of your child.

As a parent, you have the responsibility to make the most of your child's time with Head Start by actively participating in the program. You will have the opportunity to learn to be the best teacher you can be, to set reachable goals for moving your family towards self-sufficiency, to share in the governance of our program by attending Parent Gatherings and Policy Council, and to create supportive relationships with Head Start staff and parents.

Use this handbook to become more familiar with our program. Our staff can help you to understand the policies and procedures we follow. We believe in involving parents and guardians in our program, and this handbook gives you lots of ways to do that.

Welcome to Head Start. We are so very glad you are here.

Cathy Kipp, Director

Head Start of York County

COMMUNITY PROGRESS COUNCIL, INC.



Vision Statement

Community Progress Council, through its programs, will be widely recognized as an effective model of “People Helping People” to survive and succeed in our richly diverse, ever-changing, interdependent society. We will be a leader and a partner in establishing York County as the place where everyone is valued. The business community and individuals will support CPC with funding and other resources. CPC will access appropriate public and private funding opportunities. All CPC facilities will be used to their fullest capacities including expanded hours. CPC programs will follow a holistic approach to client assessment and an integrated approach to service delivery. Adequate resources and technology will be accessible so basic needs can be met. Economic and social barriers will be bridged in the interest of promoting individual and family growth and stability in all ages and stages of life, and harmony within and among all of our communities.

Mission Statement

Community Progress Council, York County’s Community Action Agency, exists to provide everyone with the opportunities, resources, and skills to move toward self-sufficiency. CPC is committed to fairness, diversity, and inclusion.



HEAD START OF YORK COUNTY

Vision Statement

Head Start of York County, in partnership with families and communities, is the leader in providing excellence in early childhood education and empowering families to achieve self-sufficiency through personal and professional growth.

Mission Statement

Head Start of York County, in partnership with the community, recognizes and supports families as the primary educators of their children. Head Start provides comprehensive services to assist families to move toward self-sufficiency and to prepare children to enter school as competent learners.

Goals

- ◆ To enable children served by Head Start to enter school as competent learners.
- ◆ To increase opportunities for staff to continually grow and develop as life-long learners.
- ◆ To increase opportunities for families served by Head Start to continually develop their capacity to support the needs of their family.
- ◆ To increase the ability of Head Start to identify, access, and utilize community resources to benefit children and families.
- ◆ To increase Head Start's capacity to adjust to a changing environment.
- ◆ To supplement the program by collaborating with local and state resources.

Head Start of York County 2009-2010 Calendar



September

- 2 Hanover Y and Noell 4 start
- 7 Labor Day-CPC closed
- 8 All classes start
- 15 Policy Council
- 18 CPC In-Service—All classrooms closed

October

- 12 Columbus Day—All classrooms closed
- 16 Staff Development—All classrooms closed
- 20 Policy Council

November

- 17 Policy Council
- 21 Staff Development—All Classrooms Closed
- 26-30 Thanksgiving and Teacher Conferences—All Classrooms Closed

December

- 11 CPC In-Service—All classrooms closed
- 15 Policy Council
- 23-1/3 Winter Break—All classrooms closed

January

- 4 All Centers Reopen
- 15 Head Start In-Service—All Classrooms Closed

January

- 18 Martin Luther King Day—All Classrooms Closed
- 19 Policy Council

February

- 15 President's Day—All Classrooms Closed
- 16 Policy Council
- 19 Staff Development—All classrooms Closed
- 22 Teacher Conference Day—All Classrooms Closed (Weather Make-up Day)

March

- 16 Policy Council
- 19 Staff Development—All Classrooms Closed

April

- 2-9 Spring Break—All Classrooms Closed
- 20 Policy Council

May

- 18 Policy Council
- 19 Last Day for all Classrooms except Noell 4 and Hanover Y
- 26 Last Day for Noell 4 Classroom
- 31 Memorial Day-CPC Closed

Attendance



Attendance in the classroom is essential for your child to excel in the Head Start Program. Please note the following rules and procedures regarding attendance:

- ◆ Parents must **call the classroom** to report why your child is going to be late or is absent on the day of the occurrence.
- ◆ **Acceptable excused absences:** illness, funeral, family emergency, medical appointment.
- ◆ **Unexcused absences:** No phone call to center reporting absence, weather, other family members off school. If child accumulates 4 unexcused absences the Family Advocate will meet with the parent to develop an action plan to improve attendance.
- ◆ **After ten unexcused absences:** your child will be withdrawn from the classroom and placed back on the waiting list.
- ◆ If your child **misses 3 or more days in a row** a doctor's note must be presented in order to ensure the health and safety of the other children in the classroom.
- ◆ When taking an extended **leave of absence** from the classroom, the Family Advocate of that classroom must be notified at least 2 weeks in advance of the first date of absence. Your child may not miss more than 2 weeks of class time or he/she will be placed back on the waiting list.

Late Policy

To receive the full benefits of the Head Start Program, it is important for your child to be in the classroom for the full day.

- ◆ Please remember to **drop off and pick up your child on time**. Entrance to the building will begin 5 minutes prior to start time. Tardiness is considered 15 minutes after start time and/or pick up time.
- ◆ **10 cumulative tardies**, late to school or late picking up the child, may result in your child being removed from the program and placed back on the waiting list. The Family Advocate will notify the parent when the child accrues 4 tardies and develop an action plan to improve timeliness.
- ◆ **Pick up your child on time**. If the child is not picked up within 1 hour after the end of class and no emergency contacts can be reached, Head Start staff must call local Police because it is considered abandonment.
- ◆ The person who picks up your child, including emergency contacts, must **be over the age of 16**.

Sick Policy

If your child is ill with diarrhea, fever, or vomiting, they **will not** be accepted into the center until the following have been met:



- ◆ 24 hours free of vomiting and/or diarrhea
- ◆ Fever less than 101 degrees orally or less than 100 degrees Axillary (armpit) **without the aid of fever-reducing medication for 24 hours**.
- ◆ Feeling well enough to participate in class (at the teacher's discretion)

This policy is intended to protect the health of your child, all other children, and the staff.

Lice Policy

If you discover that your child has head lice, we ask that you treat him/her with a lice product and remover all nits (eggs). If we find the head lice, we will call you and ask you to pick up your child and take him/her home for treatment. After treatment is complete, Head Start staff must check your child's head. The child may return to school when he/she is "nit-free" and has approval from your Family Advocate.

Court Orders

If there is a custody order or Protection from Abuse order, we must have a certified copy at the center and in your child's main file prior to the child's first day of school. Although staff cannot physically prevent an unauthorized person from picking up a child, they will call the police to intervene.

Religion/Holidays

- ◆ Head Start is made possible by Federal and State funds. Consequently, religion may not be a part of any Head Start activity.
- ◆ Holiday celebrations are appropriate and meaningful for three and four-year old children. Teachers are sensitive to the religious practices of our Head Start families and make every effort to consider those practices when planning celebrations.



Child Abuse and Neglect

All Head Start staff are required by law to report any cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. Head Start staff receive yearly training on proper reporting procedures of child abuse.

- ◆ **Urgent message: We are required by law to call Child Protective Services to pick up your child in the event the following three things should occur:**
 1. Your child has not been picked up within 1 hour of dismissal time.
 2. No authorized individual on the emergency card can be reached to pick up your child.
 3. You have not contacted the classroom to inquire about your child.
- ◆ **We ask you to join us as "child advocates". If you suspect that any child is being abused or neglected, please call Child Protection Services at 1-800-932-0313. You may be the only voice that the child has.**

In Case of Emergency

Emergencies rarely happen, but when they do Head Start needs current information to contact you.

- ◆ **Please make sure your child's emergency card is updated with correct addresses, names, and phone numbers for all individuals authorized to receive your child.**
- ◆ Authorized persons (16 years or older) may pick up your child in an emergency situation.
- ◆ As an extra measure of safety, we require all persons unknown to us to present a photo ID for verification before the child can be released. Be sure to inform authorized persons that they will need to show a photo ID to staff.

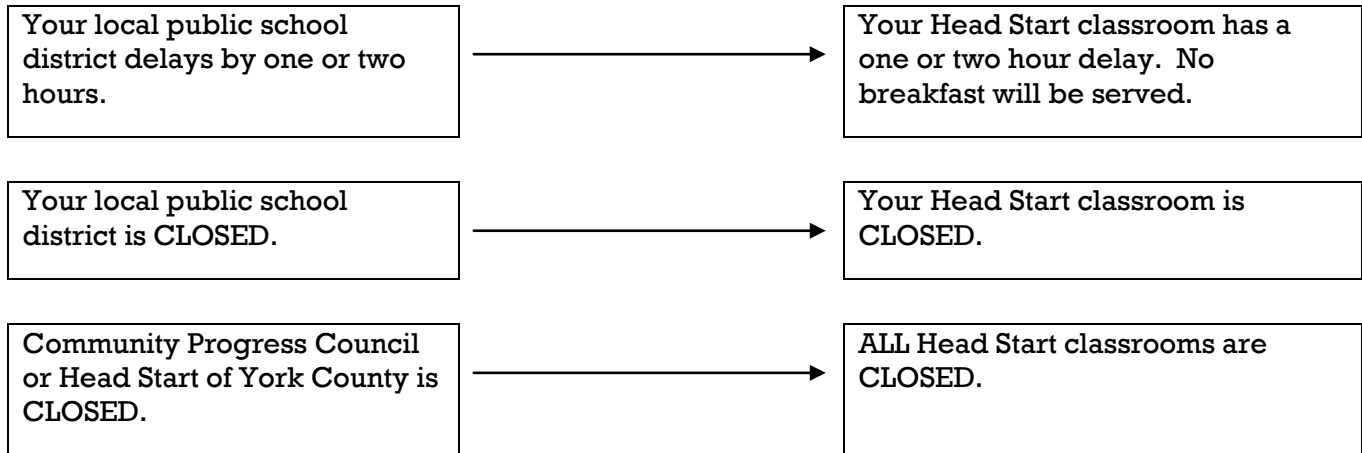
What to do in case of Severe Weather

Listen to your local radio and television stations

for announcements:

Radio Stations: WSBA 910 AM ~ WARM 103 FM

Television Station: WGAL 8



Confidentiality

ALL information known about families is **PRIVATE** and **CONFIDENTIAL**. Information is released on a need-to-know basis, even within the program. The parent may request the release of information to an individual (family doctor or other agency) by signing a release form. **NO** information may be given without a signed release form. Staff, volunteers, and parents are not permitted to discuss information they learn about Head Start families outside of the program.

Media in the Classroom

With parent consent, Head Start staff may take pictures, videos, tapes, and sound recordings of children and families participating in Head Start activities. Staff may use the media for trainings, workshops, presentations for the community and for programs for public education, such as radio and newspaper.



Parent and volunteers are **not** permitted to take pictures (including cellular phones), videos, tapes, or sound recordings of the children. This is to protect the confidentiality of our children and families.

Cellular Phones

- ◆ Parents and volunteers may carry a personal cellular phone, however, the **ring tone must be turned off or on silent when in the classroom.**
- ◆ **Parents are asked to be considerate and step outside of the center to make or receive calls.**
- ◆ Personal cellular phones that have the camera or video option may **not** be used in the centers.



Outdoor Policy

Head Start believes that daily outdoor activity is important for young children. We feel that a child who is well enough to be in the center is well enough to play outdoors. Children need fresh air and movement for general well-being and healthy development. **Please dress your child appropriately for the weather.**



Clothing

Classrooms are busy places with many hands-on activities. Art, cooking and outdoor play are fun but often messy. Please dress your child in appropriate clothing:



- ◆ Comfortable, simple clothing allows the child to play and get messy.
- ◆ Non-skid footwear that allows the child to run, jump, skip and climb. No flip-flops or sandals.
- ◆ Warm, outdoor clothes that include coat, mittens, hat and boots, are cold weather essentials.
- ◆ **Each child needs to keep a change of clothes (shirt, pants, underwear, socks) in the classroom in case of accident or spill.**

Personal Items from Home

Lost belongings, inappropriate play items and disputes between children are reasons we ask that children do not bring personal items to school. Toys, food, personal items are not allowed unless there is a special activity. Your classroom teacher will inform you if there is a special activity planned.

Parent Gatherings

We are in this together! Let's meet once a month to share important information and plan together. We'll have an informal meeting time for parents and Head Start staff to discuss what is happening in the center, give ideas and feedback to the program and receive valuable parent training and support.



Policy Council

The Head Start's governing body of parents who help make important decisions for the program is called Policy Council. We are seeking two parent representatives from each site to attend monthly Policy Council meetings at the Community Progress Council building. Please consider joining this very important group to help us make quality decisions to benefit our children and families.

Top 5 Reasons to serve on Policy Council:

1. Be a leader! Your family will be proud of you!
2. Learn new job skills to put on your resume.
3. Learn what is going on in the program so you can assist in making decisions that affect all centers.
4. Share your important ideas, opinions and feedback.
5. Meet new friends and influence people.

****Studies have shown that children do better in school
when their parents are involved in their education.**

Parent Involvement / Volunteer In-kind

In order to receive federal funds to operate the program, Head Start must obtain approximately \$800,000 of in-kind donations. In-kind donations include all volunteer time and items donated to Head Start. Examples of in-kind include:

- ◆ Volunteering in the program: in classrooms, offices, kitchens, etc.
- ◆ Riding the bus as a substitute bus monitor
- ◆ Home activities: Helping your child complete his/her homework; reading to your child
- ◆ Assisting to supervise on a class fieldtrip
- ◆ Attending center activities
- ◆ Attend trainings: Learn new parenting techniques
- ◆ Encourage others to volunteer: grandparents, other family members, community members, etc.
- ◆ Participate in scheduled home visits and conferences
- ◆ Attending scheduled meetings: Parent Gathering, Policy Council, Advisory
- ◆ Male Involvement: male members of the child's family are encouraged to join in planned activities throughout the year. Children need strong male role models in their life.

Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Your involvement is an important part of the Head Start program. These are just a few ways that you can become involved. There is no limit to the things that parents and staff can do when we put our heads together. Let your staff know how you would like to participate.

Parent Responsibilities

Head Start relies on you, the parent, to take on certain responsibilities in order for your child to have the best preschool experience.

Make sure your child attends class:

- ◆ Keep your child healthy – plenty of sleep, nutritious food, physical activity
- ◆ Be on time when dropping off and picking up your child.
- ◆ Contact Head Start when your child will be late or absent.

Remember our Head Start Policies:

- ◆ Children play outside daily, weather permitting.
- ◆ Keep children home if they are ill.
- ◆ Authorized person picking up your child must be

Nutrition

Monthly menu's are sent home and also posted in the classrooms. Menus can be adjusted to accommodate special dietary needs.

- ◆ Breakfast and lunch are provided by the program for the children, staff and classroom volunteers. Snack is provided for the full-day centers.
- ◆ Meals are served family style with children, staff and classroom volunteers eating together. Children are encouraged to taste new foods.



Donated Food

To minimize the health risk to children with food allergies, particularly peanut and milk products, Head Start of York County restricts donated food items for children to pre-packaged food where the label contains the list of all ingredients.

Health

- ◆ A current physical and a copy of your child's shot record must be given to your Family Advocate before your child's first day of school.
- ◆ Parents sign permission for children to receive screenings (dental, vision, hearing, lead, height/weight) during school hours. Screening results are shared with parents.



Contagious Diseases

- ◆ Our program has an exposure notice which lists contagious diseases. A copy is posted on the parent board at your child's center.
- ◆ If a child has a contagious disease the Family Advocate will notify the parent if a physician's note will be needed for the child to return to school.
- ◆ If the child rides the bus, the driver must wait for authorization from the Transportation Supervisor before picking up the child.

Staff are not to accept the child without notification from the Family Aorker or the physician's authorization. A physician authorization may be requested under any circumstance.

Medication

When your child needs medication, try to arrange for all doses to be given at home, outside of center hours. If you need Head Start staff to administer prescription medication required for a long term illness, you must bring the original prescription bottle along with a completed medication form to school.



Transportation

There are only a few centers where transportation is provided. **There is no guarantee that a child will receive transportation.** Transportation is on an as-needed basis. Families will be notified by phone or letter of their approval for transportation services.



- ◆ Your child will only be transported with prior approval, a completed emergency card, and any necessary paperwork.
- ◆ Because all children ride the Head Start buses for fieldtrips, all children will be expected to follow the rules on the bus. These rules have been established to ensure the safety of children, parents and staff.

If you are transporting your child to school, you must bring him/her into the school building, sign in and deliver your child to a classroom staff member. For safety reasons children cannot be left unattended at any time.

Bus Rules

Parents and children are asked to obey these simple bus rules. Failure to comply with these rules may result in the loss of transportation services.

- ◆ Parents/authorized adults (16 yrs or older) are responsible for getting child on and off the bus.
- ◆ The bus will only wait 1 minute for a child to get to the bus.
- ◆ If a child does not ride the bus for three (3) consecutive days, unless excused, transportation needs will be reconsidered and may be discontinued.
- ◆ If parent/authorized adult is not home when the bus returns, the child will be returned to the center. It will then be the parent's responsibility to come to the center to pick up their child.
- ◆ Messages to the teachers are to be put inside the child's book bag or parents can call the center. Bus staff will not deliver messages.
- ◆ No smoking, eating, drinking, profane language, physical violence, weapons, book bags with wheels or other dangerous articles are permitted on the bus.
- ◆ Riders must remain seated at all times on the bus. All passengers must have seat belts or a child restraint system on at all times.

Note: It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that teachers have updated emergency contacts with correct phone numbers. Head Start may contact the police if your child is not picked up within one (1) hour after school dismissal time.

Curriculum

Head Start uses the High Scope curriculum which is designed to meet each child's individual needs. High Scope is a successful approach to early childhood education where children are active learners. Our classrooms are designed to reflect the rich culture of the families we serve and to provide children the opportunities to:



- ◆ Make choices.
- ◆ Manipulate materials.
- ◆ Grow socially and emotionally.
- ◆ Problem solve.
- ◆ Interact positively with peers/adults.
- ◆ Use language in meaningful ways.
- ◆ Develop healthy habits and self help skills.
- ◆ Receive appropriate adult support and guidance.

Parent - Teacher Conferences

Head Start believes parents are the primary educators of their children. Conferences are an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss children's progress, accomplishments and daily routines. As part of our key goal to develop confident and capable children, parents and staff must work together to create an individual plan for education (IPE) for each child to insure his/her success in our program. Parents contribute to these plans at 2 parent conferences and 2 home visits and also informally at any other time throughout the school year.

Disabilities / Mental Health

Head Start works with parents and York County agencies, including the Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12, to help serve children with disabilities. With parent permission, all children are screened for speech, behavior, educational levels, and mental health. Screening results are shared with parents.



- ◆ For a child who enters with a current diagnosis, a team of professionals work with parents to develop a plan to continue to provide services while the child attends Head Start.
- ◆ For a child who has not been evaluated, Head Start works with parents to determine the child's needs.

A Disabilities Manager and/or Mental Health Consultant are available to provide support and recommendations to staff and/or parents when needed. Children who need special services usually receive them on site in their Head Start classroom during the program hours. All services are provided free of charge and may include one or more of the following: educational consultation, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, vision or hearing itinerant services.

Guiding Children's Behavior

Head Start has a "NO BEND RULE" which states staff and parents shall not use any form of physical punishment, including spanking, on Head Start property or at any school event. Head Start staff receive annual training to learn effective strategies in guiding children's behavior. Staff use a variety of techniques to assist children including consistency, routine and redirection. Teachers work with parents to help children learn appropriate ways to solve problems.

In rare situations when a child's behavior is at risk of causing harm to persons or property, our staff are trained in the use of "Protective Holds" to prevent harm or injury. Parents are notified immediately if this technique is used and plans to help the child are developed in accordance with our Disruptive Child Plan, as noted below.

Disruptive Child Plan

Head Start has a procedure in case extreme behavior issues happen with a child in the program.

1. An Incident Report will be completed whenever any serious behaviors occur, such as:
 - Biting, kicking, hitting, throwing objects.
 - Deliberate destruction of agency property.
 - Refusal to stay in the classroom or with the group.
 - Refusal to stay seated and restrained on the bus.
 - Use of extreme inappropriate language.
2. Parents will be required to meet with staff to develop a plan to address the problem.
3. If strategies are not effective, if parents refuse to cooperate with staff, or if the child continues to present a risk to others the child's participation in the program may be changed or discontinued.

Transition to Kindergarten

Head Start will work together with parents to ensure a smooth transition from Head Start to kindergarten or any other educational setting. Parents will sign a release of records for school districts during the initial intake. If your child will be transitioning to kindergarten, his/her progress records will be sent to the designated school district at the end of the Head Start program year.

Cultural Diversity

Head Start families represent many different cultures and religious beliefs. Children and parents will have the opportunity to learn how alike and different we all are. In our classrooms you will see many learning opportunities that include the variety of cultures of our families and our community:

- ◆ A variety of music, toys, dolls, pictures and books reflecting the different cultures.
- ◆ Different languages being shared with the children.
- ◆ Cooking experiences to introduce a variety of cultural foods.
- ◆ Parents, family members and volunteers sharing information and items from their culture.

Family and Community Partnership

The Family and Community Partnership (FCP) unit works as the case management piece of the Head Start program. Family Advocates (FAs) work closely with the families throughout the whole program year to ensure the entire family receives the benefits of Head Start's comprehensive services. Family Advocates work closely with families to:

- ◆ Provide individual services specific to each families' needs.
- ◆ Help families set goals towards self-sufficiency. Review the goals and offer assistance.
- ◆ Share information on training opportunities and career development provided throughout the community.
- ◆ Assist in gathering information for health care, insurance, housing and legal needs.
- ◆ Provide assistance with emergency and crisis needs.
- ◆ Offer support and encouragement.
- ◆ Celebrate family accomplishments.

Collaborating with the Community

"It takes a village to raise a child." Join us as we get out in the community to let others know more about our program – about Early Childhood and what all families need to be successful. Together we will find places to make our voices known.

Community Resources

Head Start believes in assisting families to meet their basic needs. We have included a list of community resources that provide assistance with emergency and crisis needs, counseling, education, childcare, child support, health care, employment, housing, legal assistance, financial and budgeting needs and parenting information for your family. Please contact us if you would like additional information about any of these resources.