



**OPPORTUNITIES**  
for Williamson & Burnet Counties



2018-2019

**Family Handbook**

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## Welcome from Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties Head Start Staff!

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties Early/Head Start Program. We are delighted you chose to enroll your child in our program this year. You may not have thought about preschool in this way, but this is your child's first step toward attending college!

Opportunities is a center based, full-day program. Our hours of operation are 7:30-4:00, and we are open Monday through Friday. We have an open door policy and welcome parents to visit/volunteer at any time during our operational hours. Students that are participating in a dual enrollment program with local ISD may follow ISD operational hours.

We know that you, the parents, are the most important people in your child's life and the key to your child's healthy development. We have many opportunities for you to be involved in the program but first, we ask you, as your child's first and best teacher, to do three things in support of your child's learning and development:

- ✓ Be sure that your child is in school and on time for every day that he/she is scheduled.
- ✓ Participate in home visits and parent/teacher conferences.
- ✓ Read to your child every night. If you don't have access to children's books, we will help you with that!

Throughout the year, you will receive notification of other opportunities to participate in the program. These may include:

- Volunteering in your child's classroom or in the program
- Attending exciting and informative School Readiness Events
- Serving on the Policy Council to provide input on program design and delivery
- Participating in workshops and classes that offer information on everything from preparing nutritious meals on a budget to parenting techniques and strategies

*Some children will be attending preschool at their neighborhood school, but even if they aren't we urge you to become involved in your child's school. Meet the principal, attend Parent/Teacher (PTA/PTO) meetings and get to know the kindergarten teachers before your child finishes preschool. You will be showing your child that education is important while showing your principal that you care! We are excited to have you and your child as a part of the program and look forward to a great year!*

Sincerely,

Opportunities Head Start Staff

# HEAD START PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES

## THE HEAD START DIFFERENCE

Head Start helps prepare children for success in school and in life. Children receive a positive introduction to education, playing with others, eating a variety of foods and practicing healthy habits. Head Start builds confidence in children and their parents. Parents become involved in their children's education, discover their own strengths and continue to develop to their fullest potential.

No person will be excluded from receiving any program benefit on the basis of religion, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties is committed to principles of equal opportunity.

It is a Head Start policy to provide supplies needed to ensure an appropriate learning environment within the limits of our budget.

### **Opportunities Head Start Vision:**

To provide the appropriate knowledge and skills to mold productive, active and successful members of society.

### **Opportunities School Readiness Vision Statement**

Head Start children and families will be school and life ready.

### **Opportunities Head Start Mission**

To maintain a program of parent involvement, to strengthen family growth and development, provide health, nutritional and community services and reinforce the natural nurturing instinct.

### **Opportunities Head Start School Readiness Mission Statement**

We will provide tools needed for children and families to succeed in school and life through partnerships with community and families.

Head Start provides comprehensive child development services to children, ages 0 to 5, and their families. Services provided include educational/school readiness services, disability services, family support services, mental health service, health services, and nutritional services.

## HEAD START CENTERS

### **Acts of Love**

207 Sonny Drive Ste. 104  
Leander, Texas 78641  
(512) 528-9948  
Director: Katie Evans

### **Bagdad Head Start**

351 North Bagdad Road  
Leander, Texas 78641  
(512) 259-9010, (512) 259-7810  
Director: Julie Lichtner

### **Bartlett Head Start**

620 West Clark Street  
Bartlett, Texas 76511  
(254) 527-4645  
Director: Connie Gonzalez

### **Burnet Head Start**

602 N. Wood Street  
Burnet, Texas 78611  
(512) 756-4777  
Director: Maisha Jackson

### **Florence Head Start**

203 Adams Street  
Florence, Texas 76527  
(254) 781-4805  
Director: Maria Chavez

### **Harris Ross Head Start**

303 Ferguson Street  
Taylor, Texas 76574  
(512) 365-1070  
Director: Debora Trejo

### **Highland Lakes Head Start**

8200 West FM 1431  
Granite Shoals, Texas 78654  
(830) 598-7667  
Director: Debbie Feist

### **Hutto Head Start**

80 Mager Lane  
Hutto, Texas 78634  
(512) 642-3144  
Director: Veronica Valles

### **Marble Falls Early Head Start/Falls EHS**

700 Avenue T  
Marble Falls, Texas 78654  
(830) 693-0497  
(830) 798-3642 (Falls)  
Director: Aletha Laterza

### **Marble Falls Head Start**

901 Avenue U  
Marble Falls, Texas 78654  
(830) 693-0497  
Director: Aletha Laterza

### **Mary Bailey Head Start**

601 North College Street  
Georgetown, Texas 78626  
(512) 863-5259  
Director: Lisa Lechow

### **Rawleigh Elliott Head Start**

103 Holly Street  
Georgetown, Texas 78626  
(512) 864-9733  
Director: Kate Adams

### **Round Rock Head Start**

1001 East Main Street  
Round Rock, Texas 78664  
(512) 255-4536  
Director: Angela Ganner

### **TH Johnson Head Start**

3100 Duck Lane  
Taylor, Texas 76574  
(512) 352-2275 ext. 834  
Director:

## ADMINISTRATION

604 High Tech Drive  
Georgetown, TX 78626  
(512) 763-1400  
Fax: (512) 763-1411

Executive Director..... Marco Cruz

Head Start 0-5 Program Director.....Charlene Burgess

Head Start 0-5 Quality Improvement Manager.....Lynore Samford

Head Start 0-5 Education Coordinator ..... Dena Yantz

Head Start 0-5 Education Coordinator ..... Veronica Hunt

Head Start 0-5 Disability/Health Services Coordinator ..... Becky Elam

Head Start 0-5 Family and Community Engagement Coordinator.....Tanya Graham, LBSW

Head Start 0-5 Emotional Wellness Facilitator ..... Jim Ellis, MA, LPC-S

Head Start 0-5 ERSEA Coordinator ..... Claudia Barnes

Head Start 0-5 Nutrition Coordinator ..... Emily O’Neil, MPH,RDN,LDN

Head Start 0-5 Data Analyst.....Kim Muñoz

## PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE OPTIONS AND RULES

### *Attendance Expectations*

- Children are expected to maintain a 90% attendance rate.
- Your child will be learning something every day!
- We will assist your child with necessary skills to excel in kindergarten, college and beyond.
- Call the Center Director before 10 a.m. if your child will be absent for any reason.
- Parents of children enrolled in both Head Start and the ISD are required to bring a note when they return from an absence.
- Family Advocates will attempt to contact you if your child is absent and we are not notified.
- If your child misses two (2) consecutive days without a phone call, a home visit will be made.
- **When a child's attendance falls below the expectation of 90%, the Center Director, Family Advocate and Family Community Engagement Coordinator, will work with the family and determine if an attendance plan is necessary.**
- Extended absences and vacations must be discussed with the Center Director.
- If it is necessary to withdraw your child, please send notification to your Center Director as soon as possible.

A child who attends class with signs and symptoms of illness, or a child who becomes ill in class, will be isolated as soon as possible and the parent/guardian will be notified to pick up the child.

Signs and symptoms of illness include:

- Temperature on thermometer reads 100° F under the arm
- Productive cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat
- Presence of rash or draining skin eruptions
- Watery, reddened eyes with discharge
- Unusual behavior

If your child requires medical treatment/medication they may return to school when he/she has completed 24 hours of a prescribed medication, 24 hours fever free, or a Medical Professional indicates it is safe to return.

### ***Classroom Arrival and Departure***

- All classroom doors are locked between the hours of 9:00 and 3:00p.m. unless ISD has a different schedule.
- You must notify the center if your child will be late.
- Excessive tardiness may result in your child not being allowed to attend that day.
- If arriving at 9:00 or later you must first sign child in at the office before taking them to class.
- If you arrive after 9:00 due to an appointment, car issue, or another problem preventing you from getting your child to school on time and your child has not had breakfast he/she will be offered breakfast in the office but the parent must accompany the child during this breakfast time.
- At the end of the day, all children must again be signed out from the classroom.
- If picking up your child before 3:00 you must check in at the office and/or follow your individual centers procedures.
- All children must be picked up by 4:00 p.m. Head Start classrooms that are on ISD campuses will follow ISD schedules.

### ***Late Pick Up***

- Please call the office if you think you will be late picking up your child.
- Certain unforeseen emergencies are excusable, but the staff needs to be informed of your situation as soon as possible.
- If a parent arrives to pick up their **child after 4:00p.m.**, they must sign a late pick up form the first time.
  - The second time, they will need to go to the office and speak with the Center Director.
  - The third time there will be a referral made to the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator, at the Administration Office.
- Day Care Licensing requires that children who have not been picked up by 4:00 (and the emergency contact person(s) listed cannot be reached), Child Protective Services or the Police Department may be called.

### ***Release of Child***

In order to ensure the safety of your child, a child will only be released from the center or the bus to the child's parent or guardian or designated person indicated on the Medical and Emergency Information Card.

- **WE CAN ONLY ACCEPT CHANGES IN PICK UP VIA A WRITTEN NOTE—(NO PHONE CALL AUTHORIZATIONS).**
- A picture ID will be required from anyone on the emergency card.



- Court documents must be on file if a parent is restricted from picking up a child because of custody issues.
- **If no legal documents are on file, we will consider both parents as having rights of access to the child.**
- In the event of the person who is picking up your child is suspected of being under the influence, the Center Director will contact another adult on the emergency contact list to pick up the child due to concerns for the child's safety. If a problem arises the Head Start Program Director and Police Department will be notified immediately.
- Parents must give written permission for a child to be released to a sibling between the ages of 14 and 18.

Please remember, as of September 2009, all children under the age of eight (8) and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches **must** be in a car seat or booster to ride in a vehicle.

### ***Change of Information***

Whenever there is a change in address, phone, emergency contact, health provider, health condition, work/school schedule, family situation or other pertinent information, we ask that this information be submitted, **in writing**, as soon as the change occurs. It is essential that we are able to reach you or a designated adult at all times, in case of an emergency situation. It is also important for us to be aware of any dramatic changes or transitions your child may be experiencing. This will enable us to be supportive, empathetic, and understanding of your child's individual needs.

### ***Program Policy Changes/Notifications***

Parents will be notified in writing of any policy changes. This can be done by letters sent home with your child, electronically through Preschool 2 Me, given at parent meetings or by e-mail. Be sure to check your child's back pack each day.

### ***Policies and Procedures***

Parents are welcome to discuss and review any questions and concerns with the center director regarding Opportunities Head Start Policies and Procedures. A copy can be reviewed at your local center.

### ***Social Networking***

In the interest of protecting everyone, especially our children, we ask you **NOT** to **post** photos, videos, names nor reference our Early/Head Start program on social media. Social Media includes, but is **NOT** limited to, forums and social networking sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, MySpace, Instagram, Snapchat or any others.

### ***Calendars***

Parents will receive a calendar each month during the school year. The calendar will describe classroom activities, field trips, parenting tips, emotional wellness and health information.

### ***Drug Free, Smoke Free, Gang Free and Firearm Free***

Early/Head Start centers operate a healthy environment that is free from alcohol, illicit drugs, fire arms and second hand smoke. This program takes all necessary precautions to keep your child safe while in our care. No violent activity (verbal or physical) or gang related activity will be tolerated.

### ***Animals at School***

If an animal is going to be present at the center, parents will be notified prior to the event. All Head Start centers follow child care licensing minimum standards protocol when pertaining to animals in the classroom. Additional information regarding procedures for animals at the site can be found in our Policy and Procedure Manual.

### ***Transportation***

Opportunities Head Start does not provide transportation to and from our centers.

### ***Field Trips***

Opportunities Head Start allows Head Start children (age 4 and up) to attend field trips. Field trips can often be valuable activities when they are linked to the curriculum. When field trips are provided, they should be designed and implemented to address educational and socialization objectives for Head Start children. Field trips must be approved by the Program Director. Field trip procedures are listed in the Policy and Procedure Manual.

### ***Emergency Closings***

In the event of an emergency or severe weather, all centers will follow the closing instructions of their local school district. When bad weather causes early dismissal or cancellation of classes, parents are responsible for picking up their child. **PLEASE NOTE:** In the event of a severe emergency, Head Start Centers will follow evacuation instructions provided by the Local Law enforcement agencies.

### ***Crisis and Emergency Action Plan***

In the event of a crisis situation such as tornado, fire, earthquake or civil disturbance: No child will be released from school unless a parent/guardian or designated emergency contact person comes for him/her and has proper identification.

All parents/guardians who come for their child must sign them out in the classroom or temporary release station. Temporary release stations are listed in the Center Directors office and each classroom.

We are prepared to care for your children in times of critical situations. Staff have been trained in CPR and First Aid, they are all aware of the Major and Minor Medical Emergency Procedures.

Staff will stay with the children at all times and will seek assistance from EMS/911, Hospital Emergency Departments, Poison Control and Local Police.

Please do not call the center for a city wide emergency event. We must have phone lines open for emergency calls.

- Following a crisis situation, do not immediately drive to the center. Streets must remain clear for emergency vehicles.
- Turn on your TV/ Radio to a local station for further instructions and directions.
- Staff will contact the parent as listed on the child's emergency contact information located on the Emergency Information card. If necessary, staff will go with the child to the Emergency Department and stay until a parent arrives.
- The Administrative Office and Day Care Licensing will be notified by the Center Director and via an incident report as necessary.
- Each Center has an evacuation plan. It is posted in the center's main office and **will be reviewed with you at Orientation.**

### ***Complaint Procedures and Concerns***

When Early/Head Start parents or any other member of the community has a complaint about the program, the procedures described below will be followed:

1. Put the problem in writing and discuss with Center Director.
2. Center Director will provide written response within five working days.
3. If not resolved, present complaint in writing to Head Start Director, at 604 High Tech Drive, Georgetown, Texas 78626.
4. Head Start Director has five working days to respond in writing.
5. If not resolved, present complaint in writing to Executive Director at above address.
6. Executive Director has five working days to respond in writing.
7. If not resolved, present complaint to Policy Council, they have five days to respond in writing.
8. If not resolved, present complaint to Board of Directors, they have five working days to respond in writing.
9. The Board of Directors is the final hearing body with the program structure.

## ***Discipline and Guidance***

Discipline must be:

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control, not punishing unacceptable behaviors.

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
- Punishment associated with food, naps, toilet training, or program activity.
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Procedure:

A caregiver may use methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, and teach positive behavior expectations, which include at least some of the following:

- Providing predictable visual schedules and routines.
- Providing visual, inside and outside, rules charts stating what good behaviors are expected of each individual in the classroom.
- Teaching children what behaviors are expected of them during different activities and routines within the classroom.
- Daily reminding children of positive behavior expectations.
- Using praise and acknowledgment of good behaviors.
- Teaching children good manners.
- Teaching children how to be respectful of others while assertively expressing their own needs and ideas.
- Teach children how to appropriately ASK for things or for help.
- Redirecting challenging behavior by telling children what they should be doing, instead of what they should stop doing.
- Teaching children emotional recognitions, in themselves and others, and emotional vocabulary.
- Teaching children to recognize when they are getting, angry, frustrated, or overly excited; stop; engage in self-calming skills; and then using problem solving or conflict resolution skills to resolve the situation.

- Setting up a safety zone (a safe supervised area) where a child can go to calm down when they are angry, frustrated, overly excited, or upset. Teachers will coach children how to utilize the safety zone to calm down and then return to classroom activities when they are ready.
- Teaching children problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Coaching children on using problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age or developmental level. (appropriate for children 3-5 only)

Never, under any circumstances, will adults of the Head Start program scream, hit, threaten or in any other way physically or verbally abuse or misuse any child in their care.

### ***Day Care Licensing***

A copy of the last Day Care Licensing inspection is posted on the parent bulletin board. Parents are encouraged to review the "Day Care Licensing Standards Handbook" which is located in the parent area and the Director's Office and can be found online at <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us>. The number for your local Representative is located on the emergency phone number list in the Directors office and in each classroom. The hotline number should be used if the licensing representative cannot be reached. This number is 1-800-252-5400. The Texas Department of Family and Protective services has a website that has additional information listed pertaining to Child Care licensing. This website is <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us>

### ***Child Abuse and Neglect, Preventing and Reporting Policy***

Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties must, by law, report any suspected cases of sexual abuse, child abuse, or neglect to the county's Child Protective Services Department. If you suspect your child is being abused or neglected while in our program or anywhere else, you should immediately contact Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at their Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400 or at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

All staff are trained annually on Texas DFPS Child Care Minimum Standards and prevention and responding to abuse and neglect of children. Opportunities Head Start provides staff training regarding possible identification and warning signs of child abuse and neglect. Parents are given information regarding child abuse and neglect at orientation and parent meetings.

## CLASSROOM INFORMATION AND PROGRAM RULES

The Head Start program is designed to meet each child's individual needs and the educational priorities of the community. Every child is offered a variety of learning experiences designed to foster physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth and to develop an appreciation for ethnic and cultural diversity. They are encouraged to express their feelings, develop good feelings about themselves and to get along with other children and adults.

Classroom size consists of a maximum of 17-20 children per Head Start classroom and 8 children per Early Head Start Classroom.

### Sample Daily Schedule in Head Start is as follows:

- Arrival, Meet and Greet
- Breakfast/Tooth brushing/ Transitions
- Circle time/Large group
- Center Time/Small Group
- Circle Time/Large Group
- Outside Time
- Restroom/Cognitive Transitions
- Lunch
- Circle time/Literacy
- Rest time (Rest time for the 3 yr. olds is 1 1/2hr and 4 year olds is 1 hour)
- Snack Time
- Center Time/Small Group Time
- Outside Time/Educational Activities
- Closing Circle Time/Reflection Time

### Sample Daily Schedule at Early Head Start is as follows:

- Child Directed Activities/Diaper change/Health Check with parent present
- Breakfast\*\*/Toothbrushing
- Child Directed Activities/Sensory Activities
- Potty/Diaper change\*
- Outside Time/Educational Activities
- Story Time/ Music & Movement
- Diapers/Potty\*
- Lunch\*\*/Toothbrushing
- Nap\*\*
- Snack\*\*/Diaper change/Potty\* – Literacy – Music & Movement
- Child Directed Activities/Departure

\*Diapers will be changed as needed

\*\*Babies will nap and be fed on demand

No child will be made to nap, although rest time is encouraged.

### ***Curriculum***

Opportunities Head Start (0-5 years) implements the Creative Curriculum which consists of individualized, well-planned units that promote language, literacy, math, science, creative arts, social emotional development, and physical health. It promotes good health and nutritional habits, personal safety habits and self-help skills. We use additional curricula supports such as Frog Street, OWL, SHINE and Energy Balance to supplement the children's learning experience. Each classroom consists of centers where children learn and play. Some of the centers are listed here: Construction, Pretend/Learn, Art/Creativity, Computer, Library/Listening, ABC, Writing, Sensory/Discovery, Math/Science, Music and Movement.

### ***Screenings***

Early/Head Start is required to provide developmental, health and educational screenings to all children enrolled within our program. Early/Head Start is required to receive parental permission and inform parents prior to screenings. Parents are encouraged to assist staff with completion of screenings. Screenings will take place within 45 calendar days of the first day of attendance. Children receive screenings relating to speech, language, developmental skills, social emotional development, vision, hearing, height and weight. Results of your child's screenings are kept confidential and provided to you. If you refuse consent for Head Start to complete required screenings, a refusal form must be signed, and it will be your responsibility to provide the screening results within the 45 day requirement.

### ***Outcomes***

Your child's progress will be assessed throughout the school year using the developmental domains of learning. Teachers work with your child to complete checklists, rating scales and record observations. Results from these assessments are shared with you throughout the year and also are used to plan educational experiences based on children's strengths, needs, and interests.

### ***Home Visits and Parent-Teacher Conferences***

Head Start children and families will receive 2 home visits and 2 parent teacher conferences throughout the year. Early Head Start children and families will receive 2 home visits and have monthly parent conferences. Parent teacher conferences/home visits help to keep the parents or guardians informed of the child's progress, behavior, social, and physical needs. Please be considerate of staff time. **If home visits need to be cancelled or rescheduled, please call the staff member with whom the home visit is scheduled.**

## CLASSROOM GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

- Smoking on school grounds is not allowed.
- Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties encourages healthy food habits in the curriculum. Eating candy, chewing gum, or drinking beverages (other than milk or water) when in the classroom is not allowed by all staff and visitors.
- Your child may bring a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed animal, for use, as necessary.
- Label all items brought to school (hats, coats, mittens, extra clothing, blankets, etc.)
- When volunteering, please permit the teaching staff to take care of discipline matters, even when it involves your child.
- Obscenities or other inappropriate/negative words or gestures are not allowed in the classroom.
- If you transport your child to school, you must bring the child into the classroom and sign them in. Children are not to come in alone. Please advise anyone bringing your child to the classroom of this policy. Please park in designated areas. Infants must be removed from carriers upon arrival to the classroom. **Please do not leave siblings unattended in the car at drop off and pick up.**
- Children cannot be accepted in the classroom prior to scheduled classroom time and must be picked up promptly at the completion of class.
- Please complete the sign-in and sign-out sheets.
- Staff members will speak with you regarding your own child. **Confidentiality does not permit staff or parents to talk about other children** or families, to parents, community volunteers, or others.
- Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties does not permit teaching staff to give out their home or cell numbers. They are available for phone calls in the classroom before or after class. Ask the center director or classroom teacher for the best time to call.
- Parents may call the center office during class time, if you need to relay a message about your child to the teacher.
- Professional boundaries between staff and families enrolled in Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties Early/Head Start programs must be maintained at all times. Staff will respect the differences between professional relationships and friendships during work hours.
- In Head Start families and staff are encouraged to share their customs (contribution of songs, stories and traditions) when relevant to the classroom curriculum. Holiday



celebrations must be appropriate and meaningful for all children. Our holiday celebrations will be supportive and respectful of all families and will include educational activities that combine fun with learning for children.

- We do **not have end-of-year graduation ceremonies**; instead of graduation ceremonies centers can recognize the children and families with a celebration and or picnic at the end of the program year in June or July.

**Families are not allowed to bring food into the classroom to celebrate birthdays or special celebrations, as many of these foods brought to school do not comply with USDA guidelines. (United States Department of Agriculture)**

## DRESSING YOUR CHILD FOR SCHOOL

- Make sure your child has an extra set of clothing at school.
- Label your child's clothing and backpack. A Sharpie or a ballpoint pen will easily do the trick.
- Dress for the weather: In Texas, that is often hard to predict. Just keep in mind that we go outside every day unless weather is severe enough to prevent us.
- Dress for work, which in a child's case is **play!**
- Your child will get messy, so don't dress them in clothing you don't want to get ruined or stained.
- Avoid belts or hard buttons that make using the bathroom more difficult for children who are still working on toilet training skills.
- Dress in safe shoes--Open toes, open backs, flip-flops, slippery soles, cowboy boots and high heeled shoes are not safe for school. Fully closed shoes, like sneakers or tennis shoes are best.
- Don't allow clothes that may be a safety risk like those with hanging strings or cords that could get caught or can make them more likely to trip or fall.
- Jewelry can get lost. If it is valuable, leave it at home.

## HEALTH INFORMATION

Your child's state of health impacts his/her total development and ability to benefit from the total Early/Head Start experience. Our program goals are to assure that each child is in optimal health. Please inform your Center Director of any allergies or health conditions that will have an impact on your child at school.

Early/Head Start requires each child to have a completed physical exam yearly, a current immunization record, TB screening Questionnaire, results of blood lead test, hemoglobin (iron) screening, and dental exams. Head Start will provide vision and hearing screenings, and measure their height and weight, if they are not noted on the child's recent physical form. We will remind you when it is time to take your child to the doctor or dentist. Your child must be up to date on well- child and dental checkups.

**The following are health exams and records that parents are responsible for obtaining.**

- **Statement of Health**

All children must have a Statement of Health from a Medical Professional stating they can attend a child care center per Texas State licensing requirements.

- **Complete Physical exam**

In addition, all children must have a current exam on file and remain up to date throughout the year

- **Additional Health Screenings**

- Blood lead test with results and Lead Screening Questionnaire
- Hemoglobin test with results
- TB skin tests with results or the TB screening questionnaire

- **Up to date immunization record**

All children must be up to date on immunizations before being allowed to attend school. Head Start follows the Center for Disease Controls (CDC) immunization schedule and recommendations, as well as The Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements for Child-Care facilities.

**If you choose not to have your child immunized, for any reason, you must apply for an exemption from the Department of State Health Service.** We must have the original notarized copy on file for your child to start school. If an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease happens at your center, your child **will be excluded** from school by the local health department, until further notice.

- **Up to date Dental Exam**

Each child must have a dental exam beginning at age 6 months performed by a dentist. Dental exams are valid for 6 months.

**If additional services or treatment are needed, as a result of the above screenings, parents should work with providers and Early/Head Start to ensure that all necessary services are received.**

### ***Medical Home and Medical Insurance***

One of the Head Start goals is to make sure that all Head Start children have an ongoing and accessible source of health care. Therefore, all children will be required to have a source of medical insurance. The Family Advocate will assist you in applying for Medicaid or CHIP if needed. Referrals requesting services for children and their families may come from Head Start staff and/or parents. Head Start must receive a Release of Information Authorization from parents/guardians before sharing any information with any outside community agency. Any information is considered confidential. Staff will follow-up with families regarding their satisfaction with referrals.

### ***Preventative Exams and Screenings***

Every child is **required** to stay current on well child and dental exams according to the Texas Health Steps Checkup Schedule. A courtesy reminder will be sent home, but please remember that you are responsible for obtaining and providing health exams to your center director. Please respond to any written notices by informing staff when appointments have been made. Please bring a Head Start physical and dental form to your appointments for your providers to complete and then return them to the center. Forms are available in the Center Directors office or online at [www.opportunitiesforwbc.org](http://www.opportunitiesforwbc.org) , click on Services. In the event that a physical/dental visit is not complete, a parent must fill out a Letter of Intent for health screenings/treatment.

### ***Healthy Habits/Hygiene***

Healthy Habits are established in the classroom during daily routines (hand washing, tooth brushing, etc.) and other routines that help reduce the spread of illness.

### ***Accidents/Injuries/Medical Emergencies***

All staff members are trained in first aid. Minor injuries (bumps, scrapes, bruises) will be reported to parents at pick-up time by our Incident-Illness-Behavior form, which will be sent home with your child.

Should your child be involved in a medical or dental emergency, our staff is trained to follow the steps in our emergency plan of action. A decision will be made if the accident or illness requires an ambulance to transport your child to emergency medical care, or if parents or staff is able to transport the child. You will be contacted immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will call the next person designated on the Medical and Emergency Information Card that you have completed.

## OPERATIONAL POLICIES

### ***Safe Sleep***

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at Opportunities Head Start will follow these safe sleep recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for infants to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS):

- Always put infants to sleep on their backs unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Place infants on a firm mattress, with a tight fitting sheet, in a crib that meets the CPSC federal requirements for full size cribs and for non-full size cribs [§746.2409 and §747.2309].
- For infants who are younger than 12 months of age, cribs should be bare except for a tight fitting sheet and a mattress cover or protector. Items that should not be placed in a crib include: soft or loose bedding, such as blankets, quilts, or comforters; pillows; stuffed toys/animals; soft objects; bumper pads; liners; or sleep positioning devices [§746.2415 and §747.2315]. Also, infants must not have their heads, faces, or cribs covered at any time by items such as blankets, linens, or clothing [§746.2429 and §747.2329].
- Do not use sleep positioning devices, such as wedges or infant positioners. The AAP has found no evidence that these devices are safe. Their use may increase the risk of suffocation [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Ensure that sleeping areas are ventilated and at a temperature that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult [§746.3407(10) and §747.3203(10)].
- If an infant needs extra warmth, use sleep clothing, such as sleepers or footed pajamas as an alternative to blankets [§746.2415 and §747.2315].
- Place only one infant in a crib to sleep [§746.2405 and §747.2305].
- Infants may use a pacifier during sleep. But the pacifier must *not be attached* to a stuffed animal or the infant's clothing by a string, cord, or other attaching mechanism that might be a suffocation or strangulation risk [§746.2415 and §747.2315].

- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a crib (such as a bouncy chair or swing, or arrives to care asleep in a car seat), move the infant to a crib immediately, unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant's health care professional [§746.2426 and §747.2326].
- Our child care program is smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in Texas child care operations (this includes e- cigarettes and any type of vaporizers) [§746.3703(d) and §747.3503(d)].
- Actively observe sleeping infants by sight and sound [§746.2403 and §747.2303].
- If an infant is able to roll back and forth from front to back, place the infant on the infant's back for sleep and allow the infant to assume a preferred sleep position [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Awake infants will have supervised “tummy time” several times daily. This will help them strengthen their muscles and develop normally [§746.2427 and §747.2327].
- Do not swaddle an infant for sleep or rest unless you provide an Infant Sleep Exception form 2710 signed by the infant’s health care professional [§746.2428 and §747.2328].

***Medical Conditions***

Some students enrolled in our program require special attention due to medical or physical conditions such as:

- asthma
- diabetes
- seizures
- severe allergic reactions
- food allergies

**If your child has any limitations, medications, or special conditions at the time of enrollment or throughout the year, you must provide written documentation from a physician.** This will be done on a Head Start Health Action Plan depending on the medical condition. The Health Coordinator will provide individual attention to those families with special health concerns, and assure that children with special health needs are monitored closely on a daily basis within the program. Your child’s general wellness will be noted on a regular basis. Whenever the

limitation or treatment is discontinued, parents should again provide written documentation from the child's physician stating the limitations have been lifted.

### ***Breastfeeding***

We encourage and support all nursing mothers, including parents of enrolled children and our own staff. Opportunities supports mothers that choose to breastfeed by providing a quiet, comfortable, and private place with adult seating where mothers may nurse and express milk.

### ***Nutrition***

- Food allergies/substitutions must be documented by a medical professional or a religious leader. These forms need to be turned in prior to the first day of your child's attendance.
- Head Start participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, children will receive at least 2/3 of their recommended daily nutritional allowances.
- Children will receive breakfast, lunch and a snack, which is designed to help meet children's daily nutritional needs.
- Early/Head Start serves all meals and snacks family style.
- Snack and meal times are used for learning and development of good health habits.
- Meals and snacks incorporate socialization, self-help, decision making, and communication skills.
- The Early/Head Start food program adheres to strict requirements including the types of foods, amounts served, and presentation style.
- Children will remain on infant and toddler food up to the age of one, unless otherwise indicated by a medical professional.
- Children's nutritional needs are reviewed three times per year, special dietary needs and feeding problems will be given individual attention. We will identify specific nutritional needs of each individual child.
- **Each center is a Nut-Free and a Nut Butter Free Zone.** At no time can a parent, child or staff bring nuts or nut butter (peanut butter), including almond milk, to the center.
- Bringing snacks to any Head Start classroom requires prior approval.
- All food brought in must be prepackaged, in the original container, and unopened.
- Suggested food items that parents may bring are muffins, fresh fruits, vegetables, raisins, snack crackers, graham crackers and cheese. Talk with your director for more suggestions.

**Per Child Care Food Program (CACFP) regulations, foods purchased with Head Start funds are not able to leave the center with the children or staff.**

### ***Medication Information***

If possible, every effort should be made by parents to administer prescribed medication to their child before or after school hours.

- First dosage must be given to the student by the parent at home, or if at school, the parent administers the first dosage and observes the child for thirty minutes.
- Please notify us if your child is receiving any type of medication at home, so we are aware and can watch for side effects or allergic reactions.
- Prescribed medications must be in their original container with the full pharmacy label attached and within the expiration date.
- When necessary, prescribed medications can be given at the center, with a written statement from the physician, and medication request form from the parent which will be valid for 12 months
- A log will be kept at the center of all medications administered.
- Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen and/or insect repellent to their child prior to bringing them to the center. Sunscreen and Insect Repellent will be considered over the counter medications and will not be applied without parent's written permission and all label instructions will be followed. Parents are responsible for supplying sunscreen and/or insect repellent that must be applied while the child is in care. Sunscreen must be SPF 15 or higher and labeled as "broad spectrum" sunscreen. Insect repellent may not contain more than 30% DEET. Opportunities Head Start has written procedures for the application on sunscreen and insect repellent.

Parents should make every attempt to give these medications prior to the child coming to school. All medication forms may be picked up in your center director's office, they are valid for one year. Early/Head Start will maintain documentation of when and who administered the medication to your child. The Health Coordinator or nurse will regularly review the forms. Medications will only be given after all forms have been provided. Please take the forms with you to your doctor visit. Medications will only be administered by staff that have been trained in medication administration.

### ***Morning Health Checks***

The overall health of each child is checked each morning with parent and teacher present. Any bruises, rashes, blisters or other abnormal symptoms are noted on the health check and body forms. If your child has an accident while at home, please notify your teacher.

**\*Parents of infants and toddlers in diapers or potty training will change their child's diaper upon arrival at the center. Teachers are to be available to parents and follow the morning health check procedures. (If parents or caregivers are uncomfortable changing their child, staff can change child while parent is watching).**

### ***Illness***

Please do not send your child to school if they are ill. It is also mandatory that you notify the center when your child is going to be absent. If a child becomes ill while in school, or does not



appear well enough to participate in usual activities, you will be required to pick them up immediately. In some circumstances, we may request a statement from a physician stating the child may return and participate in activities before that child can return to school.

A child should be kept home and may be sent home for any of the following reasons:

- Temperature on thermometer reads 100 degrees F or higher under the arm and complains of not feeling well or unable to participate comfortably in program activities.
- Shows signs of communicable disease, i.e.: flu, pink eye, impetigo, strep throat, chicken pox, cold, or fever.
- Vomiting or diarrhea two or more times in 24 hours.
- Open, oozing or bleeding sores and or has mouth sores with inability to control saliva.
- Unusual or painful rash combined with fever.
- Other signs of illness such as extreme tiredness, abnormal breathing or behavior changes.

An Incident-Illness-Behavior Report will be given to parent explaining the reason for exclusion. Head Start follows the “Diseases Requiring Exclusion from Child-Care Facilities and Schools” provided by the Department of State Health Services. This list is posted in each director’s office.

### ***Communicable Diseases***

During the course of the year it is to be expected that your child, at one time or another, will be exposed to common communicable diseases.

- Parents will be notified in writing if a child at the center has been sent home with a communicable disease.
- If your child is excluded from school, children must be fever and symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours without taking any medicine (Tylenol or Motrin) before returning to school.
- If the parent can provide the center with an official note from their physician stating that the child is not contagious, then the child will be allowed to return, as long as they are fever free with no fever reducing medication.
- If you are notified that your child has lice, treatment needs to be done before the child can return and parents should attempt to remove nits and live lice from the hair. The child will need to report to the office and be rechecked before returning to the classroom. Head Start will provide information on how to remove lice and nits from the hair. Lice treatment can be purchased at local stores. If your child has Medicaid, a prescription can be provided by your child’s doctor.
- Parents should be aware of the common diseases and routinely check their child for signs and symptoms of illness.

# PARENT INVOLVEMENT

## WE LOVE PARENTS, AND WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Your involvement is essential to the success of all Opportunities Early/Head Start programs so we are asking you to:

### ***Volunteering***

- Early/Head Start staff train, support and supervise all parent volunteers.
- All volunteers must be 14 years or older.
- Parent volunteers may not bring other children with them while volunteering during school hours.
- All volunteers must submit a criminal background check and complete a TB questionnaire and complete all required paperwork.
- All visitors must first sign in at the office and receive a visitor or volunteer badge to ensure the safety of our children.

### **“GIVE BACK” your time! Your family can be involved in a variety of ways:**

- **Volunteering for Projects**: Use your specialized talents to help enhance services or participate in projects where you can learn new skills from other volunteers and to become role models for our children.
- **Classroom volunteering**: Stay for as little as 15 minutes or up to the whole day. You can read to children, help with an art project, make center labels, help on the playground, or share a song or hobby, cultural activity. Please remember to follow the school’s procedure for sign in & badges.
- **Read aloud to your children**: The goal is that you read to your child five times a week for fifteen minutes a day for a total of 5 hours per month. You can track your hours on Reading Logs that will be provided to you each month.
- **Parent trainings**: We provide a variety of trainings that support **YOU** as the parent and your child’s development. Classes include: Parent Café’s, Positive Guidance, Health and Wellness/Nutrition, Fatherhood activities, etc.
- **Parent Committee Meetings**: We provide families an opportunity to have input about the needs and interests of families. We provide opportunities for parents to meet and get to know each other. You can serve as an officer on the committee.
- **School Readiness Events**: Stay informed, provide ideas and input on how to make your Early/Head Start program better. Build a bridge between what is happening in the classroom and at home.
- **Father and Father Figure Involvement**: Be a male role model; participate in all parent involvement activities, like monthly Parent Committee Meetings, home visits, parent/teacher conferences, class field trips, and policy council.

▪ **Other ways to be involved:** Take home activities-ask your child's teacher for more information on what they need done for classroom activities.

### ***Policy Council***

- *The parent's voice in major program decisions.*
- *Is made up of parents and representatives from the community.*
- *Elected representatives serve a one year term from October to September.*
- *No members may serve more than five terms in a life time.*
- *Employee or members of their immediate families may not serve on the Policy Council (except for parents that occasionally substitute for regular staff).*
- *Policy Council meetings are held once monthly.*
- *On-site childcare is provided (must be requested in advance).*
- *Transportation is provided to the meetings.*
- *Policy Council Representatives and Alternates will be trained on their duties and responsibilities.*
- *Responsibilities include being the link between Parent Committees and Policy Council.*
- *Assisting in communication between Policy Council and program parents, so parents understand their rights, responsibilities and opportunities available in Early/Head Start.*
- *Assisting Parent Committees in planning, coordinating and organizing program activities for parents.*
- *Ensuring that funds are set aside for parent program activities.*
- *Assisting in recruiting volunteers.*
- *Helping resolve complaint issues.*
- *Policy Council Chairperson sits on the Board of Directors and the Finance Committee.*

### ***Parent Volunteer Awards, Recognition and Appreciation***

Volunteers are sincerely appreciated and without your help, the Early/Head Start program could not fully operate. Centers recognize their parents for all the hard work they do. Some ways your center might do this is by honoring; Parent Volunteer of the Month, volunteer recognition certificate to the parents or guardians who volunteered the most hours, fathers/father figures who volunteer the most hours.

### ***In Kind Donations***

- 20% of Early/Head Start yearly funding must come from parent and community volunteer hours and donations, which is called in-kind.
- Parents are not required to bring money or supplies during the year.
- We encourage each family volunteer to "Give Back" a minimum of 9 hours per month to help us meet our Federal match.

## ***Parent Fundraising***

Parents Center Committees can raise funds for their Head Start Center, following policy guidelines. The complete Fundraising Policy is located in the agency Policy and Procedure Manual. Parent Center Committee funds will be controlled by Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties.

All fundraisers must follow the same rules regarding allowable expenditures, types of activities, documentation of money collected and how much money was spent on the fundraising project, timing of deposits and check requests. The following policies and procedures concern most of the matters that affect parent fundraisers. This list does not include everything that could come up with Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties' Parent Center Committee Fundraisers, but is intended to help Parent Center Committees understand the relationship they have with Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties and operate in a legal manner. A complete list of the Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties financial policies and procedures can be obtained from the Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties finance department. Please direct any questions about Parent Center Committee Fundraisers to the Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties Director of Finance.

### **Rules for Head Start Parent Center Committee Fundraisers:**

1. A purchase order must be submitted to the Program Director, prior to spending any money. The purchase order must state the purpose of the purchase, the vendor and an estimate of the cost.
2. Money collected by Parent Center Committee including cash and checks must be turned in to the Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties finance department (or a Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties lockbox) the same day the funds are received. Money will not be taken to anyone's home.
3. All parents who handle money at any event must pass a background check ordered by Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties.
4. A detailed, written reconciliation of the deposit must be included with the money to be deposited. The reconciliation must include a list of all revenues received and any expenditure made from the money received. Original purchase receipts must be included to document any purchases.
5. Money received by the Parent Center Committee fund may not be used for personal purchases. Any expenditure of cash received should be supported by a previously submitted purchase order.
6. Parents may not deposit Parent Center Committee fund money into a personal bank account. All money must be given to Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties.
7. All fundraisers must be approved in advance by the Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties Director of Development. Please use the "Request for Approval of Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties Fundraiser" form.
8. Parent Center Committees may not hold raffles of any kind.

9. When requesting any center funds from Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties, all check requests will be processed within 2 or more weeks, depending on the deadline given by the Parent Center Committee. Please include the date you need the check when you submit the request.
10. Requests for checks made by noon on a Tuesday will be ready by 4 p.m. the following Friday, if the request specifically states that the check is needed by that Friday.
11. A financial summary and cash balance will be provided to each Parent Center Committee on a monthly basis. The Parent Committee will review the summary and let the finance department know immediately if anything seems to be incorrect.

## EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Early/Head Start provides emotional wellness services for Early/Head Start children and families.

### ***Promoting Emotional Wellness***

Our Licensed Professional Counselor or a Counseling Intern regularly visits each classroom. He or she will regularly consult with your child's teacher about any emotional or behavioral concerns.

The counselor is available to meet with parents to discuss any concerns you have about your child. If you have concerns about your child, such as:

- Helping him or her cope with traumatic experiences, such as divorce, death, or witnessing violence
- Helping him or her cope with life transitions, such as birth of a sibling, other changes in the family make up, moving to a new home, a parent getting a new job, etc.
- Helping decrease challenging behaviors and increasing positive behaviors or
- If your child has a sudden change in his or her behavior or emotional state

We can help you:

- Set up a meeting with the Head Start Counselor or Counselor Intern or
- Access services from community providers. We have various community partners that can provide counseling services.
- Access other community resources

If you have concerns about your child's emotional wellness talk with your center director or family advocate or your child's teacher and they will help you access services.

### ***Child Safety and Aggressive Behavior***

The safety of children is always our top priority. Sometimes when young children are angry they engage in aggressive behavior that creates a danger to themselves or others. Some examples of these behaviors are head banging, hitting, biting, kicking, tackling others, throwing hard objects, tipping over furniture, or other forms of property destruction. We do everything possible to prevent these sorts of behavior from occurring, including teaching all children appropriate ways to solve problems and express their feelings appropriately, but episodes of aggressive behavior will sometimes occur.

In these situations teacher or other staff may need to hold and soothe a child to keep them and others safe and help the child calm down.

**If health or safety rules such as biting, spitting, or causing personal injury to a child or teacher are violated, the matter will be referred to the Head Start Director and the child may be immediately sent home and placed on a transitional service plan until a meeting can be held**

**with the parent and a team will be formed to address concerns. The parent will be contacted via telephone and a meeting will be scheduled at the center to develop a behavior plan.**

Every effort will be made to work with you and your child to address any challenging behaviors and prepare your child to be successful once they transition to public school.

***Chronic Challenging Behavior/Suspension Expulsion procedures***

Opportunities Head Start Staff may use methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, self-direction, and teach positive behavior expectations. Opportunities will not expel or terminate a child from Opportunities because of a child's behavior.

***Confidentiality***

Every effort is made to ensure that any emotional/behavior concerns remain confidential. We will not share information about emotional/behavioral concerns with any outside agencies or individuals without your signed consent to release information. Please be aware that Early/Head Start staff cannot talk to other family members (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.) about emotional/behavioral concerns without your written consent. We cannot talk to you about the behavior of any child other than your own.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

Early/Head Start makes it possible for all children with special needs to be identified early in the program year. Each child receives screenings in the areas of speech and language, hearing and vision, cognitive thinking, motor skills and social/emotional development. Referrals can be made with parent consent to the local Early Childhood Intervention program, the School District, and/or private therapy. The Disability Coordinator works with families and children and provides information and resources. If your child is eligible for ECI or ISD services, you will participate in developing an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP) that will ensure your child's individual needs will be addressed and integrated into all daily activities.

### ***Accessibility***

Head Start will ensure that all facilities are in compliance with the Americans with Disability Act, including accessibility to buildings and parking areas. Each center has designated accessible parking spaces, which are reserved for families with disabled placards or license plates issued by the state. It is a violation of Texas law for a person to park a vehicle in an accessible parking space without the appropriate plate or placard, or to park a car in such a way that it blocks access to an accessible parking space, access aisle, or any area that provides access for people with disabilities, such as a ramp or curb cut. People who park in accessible parking spaces are subject to fines of up to \$2,500.00 and/or up to 50 hours of community service, per Texas Law. Please use the appropriate designated parking spaces in the parking lot for dropping off and picking up your child.



## MY HANDBOOK

I have been notified by Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties Early/Head Start Staff that I can review a copy of the Family Handbook online at [www.opportunitiesforwbc.org/head-start/](http://www.opportunitiesforwbc.org/head-start/) or can receive a printed copy from my center director. I have had an opportunity to ask questions. I also attended the Parent Orientation and received information on the following areas:

- Class Schedule
- Center Rules
- Parent Responsibilities
- Volunteering
- Education Services provided
- Health and Nutrition Services provided
- Mental Health Service provided
- Disability Services
- Family Services
- Pedestrian safety/Transportation Services
- Policy Council/Parent Group
- Home Visits/Parent Conferences
- Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting
- Secondhand Tobacco Smoke and the Health of Your Family
- Attendance Policies
- Discipline and Guidance
- Complaint Procedure
- Emergency Preparedness
- Safe Sleep Policy

If you require a copy of the manual, please check here.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Center

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

**Please sign and remove this sheet and turn into the Center Director**