

Opportunities

for Williamson & Burnet Counties



2021-2022

Family Handbook/Operational Procedures

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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. Our centers have an "Open Door" Policy which means that we welcome parents to visit our centers at any time during our hours of operation to observe their child, the childcare centers, activities, and the premises and the equipment without having to secure prior approval.

Students that are participating in a dual enrollment program with local ISD will 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 do not 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 are not, 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

The Head Start Difference



Head Start is more than just day care for your child. Head Start offers services to children and their families to:

- Prepare children for success in school and beyond
- Learn ways to support their children to help them be successful
- Live healthy lives, grow good nutrition habits, and strengthen emotional wellness
- Work together to build strong relationships and support one another

Preparing Children For School and Beyond

Screenings and Assessments

We assess children's strengths and areas of growth throughout the year to meet their individual learning needs.

Conferences and Home Visits

You are your child's primary teacher. We want to hear from you about your child's needs and report their progress. We do 2 conferences and 2 home visits throughout the year to communicate their needs and what they

Attendance

Children's success depends on them being at school. Bring your child to school every day! Our goal is for your child to maintain a 90% attendance rate.

Support your child to achieve success!

Volunteer! Parents are encouraged to volunteer 9 hours per month

Read! Read to your child every night. Complete your reading logs and return them to school.

Serve! Be a part of our *Policy Council* and *Parent Committee*.

Attend! Come to activities at school and parent meetings.

Be Healthy!

Head Start has specialized staff who can help promote a healthy lifestyle for you and your children

Health Services

Becky Elam
Health Coordinator
belam@owbc-tx.org

Emotional Wellness

Jim Ellis
Licensed Professional Counselor
jellis@owbc-tx.org

Special Services

Kate Adams
Disability Services Coordinator
kadams@owbc-tx.org

Build Strong Relationships!

Your **Family Advocate** is here to help you. Get to know your Family Advocate at your site.

You and your Family Advocate will:

- ★ Set goals for you and your family
- ★ Identify needs and how to find resources
- ★ Help you learn ways to connect with your child at home
- ★ Help you find ways to get involved that work for your schedule

Head Start Philosophy and Principles

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 based on 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, emotional wellness, health services, and nutritional services.

Administration Office

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

- Executive Director.....Marco Cruz
- Head Start 0-5 Program Director.....Lynore Samford
- Head Start 0-5 Assistant Program Director.....Maisha Jackson
- Head Start 0-5 Education Coordinator.....Dena Yantz
- Head Start 0-5 Education Coordinator.....Veronica Hunt
- Head Start 0-5 Health/Nutrition/Safety Coordinator.....Becky Elam
- Head Start 0-5 Family and Community Engagement Coordinator.....Tanya Graham, LBSW
- Head Start 0-5 Emotional Wellness Coordinator.....Jim Ellis, MA, LPC-S
- Head Start 0-5 ERSEA Coordinator.....Claudia Barnes
- Head Start 0-5 Disability Coordinator.....Kate Adams
- Head Start 0-5 Data Analyst.....Nayana Arnadi
- Head Start Collaborative Coordinator/Fatherhood Specialist.....Kevin Winter

Head Start Centers

Williamson County Centers

Center		Director	Address	Phone Number
Bagdad	512-259-9010	Victoria Nunnery	351 N. Bagdad Rd. Leander, TX 78641	(512) 259-9010
Bartlett	254-527-4645	Deborá Trejo	620 W. Clark St. Bartlett, TX 76511	(254) 527-4645
Florence	254-793-9495	Maria Chavez	203 Adams St. Florence, TX 76527	(251) 793-9495
Harris Ross	512-365-1070	Gloria Roberson	303 Ferguson St. Taylor, TX 76574	(512) 365-1070
Hutto	512-642-3144	Dora Beltran	80 Mager Ln. Hutto, TX 78634	(512) 642-3144
Mary Bailey	512-863-5259	Lisa Lechow	601 N. College St. Georgetown, TX 78626	(512) 863-5259
Rawleigh Elliott	512-864-9733	Angela Ganner	103 Holly St. Georgetown, TX 78626	(512) 864-9733
Round Rock	512-255-4536	Veronica Valles	1001 E. Main St. Round Rock, TX 78664	(512) 255-2792

Burnet County Centers

Center		Director	Address	Phone Number
Burnet	512-756-4777	Aletha Laterza	602 N. Wood St. Burnet, TX 78611	(512) 756-4777
Highland Lakes	830-598-7667	Trina Howell	8200 West FM 1431 Granite Shoals, 78654	(830) 598-7667
Marble Falls	830-693-0497	Sandra Clarke	700 Ave. T, Marble Falls, TX 78654	(830) 693-0497

What is Head Start?

Established in 1965 Head Start is a program that promotes school readiness for infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children from low income families by offering educational, health, social and family services. OWBC provides services to over 600 families on an annual basis and is funded for 288 children in Early Head Start and 398 children in Head Start. Head Start is centered around fostering childrens development while engaging parents or other key family members in positive relationships focused on family well being.

Classroom Information

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.

Classroom Guidelines and Information

- Smoking on school grounds is not allowed.
- Healthy food habits are part of the overall curriculum and staff, and visitors will model behavior while in the classroom. Eating candy, chewing gum, or drinking beverages (other than milk or water) when in the classroom is not allowed for any staff or visitors.
- Children may bring a security item, such as a blanket or stuffed animal.
- All items brought to school should be labelled such as (hats, coats, extra clothing, blankets, etc.)
- When volunteering, teaching staff will take care of all discipline matters.
- Obscenities, abusive language, or other inappropriate/negative words or gestures are not allowed in the classroom.
- Cellphone use is prohibited in the classroom by staff, volunteers, or parents during drop off and pick up.
- Parents or guardians must bring the child to the center and sign them in as required. Children are not to come in alone.
- Park in designated areas. Infants must be removed from carriers upon arrival to the classroom. **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.
- The parent or guardian must complete the sign-in and sign-out sheets at drop off and pick up. Families 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 celebrations will be supportive and respectful of all families and will include educational activities that combine fun with learning for children.
- Staff members can only 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.
- Teaching staff are not permitted to give out their home or cell numbers. They are available for phone calls in the classroom before or after class time hours. Ask the center director or classroom teacher for the best time to call.

- Parents may call the center office during class time to relay a message to the teacher when necessary. Parents should speak with Center Director or Family Advocate when calling to leave messages.

Professional boundaries between staff and families enrolled in OWBC Early/Head Start programs will always be maintained. Staff will respect the differences between professional relationships and friendships during work.

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 will easily do the trick.
- Dress for the weather: **In Texas**, that is often hard to predict. Children are provided with an opportunity for outside play every day. We follow the Weather Guidelines for Children chart to determine safe weather conditions for outside play. A copy of the Weather Guidelines for Children is posted in each center.
- Dress for work, which in a child's case is **play!** Jewelry can get lost. If it is valuable, leave it at home.
- 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.

Sample Daily Schedule in Head Start

- 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, Handwashing
- Lunch
- Circle time/Literacy/ Story time
- Rest time (Rest time for the 3 yr. olds is 1 1/2hr and 4 yr. 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:

- 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.

Program Operational Policies

Attendance Expectations

Each of OWBC Head Start centers are full-day programs. Our hours of operation are 7:30-3:00, and open Monday through Friday from August to July.

- Children are most successful when they maintain regular attendance. Students are expected to maintain a 90% attendance rate as they will be learning new skills daily.
- To ensure that your child is safe and accounted for, please call or text the Director or Family Advocate before 10:00 if your child is absent for any reason.
- Family Advocates will make attempts 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.
- If your child's attendance falls below the expectation of 90%, the Family Advocate will work with your family to create an attendance plan.
- If your child will have an extended absence or vacation, please notify the Center Director prior to absence.
- Parents of children enrolled in both Head Start and the ISD may be required to bring a note when they return from an absence, according to ISD policy or if they have been out 3 days.
- If it is necessary to withdraw your child, please provide notification to your Center Director as soon as possible.
- Families that withdraw will be required to reapply for available slots.

Classroom Arrival and Departure

- All center-based classroom doors are locked between the hours of 8:15 and 3:00p.m. ISD campuses may have a different schedule.
- You must notify the center if your child will be late.
- If arriving at 8:15 or later, you must first sign child in at the office before taking them to class.
- If you arrive after 8:15 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 you must accompany the child during this breakfast time.
- At the end of the day, all children must be signed out from the classroom.
- If picking up your child before regular pick-up time you must check in at the office and/or follow your individual centers procedures.
- All children must be picked up by 3:00 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 you arrive to pick up your **child after 3:00p.m.**, you will be required to sign a late pick up form.
- If a child has not been picked up within 30 minutes of closing and staff has not been able to communicate with parents or emergency contacts, with permission from the Program Director or Assistant Program Director, staff may contact Child Protective Services or the Police Department.

Release of Child

In order to ensure the safety of your child, he/ she 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. Inform staff of any changes to your phone number or emergency contact information to help us protect and keep your child safe.

- **WE CAN ONLY ACCEPT CHANGES IN PICK UP VIA A WRITTEN NOTE or EMAIL— (NO PHONE CALL AUTHORIZATIONS).**
- A picture ID will be required from anyone listed on the emergency card.
- Court documents must be provided to the Center Director and 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 relative between the ages of 14 and 18.

Illness and Exclusion Criteria

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.

Please do not send your child to school if they are ill and notify the center that your child is going to be absent. 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.

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

A child should be kept at 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, exhibits unusual behavior or child is 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.
- Productive Cough
- Sore throat
- Vomiting or diarrhea two or more times in 24 hours.
- Open, oozing or bleeding sores
- Mouth sores with inability to control saliva.
- Unusual or painful rash combined with fever.
- Watery, reddened eyes with discharge
- Other signs of illness such as extreme tiredness, abnormal breathing or behavior changes.

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.

An Incident-Illness- Report will be given to parents 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 available in each director’s office.

Communicable Diseases

During the year, it is to be expected that your child will be exposed to illnesses that are common to children. These are known as “communicable diseases”.

- Parents will be notified in writing through the Learning Genie app and postings on the door of the classroom if a child at the center has been sent home with a communicable disease.
- If your child is excluded from school with symptoms of illness, he or she must be fever and symptom free for a minimum of 24 hours without taking any fever reducing medicine (Tylenol or Motrin) before returning to school.
- If the child is absent for 3 days, the parent must 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, if they are fever free with no fever reducing medication.

Parents should be aware of the common diseases and routinely check their child for signs and symptoms of illness. Common diseases include:

- Chickenpox
- Strep (including scarlet fever and strep throat)
- German Measles (rubeola)
- Measles

- Mumps
- Pinworms
- Head Lice
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Impetigo
- Ringworm
- Herpes Simplex 1 (cold sore)
- Fifth Disease
- Scabies
- Mononucleosis
- Giardiasis
- Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus
- Rotavirus
- Influenza (Flu)
- Coronavirus

Lice

If you are notified that your child has live lice, treatment needs to be done before the child can return. Parents should attempt to remove nits and live lice from their hair. 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. The child will need to report to the Center Director and be rechecked before returning to the classroom.

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 documented 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 you that children with special health needs are monitored closely daily within the program. Whenever the limitation or treatment is discontinued, parents should again provide written documentation from the child's physician stating the limitations have been lifted.

Medication Information/ Dispensing Medication

Medications (including over the counter medication) will only be administered with written permission from your child's physician. A medication packet must be completed and signed before any medications can be given to your child. Medication will only be administered by staff who have been trained in medication administration.

Every effort should be made by parents to give their child the prescribed medication to their child before or after school hours.

- The first dose should be given to the child by the parent at home. If the first dose must be given at school, the parent must give the first dosage and stay to observe the child for thirty minutes.
- Please notify your child's teacher if your child is taking 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. Medication forms are available in the Center Director's office.
- A log will be kept at the center of all medications administered and will include who gave the medication, the amount of medication given, and the time it was given.
- The Health Coordinator will regularly review medications and medication forms.
- Emergency medications (EpiPens, Inhalers, Diastat) may be kept in the classroom following safe storage procedures. All other medications will be kept locked in the director's office.

Notifications of Accidents/Injuries/Medical Emergencies

All staff members are trained in first aid. Minor injuries (bumps, bites, scrapes, bruises) will be reported to parents at pick-up time on an Incident/Illness report. A copy of this report will be given to the parent or guardian at the time the child is picked up from care.

Should your child be involved in a medical or dental emergency, staff are trained to follow the steps in our Emergency Manual. If your child requires immediate medical attention, EMS will be called, and parents will be contacted immediately by phone. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, we will contact emergency contacts provided.

Procedures for Parental Notifications

Parents will be notified any time there is an incident that may put the child at risk such as: an allegation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation; an injury or illness that requires immediate medical attention; failing to prevent a child from wandering away from the center or leaving a child unsupervised; or is involved in a situation that renders the childcare center unsafe such as fire, flood, or damage due to severe weather. The following methods will be used to notify parents:

By phone/text – if the child is injured or becomes ill during the school day or an incident has occurred that placed the child at risk the parent will be notified by phone/text immediately. If the parent cannot be reached, staff will refer to the emergency contact list provided by the parent.

Email – If a parent cannot be reached through phone/text, an email may also be sent.

In writing – if the child is involved in a minor incident or injury, the parent will be notified in writing using an Incident/Illness report which is given to the parent at the time the child is picked up from the center. Notifications of illness (Health Alert) outbreaks will be posted in writing on the classroom door.

Through Learning Genie – if there has been an outbreak of a communicable disease or illness at the center, parents may be notified through the Learning Genie app. Preventive health information and community events will also be shared through the app.

Exposure to blood or body fluids

All staff are trained annually in procedures to handle exposure to blood and body fluids. Written procedures for handling body fluids and exposure to potential blood borne pathogens are in the Head Start Implementation Plan. If your child is exposed to a blood borne pathogen, you will be notified immediately.

Discipline and Guidance

Discipline is:

- 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 will 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
- Requiring a child to remain in a restrictive device.

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 rules charts stating what good behaviors are expected of everyone 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.
 - Teaching 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 recognition, in themselves and others, and emotional vocabulary.
 - Teaching children to recognize when they are getting angry, frustrated, or overly excited; how to pause and engage in self-calming skills; and to use problem solving or conflict resolution skills to resolve the situation.
 - Setting up a comfort corner (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 comfort corner to calm down and then return to classroom activities when they are ready.
 - Teaching children problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
 - Coaching children using problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
- Using conscious discipline strategies when appropriate for the child's age and development, an alternate activity will be provided to help your child calm and be ready to return to the group.
 - 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.

Suspension and expulsion of children

Opportunities Head Start Staff uses methods of teaching and positive guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, self-direction, and teach positive behavior expectations.

If a child exhibits chronic challenging behaviors that create a danger to the child or others and the parent refuses to meet with the behavioral intervention team, with the Program Director's approval, the child may be asked to stay home from school until a behavioral modification plan can be developed.

Opportunities will not expel a child because of the child's behavior.

Safe Sleep for infants 12 months of age or younger

OWBC follows the operational Policy on Infant safe sleep per Child Care Licensing Minimum Standards and upon recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Parents of infants 12 and under are required to acknowledge and sign the safe sleep policy.

Refer to guidelines on the following page.



OPERATIONAL POLICY ON INFANT SAFE SLEEP

Purpose: This form provides the required information per minimum standards §746.501(9) and §747.501(6) for the safe sleep policy.

Directions: Parents will review this policy upon enrolling their infant at

and a copy of the policy is provided in the parent handbook. Parents can review information on safe sleep and reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome/Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS/SUIDS) at: <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/A-Parents-Guide-to-Safe-Sleep.aspx>

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at

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

(insert type of sleep clothing that will be used, 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 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].

Meals and Food Services

Nutrition

- Head Start participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Children will receive at least 2/3 of their recommended daily nutritional allowance through breakfast, lunch, and snack while attending the program.
- The Head Start nutrition program follows the serving size and meal component requirements of USDA/CACFP. Our menus are prepared by a registered dietician.
- Foods purchased with CACFP and/or Head Start funds must be consumed while the child is at the center and may not be sent home with children, parents, or staff.
- Head Start practices Family Style Dining. Children and teachers will eat together to promote conversation, build language skills, and provide nutrition education. Children are encouraged to serve themselves and try each food that is served.
- Infants are offered pureed baby food and formula until the age of one, unless requested by the parent and the child shows signs of being developmentally ready.
- Children's nutritional needs are reviewed by the Health Coordinator. Family and staff concerns, including special dietary requirements due to food allergies, special feeding needs, or nutrition/growth issues are addressed individually with parents.

Food Allergies and Intolerances

- **Each center is a Nut-Free, Nut Milk, and 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.
- Food allergies/intolerances must be documented on a Food Substitution Plan signed by a medical professional. This form must be provided by the parent **before** the child can attend.
- Food substitutions due to religious or cultural beliefs must be documented on a Food Substitution Plan signed by a religious leader, or the child's parent if there is no designated religious leader and provided to the Center Director.
- Milk substitutions must be nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. OWBC Head Start provides lactose free milk to children who have a lactose intolerance or soy milk to children who require a non-dairy milk alternative. A Food Substitution form signed by the parent and child's doctor is required for all milk substitutions.

Outside Food and Food Celebrations

- Head Start has an outside food and food celebration policy. Foods provided by parents for special events such as birthdays or holidays are not allowed.
- Food donations to the center must meet CACFP requirements for allowable foods. All food brought in must be prepackaged, in the original container, and unopened.
- Head Start classrooms will allow food celebrations twice a year at snack time (2:30- 3:00 PM). Parents may donate snacks for celebrations **ONLY** on the following dates:
 - February 14th (or the Friday before if the 14th is on a weekend)
 - The 3rd Friday in May
- Parents may provide food for these celebrations that meet the USDA/CACFP requirements such as vegetables, fruits, paper products, pre-packaged snacks such as crackers, graham crackers, or cheese. Snacks must be nut-free. A list of approved items will be available from the Center Director. The regular menu will also be served for reimbursement.

- One pizza party day will be allowed on the Friday before Christmas break at lunchtime (11:30 AM – 12:00 PM). Centers will order pizza and the kitchen will provide milk, salad, and fruit to meet the meal requirements.

Breastfeeding

Human milk is the best source of nutrition for infants and supports optimal health and development. OWBC encourages and supports all nursing mothers, including parents of enrolled children. OWBC supports mothers that choose to breastfeed by providing a quiet, comfortable, and private place with adult seating where mothers may nurse and express milk. In addition, nursing mothers may provide breastmilk to feed their infant while in care.

Immunization Requirements for children

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. In addition, a TB screening questionnaire will be required.

The CDC recommends the flu vaccine yearly for children ages 6 months and up. Since Head Start Performance Standards require children to have the required **and** recommended vaccinations by the CDC, OWBC Head Start requires children to receive a yearly flu shot. Information about this vaccination will be provided to your family and it is encouraged that you discuss this vaccination with your child's doctor. If you and your child's doctor decide the flu shot is not appropriate for your child, you will be asked to sign a statement that explains the shot is not recommended by your child's doctor.

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.

Hearing and vision screening requirements

Head Start will provide vision and hearing screenings and measure your child's height and weight if they are not noted on the child's recent physical form. Parents will be notified prior to the screenings taking place.

Preventative Exams and Screenings

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.

Every child enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start is required to stay current on well child and dental exams according to the Texas Health Steps Checkup Schedule. Reminders of these appointments will be sent home when they are coming due. It is the parent's responsibility for obtaining and providing copies of health and dental exams to your center director. Please respond to any written notices by informing staff when appointments have been made. Head Start physical and dental forms are provided for you to take 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 c <https://www.owbc-tx.org/head-start/>. Click on forms. A printout from the doctor or dentist's office with the details of the exam is also acceptable.

The following preventive health exams and records are required for enrollment in the Head Start/Early Head Start program:

Statement of Health

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

Complete Physical Exam

All children must have a current physical or well child exam on file and remain up to date throughout the year. Parents need to provide the Center Director with a copy of the current physical or well child exam.

Well child exams are required at 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months, 36 months, 4 years, and 5 years old.

Additional Health Screenings

*Blood lead test (finger stick or blood draw) with results. This test is usually performed at the 12 month and 24 month well child exam.

*Hemoglobin (iron) test with results. This test can be obtained through WIC.

*TB screening questionnaire and/or TB skin test results if necessary.

* Up to date immunization record. We can access your child's record through the state database (IMMTRAC) with written permission from the parent.

Dental Exam

Each child must have a dental exam performed by a dentist beginning at age 6 months of age. Dental exams are valid for 6 months. Parents need to provide the Center Director with copies of dental exams.

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, Insurance, and Referrals for Services

One of 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 medical and dental home and source of medical insurance. The Family Advocate will assist parents in applying for Medicaid or CHIP. Referrals for other community resources to assist family well-being will also be provided as needs arise.

Sharing of Health Information

Your child's health information is confidential and protected by HIPPA laws. A written Consent for Release of Information form must be signed by the parent before health information is received or released from a doctor, dentist, WIC, or other medical professional's office.

Enrollment Procedures

Each individual application submitted to Opportunities is reviewed by the ERSEA Coordinator and points are assigned based on needs of family and established criteria from the Head Start Performance

Standards. Applications are accepted throughout the year and all children are placed on the waiting list in Child Plus until there is an opening for that child. The waitlist will be updated as applications are entered and reviewed. The wait list is organized with the applicants that have the greatest number of points, in descending order to make the selection. When a vacancy occurs during the school year, the child with the highest points on the waitlist will be chosen to be enrolled in that slot. Vacancies are filled within 30 days.

When a child is selected an appointment is made for the parent/guardian to come to the center to do the enrollment paperwork, the following documents will be reviewed and/or signed for enrollment:

Forms the parent needs to bring:

1. Most recent well child and dental exam
2. Updated Immunization Record
3. Latest HGB and lead lab results from doctor
4. Driver's license or ID card
5. Custody/Guardianship paperwork
6. Copy of IEP/IFSP
7. Missing documents from the application

Forms the parent needs to fill out:

1. Medical Emergency Card
2. Health History Interview
3. Vision and Hearing Screening Form (for infants under 6 mos.)
4. CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)/ Admissions Form and CACFP Infant Feeding Preference Form (for infants under 12 months.)
5. Consent for Release of Information for Hemoglobin and Lead results (only if missing health documentation)
6. Parent Partnership Agreement – (reviewed with Family Advocate)
7. Community Resources and Needs (reviewed with Family Advocate)

Notification of Program Policy Changes

Parents will be notified in writing of any policy changes. This can be done by letters sent home, information shared electronically or by email, or presented at parent meetings. Notifications will also be posted on the parent board and in minutes from Policy Council meetings.

Transportation

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

Water activities

Opportunities Head Start may provide water activities for children but do not use wading pools or other bodies of water. Children may have water play with sprinklers with parents' permission on scheduled days. Parents must sign permission for their children to participate in water play activities.

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 are designed and implemented to address educational and socialization objectives for Head Start children. Field trips must be approved by the Head Start Program Director. Parents must give written permission before their child may attend a field trip.

Animals at School

Parents will be notified if an animal is to be present at the center, as a center pet or for an event. All Head Start centers follow childcare licensing minimum standards protocol when pertaining to animals in the classroom.

Insect repellent, Sunscreen, Diaper Rash Cream

Parents must give written permission for a teacher to apply over the counter diaper cream to their child. The parent must provide the diaper cream and it must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

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.

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, Tik Tok, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat or any others.

Calendars

Parents will receive a center calendar each month during the school year that will describe classroom activities, parent engagement opportunities, parenting tips, and emotional wellness and community information.

Cell Phone Policy

Out of respect for our program staff and other parents and children, OWBC asks all parents to limit phone contact during drop off and pick up.

Graduation Ceremonies

Instead of graduation ceremonies centers can recognize the children and families with an end of year celebration and/or picnic at the end of the program year in June or July.

Policies and Procedures/Implementation Plans

OWBC Head Start staff are provided with an Implementation Plan manual each year. 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 center.

Complaint Procedures and Concerns

If 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 a written response within five working days.
3. If not resolved, present a 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 a complaint in writing to the Executive Director at the above address.
6. The Executive Director has five working days to respond in writing.
7. If not resolved, present a complaint to the Policy Council, they have five days to respond in writing.
8. If not resolved, present a complaint to the 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.

Volunteer Opportunities and In-kind Needs

- Early/Head Start staff train, support and supervise all parent and community 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.
- All volunteers must follow OWBC standard Code of Conduct and Discipline Guidelines.
- 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.

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, facilitate an art project, assist in the office, help on the playground, or share a

song or hobby or cultural activity in the classroom. Please remember to follow the school's procedure for volunteers.

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 Learning Genie.

Parent trainings: We provide a variety of trainings that support **YOU** as the parent and your child's development. Classes include Parent Café's, Information on Positive Guidance, Health and Wellness, Nutrition, Fatherhood activities, etc.

Parent Committee Meetings: We provide families with an opportunity to have input about the needs and interests of all families and a chance to get to know each other. This is your opportunity to get involved in your child's education, learn new skills or parenting practices, and voice your opinions regarding our programs.

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: We encourage father involvement and ask dads to participate in all parent activities such as 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

- An opportunity for parents to make policy decisions about the overall operation of the program.
- It is made up of parents of enrolled children and representatives from the community.
- Elected representatives serve a one-year term from September to August.
- No members may serve more than five terms.
- Employees 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.
- Transportation is provided to the meetings if needed.
- Policy Council Representatives and Alternates will be trained in 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 Donations

Donations that count toward our “in-kind” match must be items that could have been paid by the Head Start grant and are “necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives”.

Food Donations

Food for celebrations such as birthdays do not meet program objectives and cannot be paid for by the Head Start grant and are not allowed. Examples of food items that are not allowed to be donated are: cupcakes, chips, sodas, candies, cookies.

Foods that can be used for nutritional activities or to supplement the snack and meet CACFP requirements may be donated by parents. Food donations for this purpose are to be given directly to the Center Director and the parent may fill out an In-Kind form.

All food donated to the center must be in original sealed packaging and used for classroom consumption. **Food Items that can be donated are:**

- Infant Formula
- WIC Approved Cereals
- Gerber Puffs
- Jarred baby Fruits & Vegetables
- Baby Cereal
- Goldfish
- Veggie Straws
- Chex Mix
- Nutrigrain Bars
- Cheese Its
- Canned Fruit
- Saltine crackers

Parent Fundraising

Parents Center Committees can raise funds for their Head Start Center, following policy guidelines. The complete Fundraising Policy is in the OWBC Policy and Procedure Manual. Parent Center Committee funds will be managed by OWBC Finance division.

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 Parent 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. Any questions should be directed to Head Start Program Director.

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 OWBC finance department or placed in an OWBC lockbox at the center daily.
3. Money is not allowed to be taken to anyone's home.
4. All parents who handle money at any event must pass a background check ordered by Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Parents or staff may not deposit Parent Center Committee fund money into a personal bank account. All money must be given to the OWBC representative.
8. All fundraisers must be approved in advance by the OWBC Head Start Program Director after completion of the "Request for Approval of Opportunities for Williamson and Burnet Counties Fundraiser" form.
9. Parent Committees may **not** hold raffles of any kind.
10. When requesting any center funds from OWBC, all check requests will be processed within 2 or more weeks, depending on the deadline given by the requestor. When submitting the check requests, the date the check is needed must be included.
11. 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.
12. A financial summary and cash balance will be provided to each Center Director and shared with the Parent Committee monthly. The Parent Committee will review the summary and let the finance department know immediately if anything is incorrect.

Child Care Licensing Reports and Minimum Standards

A copy of the most recent Day Care Licensing inspection is posted in every center office. The number for your local licensing representative is also listed. If the local representative cannot be reached, the hotline number is 512-834-3426. Texas Day Care Licensing information can be found online at hhs.texas.gov.

In addition, parents are encouraged to review the Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers which is located in the Director's Office and can be found online at

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov> Minimum standards for Child Care Centers

Child Abuse and Neglect- Preventing and Reporting Policy

Texas law requires that all adults, teachers, social workers, health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement and other professionals report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. Confidential calls can be made to 1-800-252-5400 or information

reported at <https://www.txabusehotline.org>. If you suspect a child has been abused or mistreated, you are required to make a report.

Crisis and Emergency Action Plan

Emergency Closings

In the event of an emergency or severe weather, all centers will follow the closing instructions of their local school district. When severe 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.

Emergency Drills

OWBC Head Start practices drills for severe weather (tornado, flash flood) according to Minimum Standards for Child Care Centers 746.5205.

Release of Children during an Emergency

In the event of a crisis such as 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. Emergency evacuation plans are listed in the Center Directors office and each classroom.

Medical Emergencies

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

Contacting the Center during an Emergency

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

- Following a crisis, 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 is reviewed with parents at Orientation.

Family 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 can always reach you or a designated adult, in case of an emergency. 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.

Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of children

Required annual training for employees

All staff participate in training annually on Texas DFPS Child Care Minimum Standards and prevention and responding to abuse and neglect of children. The training includes identification and warning signs of child abuse and neglect and the role of the mandated reporter.

Information provided to Parents

Parents are given information about child abuse awareness and reporting requirements during Orientation and in written information provided to parents in the parent calendar and parent handbook. In addition, training is offered during the school year to Policy Council and in center-based parent meetings to engage and inform parents regarding both their rights and their responsibilities. OWBC partners with Williamson County Advocacy Center and Hill Country Children's Advocacy Center, Texas AgriLife, Hope Alliance and other collaborative partners to provide information and training opportunities for both staff and parents

Daily Health Checks

Daily health checks are a way for staff to be informed about your child's health including recent illness or injury in the child and the family. Health checks may serve to reduce the spread of illness in the classroom by identifying symptoms that may be signs of illness and having the child be excluded, and enable the caregivers/teachers to plan for necessary care while the child is in care at the facility.

Parents are to fill out the Daily Health Check on Learning Genie prior to dropping off your child at school. Your child's teacher will review the Daily Health Check when they arrive to make sure they are well and healthy to attend. As part of the morning health check, parents of infants and toddlers in diapers or potty training will change their child's diaper upon arrival at the center. If assistance is needed, your child's teacher is available to help with the process.

Vaccine-preventable diseases for employees

OWBC employees are encouraged to follow the CDC's recommended immunizations for adults. Information on vaccine preventable diseases is provided to staff and parents through monthly newsletters and other educational opportunities to encourage participation in recommended vaccines. Beginning January 2022, all Head Start staff are required to be vaccinated for Covid-19. Infant teachers are encouraged to be current on their DTAP vaccine, to prevent the risk of transmission of whooping cough to infants.

Open Door Policy

Parents are informed at orientation and in the welcome letter from Program Director at front of Parent Calendar and Family Handbook. Our centers have an "Open Door" Policy which means that we welcome parents to visit our centers at any time during our hours of operation to observe their child, the childcare centers, activities, and the premises and equipment without having to secure prior approval.

Drug Free, Smoke Free, Gang Free and Firearm Free

In accordance with the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a childcare center is a gang free zone where criminal offenses related to organized activity are subject to a harsher penalty. Early/Head Start centers operate a healthy environment that is free from alcohol, illicit drugs, firearms and secondhand 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.

In addition, cursing or threatening behavior will not be tolerated by staff or parents.

Comprehensive Services

Education

Opportunities Head Start (0-5 years) implements the Frog Street Curriculum which consists of individualized, well-planned units that promote language, literacy, math, science, creative arts, social emotional development, and physical health. The weekly lesson plans promote good health and nutritional habits, personal safety habits and self-help skills. Additional curricula support such as Frog Street, OWL, SHINE and Energy Balance are used 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 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.

Developmental Outcomes

Your child's progress will be assessed throughout the school year using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP). Teachers engage with your child and record observations and results. Results from these assessments are shared with you throughout the year. Outcomes are also 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 center visits 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 in all areas of development and allows time for parents to share success and concerns. 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.**

Emotional Wellness

OWBC Head Start provides emotional wellness services for children and families and employs a Licensed Professional Counselor who regularly visits each classroom. The counselor 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 offer support by:

- Coordinating a meeting with the Head Start Counselor
- Assisting with access to services from community providers. OWBC has various community partners that we collaborate with to provide extended services or referrals.

If you have concerns about your child's emotional wellness talk with your center director, family advocate or your child's teacher and they can assist you to access emotional wellness 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, teachers or other staff may need to hold and soothe a child to keep them and others safe and help the child calm down.

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.

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.

Special Needs 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.]

Health, Safety, Nutrition

Health is the foundation of school readiness. To help children thrive, Head Start staff ensure that children are up to date on immunizations and the Texas Health Steps Medical checkup schedule, learn healthy habits, and can access the care they need. Head Start programs also promote the physical and social and emotional well-being of families and staff.

The Health Services Advisory Committee meets twice per year to discuss health needs of children and families and policies on health, safety and nutrition to make sure the program is providing quality services. Parents are invited and encouraged to be part of the HSAC committee. Talk to your Family Advocate if you are interested in serving the program in this manner.

Good nutrition is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Eating healthy foods helps pregnant women and children get the nutrients their bodies need to stay healthy, active, and strong. The Health Coordinator and program staff can explore resources to support healthy eating habits and find nutrition assistance information to share with families.

Family Services

OWBC Head Start is committed to an equal partnership with parents and completes a Partnership Agreement outlining the commitment of the program and the commitment of the parents. The comprehensive services model emphasizes individual support for each family by completing a Roadmap needs assessment while focusing on family's strengths and needs and encouraging and supporting family members to establish goals for themselves as well as goals for their child.

Parents will be provided with multiple opportunities throughout the year to learn about many topics including research-based parenting tools, discipline techniques, and typical child behavior and development. Parents will also be invited to participate in activities that will give them the opportunity

to engage with their child, other parents, and members of the community as they learn and grow along with their child. Parent participation in any program activity is voluntary, including consent for data sharing, and is not required as a condition of the child's enrollment. OWBC does not charge families a fee to participate in Head Start, including special events such as field trips, and does not in any way condition an eligible child's enrollment or participation in the program upon the payment of a fee.

Family advocates – Each Head Start site has a Family Advocate whose primary responsibility is to support the family unit. The Family Advocate will meet with you regularly to help you identify family goals and create steps to meet these goals, find resources and community support, and promote positive guidance and family engagement through learning at home.

Parent meetings – Parents are their child's first educator and advocate and play an important role in planning activities and guiding our program. Parents are encouraged to attend and participate in meetings and engagement activities held monthly at the center. Serving on the Policy Council is another way you can get involved.

Parenting Resources - are shared with families through interactions with teachers and Family Advocates. Specific information can be found at <https://www.owbc-tx.org/head-start/head-start-parenting-resources/>

Dual Language

OWBC Head Start recognizes that bilingualism and biliteracy are a strength. OWBC Head Start provides a teacher, when possible, for dual language learners that speaks the child's home language to continue development of the home language while providing experiences that expose the child to English. When staff do not speak the home language of all children in the learning environment, Opportunities Head Start makes every effort to locate an individual that speaks the child's home language. Families are also involved in providing culturally and linguistically appropriate materials in their home language to provide continued development.

Each center must adopt the same approach the local ISD is using regarding Dual Language Learners. The centers will implement a language program according to each school district and align the Head Start language of instruction with the ISD.

Parent Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Child Records

- Parents have the right to inspect child records
- If parents make a request, OWBC will make the records available for review within 45 days of the receipt of the request.
- OWBC will ensure that any records made available for review will only include information regarding the parents' child.
- OWBC will not destroy a child record with an outstanding request for review
- Parents have the right to ask OWBC to amend any information in the record the parent believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy
- OWBC will consider all requests, and if the request is denied to amend the record, will provide a written decision to the parent, and inform the parent their right to a hearing.
- If the parent requests a hearing to challenge information in the child record, OWBC will schedule a hearing within 30 days, notify the parent in advance about the hearing, and ensure the person who conducts the hearing does not have a direct interest in its outcome.

- OWBC will ensure the hearing allows the parent a full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the concerns.
- If OWBC determines from evidence presented at the hearing that the information in the child records is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy, OWBC will either amend or remove the information and notify the parent in writing.
- If OWBC determines from evidence presented at the hearing that information in the child records is accurate, does not mislead, or otherwise does not violate the child's privacy, OWBC will inform the parent of the right to place a statement in the child records that either comments on the contested information or that states why the parent disagrees with the program's decision, or both.
- Right to copy of record. OWBC will provide a parent, free of charge, an initial copy of child records disclosed to third parties with parental consent, and, upon parent request, an initial copy of child records disclosed to third parties, unless the disclosure was for a court that ordered neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information furnished in response be disclosed.
- Right to inspect written agreements. A parent has the right to review any written agreements with third parties.

Disclosures With and Without Parental Consent

Disclosures with parental consent

- Parents will be asked to provide written consent before any confidential information is disclosed with referral resources regarding their child. This consent will explain why the information will be shared and the identity of the person or parties to whom the information will be shared. This written consent will be signed and dated.
- Completing a consent form is voluntary and may be revoked at any time.
- The consent is not retroactive, and if revoked does not apply to an action that occurred before the consent was revoked.
- Disclosure without parental consent but with parental notice and opportunity to refuse. OWBC may disclose information from a child records without parental consent if the program notifies the parent about the disclosure, provides the parent, upon the parent's request, a copy of the PII from child records to be disclosed in advance, and gives the parent an opportunity to challenge and refuse disclosure of the information in the records, before the program forwards the records to officials at a program, school, or school district in which the child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled so long as the disclosure is related to the child's enrollment or transfer.

Disclosure without parental consent

- Officials within OWBC or acting for the OWBC such as contractors and subcontractors, or from a federal or state entity in connection with an audit or evaluation of the program, or for enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements of the program as determined necessary to continue to provide Head Start services. OWBC maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of the child records.
- 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 such as a serious food allergy, if the program determines that disclosing the PII from child records is necessary to protect the health or safety of children or other persons.

- To Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided the program makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent about all such subpoenas and court orders in advance of the compliance therewith, unless:
- A court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed.
- The disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General (or designee not lower than an Assistant Attorney General) concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331.
- A parent is a party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect (as defined in section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101)) or dependency matters, and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding, additional notice to the parent by the program is not required; or,
- A program initiates legal action against a parent or a parent initiates legal action against a program, then a program may disclose to the court, also without a court order or subpoena, the child records relevant for the program to act as plaintiff or defendant.
- 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 under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, if the results will be reported in an aggregate form that does not identify any individual: provided, that any data collected must be protected in a manner that will not permit the personal identification of students and their parents by other than the authorized representatives of the Secretary of Agriculture and any PII must be destroyed when the data are no longer needed for program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements.
- A caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement, when such agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection, under state or tribal law, if the agency agrees in writing to protect PII, to use information from the child's case plan for specific purposes intended of addressing the child's needs, and to destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and,
- Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.



Head Start Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

The parent handbook and the following information was reviewed at the Parent Orientation meeting that I attended. I have received a Parent Calendar and other information included in the list below. I have also been notified by Opportunities for Williamson & Burnet Counties Staff that I can review a copy of the Parent Handbook/Operational Procedures online at www.owbc-tx.org. In addition, I have been informed that I can receive a printed copy by request.

- Class Schedule/Daily Routines
- Center Rules
- Teacher Home Visits/Parent Conferences
- Attendance Policies
- Education Services provided
- Health and Nutrition Services provided
- Emotional Wellness Services provided
- Disability Services provided
- Family Services provided
- Participation in Policy Council/Parent Committee
- Volunteer and fundraising Rules
- Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting
- Positive Guidance Procedures
- Complaint and Grievance Procedure
- Crisis and Emergency Preparedness
- Safe Sleep Policy
- WIC qualification information
- Kids Safe Around Cars Brochure
- Car Seat Recommendations for children
- Benefits of Flu Vaccine/Recommended Immunizations Birth age 6
- Parent Rights and Responsibilities

To request a printed copy of the manual, please check here.

Center

Parent Signature

Child's Name

Date