



Early Learning Programs

PARENT HANDBOOK

Early Head Start
Home Base

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Child Focus is a non-profit organization and an Equal Opportunity Provider.

SECTION (2) PROGRAM OPTIONS

Early Head Start Home Based Program

The Early Head Start Home Based option is a child development program serving children birth to age three and pregnant moms. This program is delivered in the child's primary learning environment, their home. By recognizing the parent as the child's first teacher; the home visitor supports the child and their family through weekly, 90-minute home visits, providing activities promoting development in all areas. The home visitor and the parent work as a team to identify the child's strengths and needs. The home visitor will share their knowledge of child development and provide training to parents as they begin to set individual and family goals.

The Growing Great Kids™ & Growing Great Families™ (GGK/GGF™) curricula support the development of the child through the growth of the parent-child relationship. Relationship building is critical for effective home visiting. This curriculum is designed to be used as a guide to support the understanding of how scientific research and theory correlates to the best practice recommendations found within the GKI curricula and professional development offerings.

Home Based Learning Parties and Family/Community Events

These are held twice a month to provide an opportunity for children to play with other children. The home visitor will seek input from parents while planning these events. We would love to see you at these events! These events provide opportunities to:

- Talk with parents from your community about what is on your mind
- Have a safe space for your child to play with other children their age
- Partner with your home visitor and give feedback on the program
- Have fun!

They are designed to support child development by strengthening the parent-child relationship. Early Head Start home visitors provide two opportunities for play groups and/or Family/Community events each month.

- Play Groups: Recognize and build upon strengths in both children and parents and provide insight into your child's development to help support their emerging skills and confidence.
- Family/Community Events: provide families an opportunity to attend local events and places in their community while supporting children's social and emotional development.

All home-based socialization activities provided by Child Focus require parents to abide by the following regulations:

- Parents maintain constant supervision of their child/children.
- Smoking and drinking alcohol or soda is prohibited.
- Eating foods other than what is provided is prohibited.

SECTION (3) PARENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent and family participation and involvement are essential to the success of the Early Head Start program. We believe that parents and family members are their child's first teachers and are valuable contributors to our program. For this reason, we have very high expectations for families.

Parent Rights

My rights as a parent or guardian in the program include:

1. To be recognized as my child's primary educator.
2. To be treated with respect by the Early Head Start program.
3. To receive information and guidance from the Early Head Start program about my child's progress and development, including regular progress reports from my child's home visitor.
4. To participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for my child's learning and development.
5. To be supported as an advocate for my child. In the event that my child has a diagnosed disability or has been referred for a concern; I will be involved by the HMG in creating an Individualized Education Plan, and will be kept informed on my child's progress in meeting his/her goals.
6. To take part in decisions regarding my child's center and the Early Head Start program. My ideas and suggestions will be valued, and I will have opportunities to share them with staff and other parents. Opportunities include Parent Center Committee Meetings, Policy Council meetings.
7. To be informed about resources within the community related to education, health, social services, employment, etc.
8. To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.
9. To report any concerns about child abuse or neglect occurring to Children Protective Services.

Parent Responsibilities

My responsibilities as a parent/guardian in the Early Head Start program includes

1. Ensure my child attends the program consistently and on time to support his/her development.
2. Participate actively in the program and take advantage of the opportunities that the program offers.
3. Work with home visitors, administrators, and other families in a cooperative manner.
4. Be open to new ideas and experiences that can benefit me and my children.
5. Help make the Early Head Start program better by offering my opinions, constructive criticism, and suggestions.
6. Ask questions of my child's home visitor and the program coordinator or other members of the staff.
7. Reinforce what my child learns at the program by working with my child at home.
8. Ensure that my child is up-to-date on all required medical and dental needs.
9. Agree to access follow-up care when health concerns are supported or identified.
10. Participate in one home visit each week with my child's home visitor.
11. Participate in monthly group socialization activities with my child.

SECTION (4) PHILOSOPHY & GOALS

Philosophy

Our curriculum approach is based on the following philosophy:

1. Parents are their children's first and most important teacher.
2. The early years of a child's life are critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and life
3. Parents and educators work together as *partners* to close the achievement gap
4. All young children and families deserve the same opportunities to succeed regardless of demographic, geographic, or economic considerations
5. An understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions of diverse cultures is essential in serving families.

Goals

We believe every child can learn and succeed at the highest levels. As we develop relationships with parents we will provide them with the research-based knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to build a better future for our children, families, and community.

There are four specific goals we will focus on with your family as we partner together in preparing your child to succeed in school.

1. ***Use Positive Discipline.*** Praise your child when he or she is behaving well. Tell your child why you like what he is doing. "I like when you hold my hand; it keeps you safe."
2. ***Provide Language-rich Experiences:*** Talk to your child often. Talking to children as they experience the world teaches children vocabulary and shows them how to share thoughts and ideas.
3. ***Establish Family Routines.*** Consistent family routines strengthen relationships and help children learn to regulate their behavior. Eat meals together so you can talk and visit. Keeping to a night time schedule is good for you, and good for your child!
4. ***Read with your child:*** Cultivate a love of reading and literacy. Read to your child every day! Limit your child's "screen" time to help develop imagination and engage in self-directed play.

SECTION (5) GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Enrollment Process

Our program follows Federal Head Start enrollment guidelines. To enroll in our program, you must:

- Be eligible (foster children, receiving TANF or SSI, homeless, or have income below the Federal Income Guidelines)
- Complete all health and enrollment forms in the application packet
- Provide an up-to-date shot record for the child
- Provide proof of eligibility/income (pay stubs, 1040 tax statement, W2 forms, unemployment forms, public assistance forms, etc.) for the past 12 months or previous year.
- There are no tuition/fees for enrolling and attending the Early Head Start program.

Attendance Policy

Good attendance assures that your child will receive the greatest benefit from our program. We want your child to experience all the learning activities planned on a daily basis. Mildly ill children are able to participate in home visit. See "Ill Child" about symptoms that prevent your home visits. Families are expected to complete home visits at least 85% of the time each month.

Within the first 60 days of enrollment in the program, home visitors will identify children that missed 10% of home visits attendance and reach out to the families and complete the Home Base Attendance Success Plan to help the family identify those barriers that are affecting their regular participation in the program to have a successful school year.

If a child will miss a home visit, parent is to **call their home visitor immediately** and explain the reason for absence. If we do not hear from you, the absence will be unexcused and staff will call to determine the reason. All missed home visits must be made up. After two (2) consecutive missed visits, and if there have not been any make up visits in that month, the home visitor will conduct a home visit with an Attendance Agreement for you to sign. The home visitor will work with you to establish an attendance goal to improve attendance and continue services. If attendance agreements are not met, your family may be withdrawn and placed back on the Reconsider List. If the situation changes and consistent attendance can be expected, parent may call home visitor for next available opening.

It is unfair to children on a waiting list for us to attempt to provide services to children with irregular attendance. We ask for your cooperation to help your child maintain good attendance and receive a head start as they prepare for kindergarten.

If EHS is not the most appropriate placement for your child, we will work with you to facilitate the transition to a more appropriate placement. If a parent wishes to disenroll their child, the parent must notify the home visitor of the child's last day of service.

Non-Custodial Parent

Non-custodial parents not listed on the ODJFS enrollment form or the escort form must provide written documentation from the court indicating that they have permission to access child's records or have access to child.

If there are court documents in the child's center file that deny/limit the non-custodial parent/guardian's right to visitation we **CAN NOT** release the child. The staff will call the custodial parent and report the circumstances.

If the parent insists or is threatening, staff will call 911 immediately.

Statement of Confidentiality

All files and information recorded in Early Head Start regarding children and families in the program are kept strictly confidential. Staff members are the only people who have access to these files, including family advocates, home visitors, classroom teachers, and other staff and consultants as needed (e.g. in the case of a specific health concern). Access to files is on a "Need to Know Basis"; only staff members that are involved with your child/family will have access to the records.

Release of Confidential Information

Our program will not release information from a child's record or file without the consent of a parent/guardian. If the program receives a request for information on your child and/or our program would like to obtain information from an outside entity we will request that the parent/guardian sign a consent form that includes what kind of information we would like

to release/receive and to/from whom. Parents/guardians have the right not to sign this release consent form.

Consents, Authorizations & Releases

Thank you for allowing Child Focus, Early Learning Programs to provide educational services to your child. Our quality programming works to assure children reach their full potential and are ready for success. We value the critical role parents' play in the lives of their children. We look forward to a promising partnership with you.

Through participation in our program, your child will receive educational screenings and assessments. The results of these will be used to design the best approach in maximizing your child's learning opportunities. Educational staff will discuss assessment results with you. You will be provided strategies to continue learning opportunities at home. Periodic updates will let you know how your child is doing throughout the program year.

Social-emotional well-being also plays a critical role in a child's ability to be successful. Our program is fortunate to have the expertise of early childhood mental health intervention specialists in assuring classrooms are nurturing and responsive to the social-emotional needs of all children. These specialists conduct classroom observations, providing ongoing support to staff. When children demonstrate difficulties in the classroom, these specialists work with staff and parents to outline an intervention plan designed to promote social emotional development and eliminate barriers that may interfere with learning.

Optimal health is vital to a child's ability to reach their full potential. As such, we are required to assure children are up-to-date on a schedule of age-appropriate well child care including dental care. Documentation from your child's physician and dentist allows us to track your child's health status. When health screenings are not completed by your child's physician, our program will complete screenings needed to bring your child up-to-date. These screenings may include vision, hearing, blood pressure, hemoglobin and lead screenings (requires simple finger stick procedure). You will receive written results of all screenings. Health staff will contact you to discuss any abnormal results.

Child Focus works with local public schools and others to help ensure your child's successful transition to Kindergarten or other placement. Child Focus will exchange information with (release to and receive from) public schools, other placement or consulting physicians, when indicated. Such information may include but is not limited to health records, registration information, educational assessments, standardized test scores, testing/screening results, Individual Education Plan (IEP), and/or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). This permission remains valid until children complete Grade 3. If you choose to revoke permission in the future, contact Child Focus, you child's school and any other professional or agency to which permission is no longer granted.

Grievance Procedure

Child Focus is required to comply with all state and federal regulations. If for any reason complaints arise, parents or members of the community should speak with center staff and/or call the Program Coordinator. They will be happy to help. If the situation is not resolved, please call the office at 528-7224 and ask to speak to the Assistant Director of Head Start. We ask that all formal complaints be put in writing (on form provided or by email) and sent to Assistant Director. If the results are not satisfactory to you, you may contact the Early Learning Director. If after exhausting all channels the problem still remains unresolved, the issue may be brought before Policy Council by the appropriate representative. Policy Council will attempt to satisfy the grievance for all parties concerned.

Babysitting/Party Policy

Staff is prohibited from babysitting, attending social functions and social networking via technology of families enrolled in the program. Please do not ask staff to baby sit, attend a social event or request to social network with them. We request that you respect our professional boundaries.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Our staff is responsible for the health and welfare of all children participating in the program, and as such are **mandatory reporters** of any suspected child abuse or neglect. If necessary Head Start staff will provide the following information to Child Protective Services (CPS) office on the child:

- Child's name, birth date, home address
- Parent's full name and phone number
- Time of incident and where it took place
- Any other relevant detail

*** If an allegation of child abuse and/or neglect is substantiated against any Early Head Start staff member, his/her employment will immediately be terminated.**

Parent Communication

The decision to notify parents that a report was made to CPS will be determined on a case by case basis. If, after an investigation, a determination is made that corrective action is necessary to protect the child, Early Head Start will carry out the recommendation from CPS for corrective action.

In addition, staff shall advise parents of any unusual incident that occurred during a home visit and that might indicate possible abuse and/or neglect involving the child, such as unusual sexual activity; violent or destructive behavior; withdrawal or passivity; or significant changes in the child's personality, behavior or habits. Such notification shall be made on the same day on which the incident occurred, and documentation of the incident and of parent notification kept on file.

Positive Discipline and Guidance Policy for Children

The Early Head Start program uses an approach to discipline and guidance that emphasizes respect for each child; developmentally appropriate expectations of children's behavior; and the use of positive discipline and guidance strategies.

Our staff members strive to create a relaxed, positive environment that enables children to explore and experiment while remaining safe and feeling well-supported. Through positive guidance strategies and modeling social skills, staff helps children learn pro-social behaviors, build confidence and self-esteem, and develop greater respect for others' rights and feelings, as well as a sense that they are themselves respected.

Discipline concerns are handled by staff in a way that encourages children to solve problems and develop a sense of inner self-control. Children are given authentic choices and the opportunity to be an active part of decision-making in their environment, thus fostering a sense of personal responsibility. Staff helps children to understand the reasons for rules and limits and to feel good about the choices they make.

Our staff will use a variety of strategies for positive discipline and guidance, including the following:

- Plan ahead in order to anticipate problems.

- Limit expectations to what is realistic for the developmental level of each child (and make these expectations clear to children). E.g. understand that young children are not ready to share yet; model and encourage sharing, but do not insist on it.
- Create a "yes" environment: rather than telling children what they cannot do, give them choices of the things they can do.
- Talk about children's positive behavior: "Thank you for giving the truck to Daniel when you were finished with it."
- Set a few simple, clear rules, focused around health and well being, safety, respect for property, and respect for others.
- State rules positively rather than negatively: "Please walk" instead of "Don't run."
- Offer reasons for rules: "I know you really want to run, but it is not safe to run inside. I don't want you to slip and fall. Please use your walking feet when you are inside."
- Model behaviors that we wish children to use, e.g. always being courteous and attentive.
- Give children clear, simple directions and positive reminders.
- Pay close attention to children in order to prevent and/or intervene in challenging behaviors. (Especially important with children who are likely to escalate, hit or bite.)
- Redirect children from unacceptable to acceptable behavior: "I am going to help you stop kicking. We'll find something else for you to do."
- Share our own feelings about certain behaviors: "I get worried when you climb on the bookshelf."
- Help children deal with frustration and anger through words or pretend play.
- Focus on the child's behavior, not on the child's value as a person.
- Help children understand the consequences of their actions, and use problem-solving skills to develop solutions.
- Encourage children's growing sense of independence and acknowledge when children show self control.
- Help children refrain from dwelling on mistakes, so they can learn to move on.
- Some of the above strategies adapted from the Creative Curriculum® (Teaching Strategies, Inc.).

Time away from an activity can allow a child the chance to cool off and regain control; however, this strategy is used only rarely, for very objectionable, out-of-control or repeated antisocial behavior.

Unacceptable Discipline Methods

The following methods are prohibited by staff at all times, under any circumstances:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, squeezing and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom
- Use of food as reward
- Abusive or profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment or emotional abuse, including shaming, humiliating, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child
- Punishment for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet
- Bribes, false threats or false choices
- Retaliating or doing to the child what s/he did to someone else
- Labeling a child as "bad" or otherwise implying that s/he is a problem, rather than the behavior

In the home, the Early Head Start Home Visitor must respect the parents' method of disciplining their children. However, one of our purposes is to help parents find more effective means of discipline. Child Focus/Early Childhood Division does not condone parents physically disciplining (spanking, etc.) or verbally abusing (calling names, etc.) children. This destroys the positive atmosphere that we attempt to encourage.

If a child exhibits a consistent challenging behavior, efforts will be made to understand why the behavior is happening. Staff and parent conferences are held to talk about ways to change behaviors, if necessary. It is important that staff and parents use a consistent approach to the problem both at the center and at home. If the child does not show improvement, we may refer the child and parents to our Early Childhood Mental Health Therapist and/or other qualified professionals for further evaluation.

All staff will:

- discuss topics such as: child management, guidance, discipline, techniques to modify behavior.
- distribute literature on discipline, child management, stress.
- inform parents of agency workshops on stress, discipline and behavior management techniques.
- make referrals to mental health services when needed.

All children will be supervised at all times. The requirements of ODJFS Rule 22 of the Administrative Code apply to all employees.

Transition Process

Transitions from one center or option to another may be difficult for children. Transition plans are developed for each child as needed. This allows time for the child to adjust to new staff or centers.

- Transition from infant/toddler to preschool options will begin when the child is 2½ years old. Their plan will include staff from both options and the child's parent/guardian. A written transition plan is signed by the parent and staff and placed in the child's file.
- Transition from home-based to center-based options begins within 30 days of the anticipated start in the center. A written transition plan will be developed by the Early Head Start Home Visitor and the child's parent, and will include the center-based teacher and a visit to the center prior to the child's start there.

Transportation

- A family can be transported in a van by a home visitor. Child Focus car seats must be used.
- We will strive to accommodate parent's transportation needs to required WIC & dental appointments. However, there are times parents must transport themselves to events.
- Home visitors cannot transport in emergency situations.
- Eating and smoking is prohibited in the company vans.

SECTION (6) HEALTH

Physical Exam Requirements

All enrolled children must meet Federal requirements of the Office of Head Start. You must:

- Obtain a physical examination by a licensed physician for your child **within 30 days of enrollment** or **provide a copy of a physical that has been completed within the past year**. Early Head Start requires physicals follow the well child check schedule.
- If the physical is not obtained within 30 days of enrollment, the child will not be permitted to attend the center. Once the physical is obtained, the child may resume attending. If the physical is not obtained, the child will be withdrawn and placed on the reconsider list.

Health problems treated early may prevent long term problems later in life. Let your child's doctor know the screenings listed here are **required by Early Head Start** and must be completed.

If health screenings are not done by the doctor, with your consent, we will complete missing screenings.

- Vision
- Blood Pressure
- Hearing
- Measurements – Height & Weight
- Lead & Iron Screening (we no longer perform this task but we do monitor these screenings)

Age appropriate screening tools are used. If you have any questions about how screenings are done, please call the Health Team at 513-528-7224. You will receive written results of screenings conducted. If there are any concerns noted during these screenings, you will be notified. We are available to help you locate providers for further testing as needed. Remember, if you do not want health screenings completed by our staff, you **must** have these screenings done by your child's physician and provide us with those written results.

Dental Exam Requirements

All enrolled children must meet Federal requirements of the Office of Head Start. You must:

- Obtain a **dental examination** by a licensed dentist within **30 days** of enrollment and **after first birthday**.
- If your child needs any follow-up treatment, you must be sure your child gets the needed treatment.
- Your home visitor can help you find a doctor or dentist in your area, access health coverage, make appointments, and provide transportation as needed.

If your child has a health condition or disability, we will make every effort to meet your child's needs. The Health Team and EHS staff will meet with you to discuss the condition. A Medical/Physical Care Plan will be developed to outline a plan of care for your child while attending the center.

SECTION (7) SAFETY

Child Focus is pleased to offer family events and socialization opportunities for families. These events are designed to expand children's experiences, for children and caregivers to spend time together and provide opportunities for families to socialize with peers. Family events are often held away from the controlled environment of our classrooms. Children become very excited with new experiences. They are laughing, playing, and having a great time. We don't want to take that away but we must ensure children are safe.

Parents are responsible for the safety of their child(ren). Please review the general guidelines outlined below. You must follow these guidelines during all family events and socializations. Following these rules will reduce the risk of injury and keep children safe.

- Supervise your child at all times. Your child should always be within your direct line of sight and in close proximity.
- Staff is not responsible for the supervision of your child. They are busy conducting the event and are not able to properly monitor each child's whereabouts and activities.
- Children are not permitted to run freely. Encourage your child to use walking feet when indoors.
- Children are not permitted to go to the restroom alone. A parent must accompany the child.
- Parents must assist children when serving themselves during meals. Be mindful of appropriate serving sizes. Foods served meet all safety guidelines. Hot foods are served hot. Parents are responsible to assure foods are properly cooled before children eat.

If child care is being provided during a parent meeting or event, please remember it is your responsibility to provide any items your child may need (diapers, wipes, change of clothes, etc.) Staff will notify you should issues arise with your child requiring your assistance.

SECTION (8) OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Engagement in Early Head Start

Child Focus Early Head Start strives to bring a relentless focus on positive child and family outcomes to close the achievement gap and build a better future for children, families and communities. As parents/guardians you will want your child to build upon the good start you have given them in your home. Parent involvement is the basis for your child's success.

Child Focus strongly encourages parent involvement in their child's education by asking all parents to partner with us through a **Family Involvement Contract** which includes:

- Ensure that you and your child are at home, dressed and ready to participate at the start of every scheduled visit because consistent attendance in the home based program is key to success
- Actively participate in the entire home visit to develop skills as child's primary educator.

- Attend Group Socialization activities with child to emphasize peer group interaction through age-appropriate activities.
- Utilize only positive discipline techniques during home visits to promote my child's healthy development.
- Follow the guidelines for a successful home visit.
 - Designate a clear working space for home visit activities
 - Engage with child and home visitor in the learning activity
 - Eliminate distractions from visit including: TV, radio and cell phone
 - Safely secure pets in another room or outside
 - Refrain from smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages during visit
 - Assist child with toileting and other personal hygiene matters during visit

We are excited about the opportunity to partner with you. Here's what Child Focus will do as part of the contract:

- Provide an excellent education program for all students in the centers, on home visits and during socializations.
- Work with you to set goals that will support your child's education.
- Help identify your strengths and skills and work with you to reach your own goals.
- Deliver or coordinate comprehensive services for your child and family, including education, family services, health, nutrition, mental health, and special needs; if applicable.
- Offer many ways for you to participate and volunteer at child Focus Head Start

Volunteer Opportunities

Parent Committee

Participate in the leadership of your child's center/home base by attending meetings and discussing issues.

Advisory Committee

Serve on a committee that focuses on specific issues affecting the program, such as health or social services.

Policy Council

Represent your child's center or home base as the elected representative by attending monthly meetings and voting on many of the important decisions affecting the entire Child Focus Head Start program.

Some functions of Policy Council include:

- Serve as the link between center/home base to Policy Council bringing updated information to the parent meetings so other parents will be informed of current changes, grants, and strategic plans for the future.
- Serve as a link between public and private organizations, neighborhood councils, the Board of Directors and the community it serves.
- Have the opportunity to initiate suggestions and ideas for program improvement and to receive a report on action taken by the administering agency with regard to its recommendations.
- Plan, coordinate and organize agency-wide activities for parents with the assistance of staff.
- Recruit volunteer services from parents, community residents and organizations, and mobilize community resources to meet identified needs.

Agendas and minutes of Policy Council and parent meetings are available through your home visitor. If you are interested in more information about Policy Council, please contact the Family & Community Partnerships Manager at 528-7224.

Family Engagement Home Visits

Home visitors will schedule a home visit at the beginning of the program year to complete a Family Success Roadmap. After the Family Success Roadmap has been completed, staff will schedule another home visit to develop a Family Partnership Agreement in which families may choose goals they would like to accomplish to prepare their child for success in kindergarten.

Home visitors are also available to assist families with:

- crisis intervention
- support and referral to appropriate community resources
- a linkage with state and federal benefits
- medical and dental resources
- housing resources
- parent education