

Head Start Parent Handbook

2011-2012

Revised October 27, 2011

Administrative Office
Westmoreland Community Action
Head Start Program
226 South Maple Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601
724-834-1260, Ext. 350 1-800-816-0022 Fax 724-834-4863

Center _____ Center Phone Number _____

Center Staff _____

Center Address _____

Center Start Time _____ Center End Time _____

Bus Pick-up Time _____ Bus Drop Off _____

School District to Follow for Delays _____

Center Emergency Evacuation Location _____

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!

We are excited that you have chosen the Head Start Program to be included in this special stage of your child's life. Children ages 3 to 5 are learning – and they learn best by being active. While preschool children are alike in many ways, no other child is exactly like your child, and no one knows your child better than you do.

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Therefore it is in your child's best interest that you become a partner with the Head Start staff to ensure that your child will develop the skills needed to successfully prepare them for the transition into kindergarten.

Preschool children ask a lot of questions and are very curious about their world. We could answer their questions, and sometimes we do. But we want them to find their own answers because we want children to see themselves as inventors, problem solvers, discoverers, and capable learners. We encourage children to think for themselves, observe, and explore the world around them to see if they can find answers on their own. The more active children are in their work, the more they learn and remember.

With your involvement in our program, it is our goal that your child will leave our Head Start program with a strong foundation for future learning. In the weeks and months ahead, we will share many experiences and trust that your time with us will be enjoyable and rewarding.

We encourage you read to carefully through the content of this *Parent Handbook* so you will understand the policies and procedures of our Head Start Program. If you have any questions do not hesitate to call your center teacher.

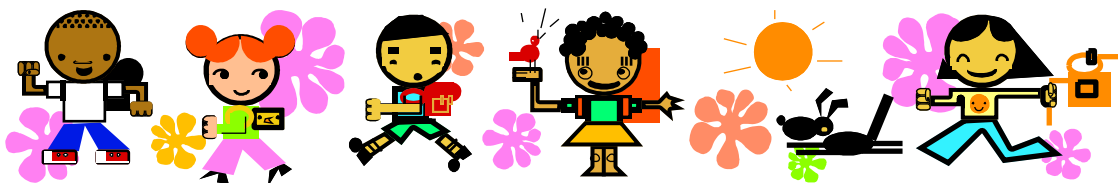


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Head Start Administrative Staff

Director Of Children Services	Karen Brinker
Program Operations Manager	Patti Prior
Child Development Specialist	Patti Jo Rak
Family & Community Partnership Coordinator	Lori Brooks
Family & Community Partnership Specialist	Cathy Anthony
Health Services Coordinator	Mary Calamera (Micki)
Health Specialist	Mila Schall
Nutrition Consultant	Lois Malmgren
Recruitment/Enrollment Specialist	Diane Colosimo
Special Needs & Mental Health Coordinator	Cathleen Slagle
Special Education & Mental Health Specialist	Celest Roof
Special Education & Mental Health Specialist	Barb Leeper
Training Coordinator	Patty Berkey
Supervisor Of Clerical Services	Karen Hayden
Administrative Assistant	Sharyn Kuhns
Administrative Assistant	Denise Baker
Administrative Assistant	Bobbi Jo Shifko
Early Head Start & Head Start Data Entry/Receptionist	Melissa Salvio
Program Support Specialist	Deb Hutcherson
Staff Development Specialists	Mary Susan Hayden
	Bill Vigliotti
	Cheryl Werner
	Angela Wtorkiewicz
	Melissa DePaul

Head Start Administration Office

Email: headstart@westmorelandca.org

Fax # 724-834-4863

Description of Program Services

Our Head Start program receives both state and federal funding. We try to place families in the option that best fits their needs.

The **State Center Based Option** provides four 6-hour days of classroom experiences for children and a minimum of two home visits a year by the teacher and a minimum of four home visits by Family Service Worker (based on family needs), and two Parent/Teacher Conferences.

The **Federal Center Based Option** provides four 4-hour days of classroom experiences for children and a minimum of two home visits a year by the teacher and a minimum of four home visits by classroom staff (based on family needs), and two Parent/Teacher Conferences.

For parents who need **full-day Child Care Services**, we also contract with Seton Hill Child Services.

W.C.A. HEAD START CENTER SITES

DERRY/LATROBE

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
331 Weldon Street
Latrobe, PA 15650
724-532-2388 or 724-537-0970
Email: dl1@westmorelandca.org

DONEGAL

OLD DONEGAL BORO SCHOOL BLDG
340 Church Street
Donegal, PA 15628
724-593-2255
Email: donegal@westmorelandca.org

GRANDVIEW

GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
188 Recreation Road
Derry, PA 15627
724-694-4236
Email: grandview@westmorelandca.org

GREENSBURG

119 Westmoreland Avenue
Greensburg, PA 15601
724-837-6980 or 724-837-6454
Email: gbg1@westmorelandca.org

JEANNETTE

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
N. Second Street & Hacker
Jeannette, PA 15644
724-523-8592 or 724-523-8299
Email: jnt1@westmorelandca.org

KISKI

273 Franklin Street
Vandergrift, PA 15690
724-567-5191 or 724-567-5271
Email: kiski@westmorelandca.org

LOYALHANNA

TREE OF LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
1005 Cedar Street
Latrobe, PA 15650
724-537-5130
Email: Loyalhanna@westmorelandca.org

MON VALLEY

412 Reed Avenue
Monessen, PA 15062
724-684-3229 or 724-684-4002
Email: mv1@westmorelandca.org

NEW FLORENCE

Ligonier Street (Corner of 8th & Ligonier Streets)
New Florence, PA 15944
724-235-9360
Email: newflorenc@westmorelandca.org

NEW KENSINGTON

WCA HEAD START
1049 Fifth Avenue
New Kensington, PA 15068
724-335-6300 or 724-337-1130
Email: nken1@westmorelandca.org

NORTHERN OUTREACH

HEBRON LUTHERN CHURCH OF
AVONMORE
601 Cambria Avenue
Avonmore, PA 15618
724-697-5097
Email: northoutreach@westmorelandca.org

NORWIN

HARTFORD HEIGHTS
15020 Ardara Road
North Huntingdon, PA 15642
412-824-2380
Email: norwin@westmorelandca.org

RUFFSDALE

RUFFSDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
842 Route 31
Ruffsdale, PA 15679
724-925-1154
Email: rf1@westmorelandca.org

EARLY HEAD START

226 S. Maple Avenue
Greensburg, PA 15601
724-834-1260, Ext 168 or 144
Program Coordinator – Karen Brinker
Email: kbrinker@westmorelandca.org
ehs@westmorelandca.org

CENTER CLOSINGS/DELAYS

You will receive a monthly center calendar to provide you with any advanced center closing information, but centers may also be closed for the following reasons:

- Inclement weather
- Building concerns (heating/water problems, renovations, etc.)
- Staffing issues

If the need arises to close the center at any time not scheduled in advance, center staff will notify parents.



CLOSINGS DUE TO WEATHER

There are times when centers must close or adjust their regular daily schedule due to “bad” weather. When this occurs, the following procedures go into effect.

- If the school district identified for your center is closed, your Head Start Center may also be closed. Please listen to the radio or television for school closings.
- If a parent sees that their area of road or street is unsafe or even closed for driving, please call your center to notify the bus not to come pick up your child. Also, please notify the center staff that you will not be sending your child if you are worried about their safety in traveling to the center.
- In the event of severe weather after the center has begun operation for the day, the Teacher will consult with the appropriate people for a decision about early dismissal. Parent and caregivers will be called to inform them of any changes in the normal center schedule.
- Some centers use the same transportation as the school district. If the school district has a delay (1-2 hours), we may not be able to have center due to busing conflicts. Check with your center staff.
- Your center staff will call you if they are unable to travel to your home due to weather or road conditions. Please call your center if you think it is too risky for them to come to you. Visits cancelled due to weather will be rescheduled within two weeks. There may be times when the weather and roads clear later in the same day, if so staff may then try to reschedule the visit for later that day.

All families will follow the exact policy provided to them by their center’s staff.

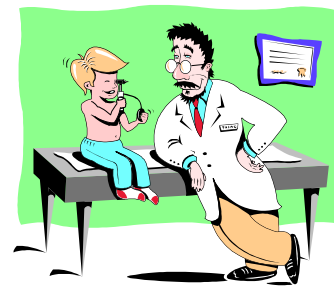
HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The Head Start program regulations require that certain health requirements are to be completed for every enrolled child. Head Start uses the term “Medical Home” which means that your child has an ongoing source of treatment from a doctor or nurse practitioner, a dentist and has medical insurance. The goal of prevention and early intervention is to ensure that all children are well and obtain any necessary treatment to maintain wellness.

The following are required to complete enrollment:

- **Well Child exam every year**
- **Dental exam with cleaning and fluoride treatment every 6 months including completion of any necessary dental treatment**
- **Up-to-date immunizations – proof of MMR before child attends center**
- **Screenings for vision, hearing, speech, blood pressure, and behavior along with height and weight measurements within 45 days of enrollment.**
- **Care plans for children with special health needs.**

Health staff is available at screenings and through phone consultation when needed.



Head Start promotes healthy development to ensure that health problems in your child are quickly identified and addressed. Early identification and treatment for these health problems reduces complications and improves the health outcome of your child.

Your child will be better equipped to learn when they are well. A sick child cannot concentrate.

Your child’s health and well-being is your primary long-term responsibility as a parent or legal guardian. It is critical for you to be involved in your child’s health care by making and keeping appointments for a yearly physical with any needed immunizations, two dental exams a year, and any follow-up recommended by your doctor or dentist.

Head Start staff members are always available to assist you in accomplishing this process.

Please be sure to keep your emergency information up to date.

Developmental Screenings

Most young children are eager to learn. They love stories, songs, playing, running and jumping. If they have a problem with their vision, hearing, speech, growth or development, it can interfere with their ability to learn and engage in classroom activities. For this reason we complete a number of important screenings on all enrolled children. The purpose is to identify any child having difficulty in any of these areas so that they can receive help as soon as possible; whether it means glasses to correct their vision, antibiotics for an ear infection, nutritional counseling, speech therapy or developmental services.

Screenings conducted within the first 45 days of the child's enrollment are:

Hearing – A BioLogic OAE (otoacoustic emissions) method is used. This test is an accurate quick way to assess the child's hearing by using a computerized program which either passes or refers the child based on how the eardrum and small hairs in the ear respond to the emitted frequency. ****We prepare children by calling this a listening game, and they have to be quiet and listen to the special phone.**

Vision – A Good Lite box screener or vision cards are used. The child matches the letters H, T, O and V or pictures of an umbrella, house and apple as seen on the screener/cards to pictures placed in front of the child. ****We prepare children by calling it the matching game. They do not need to know their letters, just have the ability to match shapes that are alike.**

Color Blindness – The Ishihar's Design Chart for Unlettered Persons is used. This tool has a book with various shapes and lines that the child traces with a paintbrush. ****We prepare the child by calling this the painting game.**

Speech – The Fluharty Speech and Language Screening is done with a fun game-like approach. This tool uses common household items that most children can identify and name demonstrating that they are developing age-appropriate speech sound and language skills. ****We call this the talking game.**

Cognitive – Using the Brigance Preschool Screen II for 3, 4, and 5 year olds, children are asked basic questions and play games which assess the child's thinking ability, small and large motor skills, and provide additional information on their speech and language ability.

Behavioral – Completed with the parents and lead teachers with the use of a Social and Emotional Questionnaire. Includes questions about the child's personality and temperament, how well they interact with others, and any special concerns the parent may have.

Growth Assessment – Uses the child's height and weight to calculate the child's Body Mass Index (BMI). This calculation is used to determine if your child is growing appropriately.

Blood Pressure – Is checked and if it is determined to be high (110/70), it will be rechecked to compare and a referral may then be made. ****We prepare children for this screen by explaining that we are going to give their arm a hug.**

Lead – The state of Pennsylvania requires all children have a blood lead screening.

Children who do not pass any of the above screenings are referred for further evaluation.

SICK CHILD POLICY

Children, upon arrival at center, will have a health check every morning for the purpose of observing for signs of illness. Children may be too sick to attend if:

1. They do not feel well enough to participate in program activities.
2. Staff cannot adequately care for the sick child without compromising the care of the other children.
3. Fever (101 degrees) accompanied by behavior changes and other signs or symptoms of illness.
4. Signs and symptoms of possible severe illness (persistent crying, extreme irritability, uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, extreme fatigue).
5. Diarrhea (increased frequency, watery, loose stools).
6. Vomiting.
7. Mouth sores with drooling.
8. Rash with fever or behavior change.

If a child becomes ill while at the center, parents will be notified by staff and the parent must then pick up the child within one hour.

In the following diagnosed contagious diseases, the child may return to center:

24 hours after treatment has been started for infectious conjunctivitis/pink eye with proof of treatment.

24 hours after treatment has been started for scabies with proof of treatment.

24 hours after treatment is started for impetigo with proof of treatment.

Six days after start of rash or all sores have crusted over for chicken pox.

After treatment for head lice has been started and child is free of nits.



1. A parent will be expected to pick up their child within one hour of being notified when they have active head lice or nits.
2. Child must be checked by staff before returning to center. Parent may bring child to center prior to start of center day to be checked.

For other illnesses, you may be asked to have a signed paper from the doctor stating that the child is free of contagious disease and able to participate in group activities, in order to return to the center.

IMPORTANCE OF BEDTIME ROUTINE AND SLEEP

Preschoolers require about 10 to 12 hours of sleep per day. As a parent, establishing a regular bedtime routine is important in order for your child to be well rested and full of energy. Each center's daily routine is filled with a variety of fun learning activities. We want your child to benefit and maximize their learning potential by being ready for the day.

Tips to keep in mind:

- Allow 30 minutes of winding-down time before bed.
- Alert your child bedtime is nearing an hour before, half hour and ten minutes before.
- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine before bedtime. Limit food/drinks before bed.
- Make the bedroom quiet, cozy, with NO TV.
- Play soft soothing music.
- Allow your child to choose pajamas and stuffed animal to take to bed.
- Tuck your child in for a feeling of security.

Westmoreland Community Action Head Start Philosophy of Education



Our philosophy of education is based on the belief that families have the primary role in their child's development. Head Start staff work together with the families to provide the educational experiences that will eventually guide each individual child through a smooth transition into Kindergarten.

We believe in educating the "whole child". Opportunities and learning activities will be planned and provided by staff and parents to help children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We believe that children can build the self-confidence and competence necessary to follow a path to lifelong learning. An educational environment can be in a classroom or promoted at home.

The W.C.A. Head Start Program is committed to the following beliefs:

- ❖ All children can learn.
- ❖ Children's play is the primary vehicle by which they learn.
- ❖ Developmentally appropriate practices are implemented for all children.
- ❖ Effective practices are responsive to individual needs.
- ❖ A multi-cultural approach is encouraged.
- ❖ Children learn through "hands on" experiences with materials. Children need to explore, touch and create within their learning environment.
- ❖ Sensory learning is promoted.
- ❖ Process is valued over product.
- ❖ Each child will be engaged in language as much as possible. Opportunities for language include: conversations with children and adults, open-ended questioning, songs, and strong literacy connections.
- ❖ Literacy activities link into each curriculum area.
- ❖ The individuality of each child is highly valued and taken into account when planning learning opportunities.
- ❖ Childhood is a special time and having fun is an important aspect of learning.

Our program is based on a respect for the children and their families. Educational opportunities are integrated into all components of our program such as health, nutrition, special needs, parental involvement, and social services.



Curriculum

Westmoreland Community Action Head Start uses **The Creative Curriculum.**

The Creative Curriculum supports the PA Early Learning Standards by:

- ❖ Involving children in purposeful play
- ❖ Making learning fun
- ❖ Stimulating the child's creativity and imagination
- ❖ Including and promoting family involvement
- ❖ Placing a high priority on social development
- ❖ Providing rich early literacy experiences
- ❖ Encouraging opportunities in music and movement
- ❖ Incorporating math and science activities into the day



Each family will be provided with “*The Parent’s Guide to Preschool*”. This booklet gives a good overview of the Creative Curriculum. If you have any questions about the curriculum, feel free to ask the Head Start Staff.

The Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards are designed as a framework for quality in pre-kindergarten programs and to provide guidance about what children should know or be able to do when they enter kindergarten. The Standards are inclusive of all children.

Typical Head Start Center Day

Routines vary from center to center

- ❖ Arrival / Welcome children / Health Check
- ❖ Large Group Time
- ❖ Wash Hands
- ❖ Mealtime
- ❖ Brush Teeth or Swish
- ❖ Planning Time
- ❖ Work Time / In Center Classroom Areas
- ❖ Clean-Up
- ❖ Review Time
- ❖ Small Group
- ❖ Wash Hands
- ❖ Mealtime
- ❖ Outdoor time will also be included in the daily schedule



Reading is Fundamental

Our Head Start Program participates in the RIF Program. Each enrolled child chooses three books throughout the year at RIF distributions. These distributions are held in a variety of ways such as parent/child events/literacy related activities, reading celebrations, and so on. Children who are absent from these events will choose their books on another center day. This program is funded through a federal grant. Parents are strongly encouraged to ask the Head Start staff about volunteer opportunities with the RIF Program.



Work Sampling System



We are pleased to have your child in our Head Start Program. The preschool years are filled with excitement, curiosity, and endless opportunities for learning.

Families and Head Start staff are interested in the future success of each child. Will they be ready for Kindergarten? Will they do well when they go to “Big School”? It’s also important for us to focus on what children need right now.

We are required to track each child’s progress in various areas. The Work Sampling System is used for this purpose. The Work Sampling developmental checklist is divided into areas such as Language, Literacy, Math, Science, and more.

These checklists are used in the center to help plan for each child’s individual needs. By keeping track of the skills they have learned, we can build on their strengths and help them with their needs. This process also assists in preparing for Kindergarten.

It is very important to remember that each child will learn and develop at their own rate. If a child is not yet ready for a certain skill... be assured that it is not a problem. These checklists are designed for children from 3 to 5 years of age. Each child develops at their own pace.

The Work Sampling system includes three important parts:

- Developmental Checklists
- Observational Notes
- Portfolios / A collection of the child’s work

All of these will be shared with parents/guardians.

We are looking forward to working with each family. With your help and input, each child will continue on their path of successful learning.

CLOTHING

- Because of the varied activities, your child will be more comfortable in washable clothing. Finger paint from the art area and spaghetti from the lunch table have a way of winding up on children's clothing!
- Shoes should have rubber or non-skid soles. **Tennis shoes are preferred, no flip-flops or shoes without backs.**
- Please be sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather. We provide outdoor activities on a regular basis. We are required to take children outdoors if it is 25° or above.
- Please put your child's name on clothing such as jackets, boots, hats, etc...
- Six hour Center Option – Blankets and/or pillows need to be laundered weekly.
- Please do not send personal belonging in plastic bags. Use paper bags or shoebox size plastic containers.



DISCIPLINE

Most parents have many questions about disciplining their child. Staff can talk about discipline with parents when requested. Head Start does not permit physical punishment within the Center, nor the use of labels, name calling, shame, or any other form of punishment that is harmful to a child's self concept. Please allow behavior problems within the Center to be handled by the staff. Parents volunteering in the Center should refer these problems to the Teacher.

- Adults help children learn effective ways to meet their needs while at the same time learning to appreciate and respect the needs of others.
- To discipline is to teach. Through discipline, children learn safety, responsibility, family rules, personal values, and self-control.
- We can facilitate the development of self-discipline in children in a number of ways:
 1. Rules are developed and reviewed with the children. The children have input in making these rules.
 2. A consistent routine is provided in the Center for the children. This consistency helps them to learn what is expected.
 3. The children are provided with a variety of choices and activities within the daily routine.
 4. The staff supports children in solving their own problems.
 5. The staff redirects when needed.

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS AND INTERNS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO DISCIPLINE CHILDREN.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Young children often have difficulty expressing their feelings and will often act out these feelings through their behavior. Understanding the difference between what is typical behavior and what we should be concerned about can be a challenge for parents and staff in the classroom. Head Start has specially trained staff that can help in centers or in the home. If you have any questions or concerns about any area of your child's behavior, please discuss it with your child's Teacher. There may be times when a child may need to be temporarily removed from the center or have a shorter number of hours in the center because of behavior issues. This would occur if children were beginning to show signs of serious safety risks to themselves or other children and staff.

Our goal is always to try to work together with parents to develop behavior plans that best meet the child's needs.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Head Start is designed to meet the needs of all children including those who may have difficulty in some area of development. These areas may include: speech, hearing, learning, motor skills or any area of development parents or staff may have concerns about.

- The goal is to provide support and assistance to the child, family and staff in determining if the child has a special need, as well as meeting the needs of children who have a diagnosed condition.
- If you have any concerns or questions regarding your child's development, talk to your child's Teacher. Together you can decide if you would like to talk to the Special Educator who provides services to your center. Together we can address any concerns you have.
- Helping children with special needs requires the cooperation of the parents and community agencies. Teamwork can provide the support, encouragement and resources necessary to give you and your child the help he/she may need.

POLICY FOR GIVING MEDICATION AT CENTER

- The medicine must be in the original bottle from the Pharmacy.
- Authorization for medication administration must be completed and signed by both the parent and the doctor.
- Only medications, ordered by a doctor, will be given by the staff at Head Start.
- When possible, plan your child's medicine schedule so that he/she will not need to be given medication at the center.
- Medications must be given directly to the staff. If your child rides a bus, you must give the medication directly to the aide. **Do not put in the child's backpack.**
- If your child receives medication at the center, staff will share the child's medication log (a record of the dates and times given) with you every month to help you monitor the child's progress/condition while on medication.

SAFETY IN THE CENTER

- Children will not be released to anyone other than the parents without written parental permission and a picture ID being shown.
- Head Start will abide by any dated court orders (custody papers, PFA's, etc.). A copy of any such paper must be kept on file at the center.
- Evacuation procedures in event of an emergency are posted in each center along with a log of the fire drills.
- Alcohol, drugs, weapons, etc. are not permitted at Head Start Centers or at any Head Start Event. Violations of this regulation will result in police being notified.

IMPAIRMENT

The Head Start Program has developed a policy on the release of children to parents or other designated adults who appear to the center staff to be in an impaired condition. An impaired condition specifically relates to alcohol, mind-altering chemicals or other medical conditions that render a person to be unable to operate a motor vehicle or supervise a child and thereby endanger the safety of a child by the impaired person. If, in the judgment of the responsible personnel at the center or during bus transportation, a parent or a designated person appears to be unable to safely transport or supervise a child, the center personnel will ask the parent or designated person to arrange for alternative transportation or supervision of the child. If the person is unwilling to provide such alternate transportation or supervision, the matter will be referred to the police or the local Children's Bureau. The program recognizes that this is a stringent policy, but we could be morally and legally responsible for releasing a child to an impaired person. Hopefully, the necessity to implement the policy will not arise, but should it, the parent/designated person must be apprised of the policy.



The Head Start staff will not release children to parents or other designated adults who appear to the center staff to be in an impaired condition.



HOME VISITS

Home visiting is an IMPORTANT part of our program. Parents are expected to abide by the “Family Partnership Agreement,” which will be explained in detail by your Teacher at your first home visit. Head Start believes that parents are the primary influence in their child’s education and development.

- Home visits MUST occur with parents or legal guardians.
- Adjusting visit times may occur for working family’s schedules.
- Evening and Saturday visits are available.
- Families need to restrain pets/animals in the home during visits.
- We ask that family members refrain from smoking during home visits.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Our goal is to assist you and your family as you work toward your goals. The program produces a Resource Directory that may help you find agencies within the county as well as your community. The Family & Community Partnership Coordinator/Specialist updates staff on new programs as well as changes in existing programs. Your center staff will do their best to help you find available resources by:

- Assisting you in applying for available services.
- Going with you and your child to an appointment.
- Identifying parent education opportunities.
- Encouraging and supporting you and your family as you discuss strengths, needs and set goals.

Westmoreland Community Action Head Start Resource Directory

W.C.A.’s Head Start program has developed and maintained a Community Resource Directory. It can be found online at www.westmorelandca.org. On the home page click on Links & Downloads, scroll down and then click on **Resource Directory**.

FAMILY DAYS

A center may plan a family day during the year. This day is to be planned for the enrolled child’s entire immediate family. Such activities could be picnics, field trips, or events held at the center. If meals are served on Family Days they will all be paid from Special Event monies. The Cook Manager will need help from parents and staff to prepare the meal for that day. Under no circumstances are parents to bring covered dishes, snacks, drinks, etc., to accommodate Head Start events.

CHILD ABUSE LAW -Child Protective Service Law – P.S. 2201-2224

The instructions to mandated reporters say: Any person who, in the course of their employment, occupation or practice of their profession, comes in contact with children, shall report or cause a report to be made to Childline (800-932-0313) when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their medical, professional or other training and experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse.

Mandated Reporting

Head Start staff are mandated reporters and must report suspected abuse. Our role is not to monitor families. The most difficult role any of us will ever have is being a parent. Head Start supports parents by providing encouragement, identifying strengths, and helping parents find support within their community. No one has all the answers, but together we can work at being the best parents we can be.

Child Abuse & Neglect

Head Start staff is required by law (mandated) to report any cases of suspected child abuse or neglect. Sometimes a volunteer may see or hear something during the class day that could be suspected child abuse or neglect. If that happens, the volunteer should tell the Head Start Teacher IMMEDIATELY. Do not question child, as Teachers are trained in appropriate ways to respond.

The volunteer should take the staff person aside and talk in a quiet voice so no one else can hear. The Head Start Teacher will need to know exactly what the volunteer saw or heard in order to make the required report. Volunteers are not required to make a formal report of suspected abuse to state authorities.

Volunteers must not discuss reports of suspected child abuse or neglect with ANYONE other than the Head Start staff person making the report. This is considered a confidential matter.

NUTRITION

Our centers will serve a morning meal, a lunch, and/or an afternoon snack depending on their schedule. Children may need a light breakfast (like cereal) before leaving home.

If your child is allergic to a particular food or has an eating or swallowing problem, please let us know. Nutrition Related Health Problem form must be completed and signed by both the parent and the doctor in order to make substitutions.

Eating well helps children:

- Be healthy
- Grow and avoid weight problems
- Both learn and feel better

The way to develop good eating habits is to practice eating well. You can find good information on eating well at www.myplate.gov. We serve lots of vegetables, fruits, whole grain foods, lean meats, and low fat milk in the center. The fats we use are generally the healthier oils. At the center, children practice eating well by helping to prepare, serve, pass, cut up, and taste nutritious foods. Meal times are relaxed and enjoyable, with the staff and children eating together, family style.

Please share menu ideas with us and feel free to volunteer in the kitchen. We also ask that you not send any food or treats in to the center. Head Start receives money for food for the children, and we have regulations to follow. Since staff, parents, and guests are to model good eating habits and follow federal regulations, they are not to have food products such as soda pop, chips, candies, etc., at Head Start functions.

Family Style Meals

We serve meals “Family style” at the Head Start Centers. Family style mealtimes promote the physical, social, and emotional development of children. Mealtimes provide opportunities for decision-making, sharing, communicating, developing responsibility for feeding themselves, and developing eye-hand muscle coordination.

- Children, staff, parents, volunteers, and substitutes eat together, sharing the same menu, and socializing in a relaxed atmosphere; conversation is not limited to the meal being served.
- Children are encouraged to try new foods but are not forced to taste or eat any foods.
- An approved menu that meets requirements will be followed at all times.
- A copy of monthly menus will be sent home and posted in the classroom.
- At least thirty minutes will be allotted for children to eat each meal.
- Clean up materials are on the child’s level, so that children can be involved in clean up.
- The children set their own tableware (dishes, utensils, cups).
- They pass serving dishes to one another, serve themselves, and clean up after themselves.
- Food is not used as a reward or punishment.

During mealtimes, the adult at the table acts as a role-model for the children sitting at the table, passing food, and taking a taste of each food. Adults should also encourage conversation among children sitting at the table. This is a great opportunity to help children develop language skills.

Volunteers must follow all Head Start meal procedures when eating with the children. No food or drink should be brought to the center (except water).

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are valued partners in the education and development of their children. A primary goal of Head Start is to support and enhance the parent role through a variety of experiences and activities. We want to provide environments where families feel valued and safe with many opportunities to volunteer and be involved in their child's education.

Opportunities to be involved and volunteer include but are not limited to:

- Classroom volunteers
- Home visit participation and planning
- Center parent committees
- Policy Council - Child Care reimbursed
- Local area community activities and projects
- Workshops and informal get-togethers
- Annual Head Start Self Assessment
- Head Start Program Committees *
 - Budget – purpose: To develop and monitor Head Start and Early Head Start budgets; monitor spending and in kind; work with planning committee to meet established goals.
 - Health Advisory – purpose: Examine health services and education programs to identify any areas of concern; develop plans for meeting areas of concern to meet Performance Standards.
 - Parent Newsletter – purpose: Choose articles that are sent in from parents and center staff that will be of interest to all families in the program. Can be typed by parents or clerical staff.
 - Personnel/Interview Team
 - Planning
 - Nutrition/Menu Planning
 - And other program committees as planned

*Parents are reimbursed for babysitting and mileage at the conclusion of the meetings.

Each parent/caregiver in the home completes a “Parent Interest Survey” at the beginning of each year, used for planning volunteer opportunities.

Introduction for Volunteers

Volunteer skills, time, and energy contribute directly to the success of the Head Start Program. We rely upon our volunteers and appreciate the help. Our Head Start Performance Guidelines require that we have a volunteer in each classroom every day. This is a great way for parents to help out. This section of the handbook and the Volunteer Handbook are reference guides for family, community members, and student interns who volunteer with Head Start. Please take time to read to read through them before volunteering. In addition, staff is always happy to answer your questions.

Tips for Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering, the staff welcomes you. We hope these ideas will help:

- In the classroom/center, it is all right to just watch and observe until you feel comfortable participating. The more time you spend in the classroom/center, the more comfortable and confident you will become.
- The best volunteer is one who arrives on time as scheduled and is ready to assist staff.
- Always feel free to ask questions about what a staff member is doing and why.
- If you have ideas for activities to do with children, talk with the Teacher and she/he will find a way to include your idea.
- Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience. Have fun!
- Physically get down to the child's level. Eye contact is very important.
- Say "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" to the children. You are a model for good manners and respect. If you show it to children, they show it to you and to each other.
- Avoid words that hurt, scold, or humiliate. Avoid holding children by the wrist. Do not label children such as, "you are bad," etc. Remember...positive reinforcement!
- Avoid questions that can only be answered with a "yes" or a "no" to encourage children to talk as much as possible. For example, "Tell me about your picture" is better than, "Is that a truck?"
- Wear appropriate, comfortable, washable clothes and dress for the weather. Outside activities, sitting on the floor, and art activities are a part of a Head Start class day.
- Be alert for situations that may not be safe for the children. Be prepared to step into a dangerous situation quickly. Tell the Teacher if there is time.
- For your personal safety, do not lift children.

Please let the Teacher know how you feel about the day. Call the Teacher when you get home to discuss your feelings and questions or speak privately to her/him when you leave the class. Please remember, it is important not to discuss things in front of the children. Thank you for giving your time to Head Start.

Classroom Rules

Every classroom/center has the same ground rules. Some classrooms/centers may have additional rules based on the classroom/center and children's needs.

1. We talk softly inside.
2. We walk inside.
3. We use gentle hands.
4. We put things away after we are finished playing.
5. All children need to be supervised when leaving the classroom/center.

Classroom/center staff repeats these rules frequently throughout the day.

It is important that ground rules be consistently reinforced to set limits. The ground rules show respect for oneself, others and the environment. All of the rules are stated positively. For example, we say, “please walk” instead of “do not run”.

Adults “model” the ground rules for children by following them at all times. If we speak softly in the classroom/center, then the children will learn to do this also.

What Volunteers Need to Know

- How many children are in attendance.
- Procedures for reporting unsafe conditions of the indoor and outdoor play areas.
- The day’s normal schedule of activities, plus any special events.
- Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and/or neglect.
- Emergency procedures for all fire drills, evacuations, etc.
- Process for releasing children, who is authorized to pick up each child (per updated emergency cards), which children may be released early. Volunteers should never release children to persons who come to the center, but should allow a staff member to do this.
- Who to ask for center and program information.
- Whenever possible, two staff must be with the children for everyone’s safety. Volunteers are not counted as staff in meeting this requirement.
- Cell phones, tobacco products and medications are not permitted in any classroom. Ask staff members where these items may be safely stored.

Ways Volunteers Can Help in the Classroom

- Help children follow the ground rules
- Smile and give individual recognition to children
- Talk with children about their work
- Read to a child
- Join in at the sand table or water table
- Play a board game or join with a small group
- Invite a child to play with you
- Work individually with children who need special help
- Talk with children at mealtimes
- Play with children in the dramatic play or block area
- Help prepare materials
- Help set up food for meals
- Hang up children’s art work
- Help set up gross motor activities
- Help children clean up and move from activity to activity
- Help with washing hands
- Help children with their coats
- Observe the classroom and move into an area that has no adult
- Encourage children to do things themselves and be ready to help them, if needed
- Give positive reinforcement such as, “You’re doing a good job.”
- Encourage each child to try again when frustrated

- Listen attentively to each child
- Respect each child's needs and feelings

How Can I Volunteer?

- Sanitize toys and equipment
- Paint and repair equipment
- Wash dramatic area clothing
- Make: Puppets
 - Costumes
 - Booklets
 - Art Activities
 - Materials for art activities
 - Toys or games
 - Meeting or Parent/Child Day notices
 - Teaching Aids
- Drawing, storytelling, singing
- Collect things for visits or center projects
- Join committees, groups, attend meetings
- Recruit others
- Arrange bulletin boards
- Assist in classroom changes, labeling, arrangement
- Help organize special events for children or parents
- Contact speakers
- Cut things out for staff
- Do "Activities left in home," after visits, throughout the week
- Play games to teach child how to follow direction, such as Simon Says...
- Write or type Parent Meeting minutes

Brothers, Sisters, Other Children

Due to space restrictions we are unable to allow you to bring children who are not enrolled in Head Start with you when you volunteer; this includes school age children. It is the policy of W.C.A. Head Start that school age children may not participate in classroom/center activities, field trips, or any other Head Start sponsored activities held during regular school hours. It is much more difficult to be a volunteer if you are responsible for other children. Many of our classrooms do not have enough room for more children than are enrolled in the Program. Anyone who baby-sits for you so that you can volunteer for Head Start should sign a Volunteer Time Sheet to earn volunteer credit for the Program. Please ask the Teacher for a volunteer Time Sheet to take to your babysitter and return to the Program after it has been signed.

Scheduling/Time Sheets/Valuables/Etc. Policies

Tuberculosis Screening – All regular volunteers who have volunteered 50 hours or more in the classroom/center will be required to receive a Tuberculosis screening and to document the date and results.

Scheduling Your Volunteer Day – Although volunteers are welcome at any time, scheduling volunteer time in advance with the Teacher is preferred. It helps both the volunteer and the staff plan ahead. If you cannot come on your scheduled day, please call the Teacher who is expecting you as early as possible so a replacement can be found.

Volunteer Time Sheets – W.C.A. Head Start is a non-profit program and offers free services to children and families. In return, families are asked to volunteer their time to the Program. Volunteer hours are given a dollar value and are a required part of our Head Start budget each year. Parents who cannot volunteer can arrange for other reliable adults to volunteer in their place.

Money/Valuable Items – Money and valuable items should not be brought to the classroom. If you cannot avoid bringing in your pocketbook or purse, please ask the staff to lock it away for you.

First Aid Kit – We follow “Universal Precautions” when anyone is hurt. Every classroom has first aid and infectious disease control kits. Please ask the staff to show you the location of the kits and explain when and how to use them on your first classroom visit. Please tell the staff when someone is hurt.

Hand Washing – Every adult must follow the hand washing procedures posted in the classroom. Thorough hand washing is required by state law and Head Start regulations and is for the safety of everyone.

Classroom Fire Drill – Monthly fire drills are held in each classroom/center. It is important that volunteers and interns participate in the practice and follow the procedures.

Donations and Contributions

Westmoreland Community Action receives money from the federal and state governments to operate the Head Start program. The federal government requires us to get community support to assist in operating the program. This local assistance consists of grants from the state, cash donations from the county, donations of items the program needs, and the time parents spend assisting the program by working with their child, volunteering at the center, attending parent meeting and many other ways. For every \$4 we get from the federal government, we need to have \$1 in local contributions.

We don't ask parents to pay for any of our services, but we need your help to meet our local contribution requirement. Parents help by:

- Volunteering at the center in the classroom or kitchen
- Attending parent meetings
- Going on a field trip
- Making labels and other teaching aides for the classroom
- Spending time with their child on activities provided by the teacher to assist the child in their individual development.
- Attending Policy Council meetings, Health Advisory meetings or any program committee meetings

Please make sure to complete the proper paperwork so the program gets credit for all of the work you do.

PARENT MEETINGS

We encourage you to help plan and attend your center parent meetings. The monthly meeting is a good way for you to get to know other families and all staff members, share your ideas about what is happening at your center, and share your skills and talents.

Every parent is important and is encouraged to participate in whatever way they can.

- Parent committees are made up of all the parents or legal guardians of enrolled children.
- Parent meetings are held once a month at the center. Meetings should be scheduled at the first meeting for the remainder of the year.
- Minutes are recorded at each meeting by an elected Parent Secretary or another parent in attendance.
- The Parent Meeting Minutes are typed and given to each family, then approved at the next meeting. This enables all families to have center news.
- Meetings are led by an elected Parent Chairperson.
- Plan meetings and activities, keeping in mind what you want to “learn and experience as a group.”
- Speakers, interactive workshops and community projects are planned, keeping in mind the assessed needs of all families. Speakers are based on tally completed by Teacher from Parent Training and Interest Survey.
- Other adult family members may attend, but only parents or legal guardians can vote.
- Babysitting for children above 2 years of age may be provided by staff. Children under 2 must remain with parents during the meeting. Please contact staff for availability.
- No reimbursement is provided for center functions.

We welcome you to attend parent meetings because we value your input and your attendance is extremely important.

ELECTION OF PARENT COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Each center will elect the following offices yearly, Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary from all the enrolled parents. Self-nomination or volunteering for a position is our standard form of nominating.

CHAIRPERSON RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Plan Parent Meeting and agenda with a center staff member one week prior to scheduled meeting.
- Lead discussion at meetings by following the agenda.
- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Make sure when votes are taken, a majority decides.
- In case of a tie vote, the chairperson votes.

VICE-CHAIRPERSON RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Performs chairperson's duties in that person's absence.

SECRETARY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Fills in notes of the meeting on a "minutes form" during meeting.
- Go over the notes with the staff after the meeting.

POLICY COUNCIL

One of Head Start's governing bodies is Policy Council. Policy Council is composed of parents, community representatives, and W.C.A. Board of Directors members, who meet monthly in Greensburg. In the spring of each year, centers elect Policy Council Representatives and in the fall, Policy Council Alternates, based on the number of enrolled children in the center. Together these parents represent all the other parents from their center at the monthly Policy Council meetings. Policy Council members are responsible for providing parent input and approval of personnel hiring, annual program review, regular Head Start budget overview, and ongoing parent participation in Head Start Program Advisory Committees. Policy Council Minutes are reviewed at the Center Parent Meeting and sent home monthly. The performance standards prohibit staff members and immediate relatives from serving on Policy Council.

Policy Council members:

- Should volunteer in the center a minimum of one day a month.
- Meet with Center Staff one or two days before and after the monthly Policy Council meeting to share information.
- Review Policy Council information during center parent meetings.
- Distribute via a parent bulletin board at the center or through the home visiting staff, any flyers and information received at the Policy Council meeting.
- Sign a confidentiality statement. This is necessary due to the nature of members' work, which, at times, is confidential.
- Be committed to attend the monthly Policy Council meetings. Note: if a member misses two consecutive meetings without being excused a new Policy Council Representative or Alternate will be elected at the center to replace the member.

POLICY COUNCIL CHILDCARE AND MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

To encourage Policy Council members to participate fully in their responsibilities, Head Start will provide reimbursement for reasonable expenses incurred by the members.

- A child under 2 years of age may remain with the parent in the meeting and is very welcome.
- Babysitting reimbursement is \$3.50 per hour plus \$.50 more an hour for each additional child for some program committees according to Policy Council Standards of Operation. We do not reimburse childcare cost to persons living in your home or someone who normally cares for your child without pay.
- Mileage is also reimbursed, at the end of the meeting, at the rate of 42 cents a mile from your home to the meeting and back home.
- Please record your odometer readings.

“PARENT ACTIVITY MONEY” EVENT GUIDELINES

*Guidelines Revised by Policy Council Members, May 8, 2009

Parent Activity Money must be set-aside in each Head Start Program for the purpose of the parents/guardians of enrolled children conducting projects which they have planned. These activities should take place early into the program year.

The Parent Activity Money will be divided among sites according to number of children enrolled at each site, some sites having more than one classroom.

Each site will hold two “Parent Activity Money Events” per year at the center to be paid for by the Parent Activity Money. When choosing activities and food costs for each, keep in mind the amount your site has to spend for two events.

- The first event will be held by October 31st with paperwork due by September 28th. The activities, menu, date and time will be planned by the teacher following the center calendar and nutrition guidelines. A Special Events form must be completed. Event must include the entire center group as a whole and each event should have parent evaluation forms available for parent comments. Keep in event folder at center. Must have a parent(s) or legal guardian (not another family member) in attendance.
- The second event must be held by March 31st with paperwork due by February 28th.
Hint: Parents could form Committees for Meal Prep, Serving, Clean up, Games, etc. Activities should be fun for majority and something that gets parents talking with one another. Children may attend. No videos, please. Guidelines will be provided at the first parent meeting.
- Any food involved with the above events will be provided by Head Start. Under no circumstances are parents to bring food or drink items, i.e. covered dishes, bagged snacks, or bottled drinks.

These two events *will not* have a parent meeting,
will not have any voting taking place, and *will not* be a field trip.

FAMILY EDUCATION

Family education is a valued part of the Head Start program.

- Parents receive training and skill development in a variety of areas including nutrition, health, parenting, social services, and child development.
- Each parent completes a “Parent Training Assessment” form indicating what topics he/she would like to learn more about.
- Information is shared through home visits and by guest speakers at Parent Meetings.

RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

Our current and former parents are the best source of advertisement for our program. Parents can share with others what they and their children enjoyed most about their Head Start experience. We appreciate and value your involvement with our program. If you know of anyone who may be interested in Head Start, please have them call your center or our toll-free number 1-800-816-0022 or 724-834-1260 ext 350.

TRANSITIONS

Transition is an important part of the Head Start Program. Transition is simply about change. The changes you and your child experience coming into our program, the changes you will see taking place while you are involved in Head Start, and finally the changes involved as your child prepares to move from Head Start into your local school system.

- When you enter the program, your Teacher and the center staff will work with your family to help make your child’s experience in Head Start a positive one.
- As you progress through the year, you will be given numerous opportunities to become an active part of your child’s transition.
- Transitions occur when your child comes into Head Start and enters kindergarten.
- As your child prepares for the move to kindergarten, many new questions will arise. To make this as smooth a process as possible, we work with the various school districts within Westmoreland County to provide information and support to Head Start families.
- The overall goal of Head Start Transition is to ensure that you and your child experience a smooth transition into the next level of education. This ongoing process is constantly being reviewed and updated to provide you with the best possible services.

Children’s educational record and screening results will be transferred directly to the school district, another childcare provider or another Head Start program your child will be attending. The Head Start center will be getting a signed permission from each parent before doing so.

FUNDRAISING POLICY

Fundraising in Head Start is not necessary since funds are available to purchase items for the center or to plan special field trips or activities. **The general policy of the W.C.A. Head Start Program is that any type of fundraising or asking for donations by center staff and parents is prohibited.**

HEAD START CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the role of every person at Head Start to treat staff, families, and children with respect and dignity. All parents are given a “Code of Conduct” paper that will be explained to them and they will sign indicating they understand the implications if the “Code of Conduct” is violated.

Performance Standard: 1304.52(h)(1)(iv) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that all staff, consultants, and volunteers abide by the program’s Standard of Conduct. These must specify that: They will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. In addition, they will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs.

PARENT/GUARDIAN COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

When a parent or guardian has a complaint, the following procedure should be followed:

Please note that parent concerns or complaints should be addressed privately (not on field trips, parent meetings, special events). Written documentation of conversations may occur and/or parents may be asked to provide written documentation during process.

- Parents or guardians should communicate first with Teachers. It is suggested that discussion with Center Teachers be made during times when children are not in center. If parents/guardians would like a private conference with the Teacher, they should schedule an appointment.
- If a resolution is not reached, then the Parent or Guardian has the option to discuss their concern with the Staff Development Specialist, who may involve the Program Operations Manager.
- If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the Parent/Guardian also has the option to put the concern in writing to the Director of Children Services.
- Within 5 days of receiving the written complaint the Director of Children Services will gather information regarding the concern from all parties involved and schedule a meeting with the Parent/Guardian.
- The Director of Children Services will meet with the Parent to resolve any issues related to the complaint.

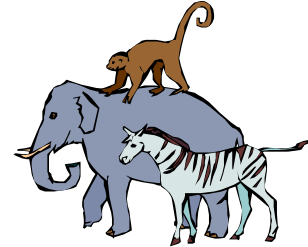
If the parties involved cannot come to a satisfactory agreement they have the option to follow the Community Complaint Procedure as outlined on page 30 of this parent handbook.

SPECIAL EVENTS POLICY

Together, the parents and staff plan and budget special events for their center. Activities can be in addition to, or in place of, a regular center day no more than once a month. The Tickets for Kids Program will be utilized whenever possible.

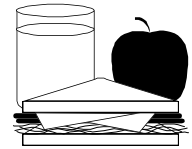
EXAMPLES OF SPECIAL EVENTS

- Libraries
- Stores
- Businesses
- Post Office
- Parks & Playgrounds that meet our safety requirements
- Picnics
- Celebrations of seasons



MEALS

- All Head Start nutritional guidelines will be followed.
- If Head Start is providing the meal, everyone (staff and families) is required to eat together following CACFP Guidelines.
- If families and staff are providing their own meals (packed lunches) for field trips, good nutritional choices are encouraged.
- Head Start will provide coolers for any/all meals.
- If meals are catered or purchased, the cost will come out of the center's special events budget. Cost will cover the enrolled child and one adult per family.



TRANSPORTATION

- Some transportation may be provided by program.

ADULT/CHILD RATIO

- An adult should accompany each child to special events.
- Children are not to be left unattended at any time.

EMERGENCIES

- A staff person will carry a first aid kit and emergency notification forms on all children attending.
- If a special event has been cancelled or changed, staff will notify parents as soon as possible.



CELEBRATIONS

- Because Head start is federally funded, we are not able to use program money to promote any one religion or ethnic holiday. This is part of why we do not celebrate holidays in the center. With the age of the children that we have in the program, many of the customs and traditions of the holidays are beyond their level of understanding. We believe that children should get their holiday traditions and customs from their families, as each family is different.
- We like to learn how our families celebrate the special times in their lives. Our intentions as a program are to expand on what the children have already experienced and to provide them with new experiences. We celebrate the four seasons and provide educational experiences around the seasonal changes, enriching and enhancing the growth of each child.
- **We do not accept any food items or gifts to be given for birthday, holidays, etc... Please do not send these items in or ask the bus driver or aide to deliver them.**
- We encourage our families to continue to celebrate the holidays in their individual homes according to their own culture, customs and traditions.



SMOKING/TOBACCO USE POLICY

As an agency, we focus on the well-being of our children and staff, and promote health awareness and prevention. The W.C.A. Smoking Policy states:

“In order that we may have as healthy an environment as possible for our employees, clients and children, smoking and/or tobacco use will not be permitted in the presence of clients. No smoking or tobacco use is allowed in any of our Head Start facilities or within 100 feet of the premises.”

Head Start further states:

- There will be no smoking by staff or volunteers when children are present. This includes both indoor and outdoor activities.
- Designated smoking area will be outside the building and out of sight of the children and at least 100 feet away from the main entrance.
- During outdoor functions, smoking will be out of sight of the children and at least 100 feet away from the activity area.
- There will be no tobacco use in personal or agency vehicles when transporting persons on Head Start authorized business.
- Field trips, walks and other off-site activities will be smoke-free to the fullest extent possible.
- If you smoke, we ask that you limit it during Head Start events. If you must have a cigarette, please ask staff privately where you may do so and ensure that someone will watch your child while you do.
- No tobacco is permitted in the classroom.

PROGRAM COMMUNICATIONS FOR PARENTS



PARENT NEWSLETTER

- The Parent Newsletter is published monthly from August to May.
- The Family & Community Partnership Coordinator/Specialist enlists the help of parent volunteers to help choose articles and type the newsletter.
- The newsletter includes important dates, parenting articles and tips, nutrition and other information interesting to our families.
- We encourage all families and centers to contribute to the newsletter.

If you have an article or letter you'd like to submit, give it to the Teacher who will forward it on to the Family & Community Partnership Coordinator.

PARENT MEETING MINUTES

- The Parent Secretary takes minutes of each meeting and staff sends them to the Family & Community Partnership Coordinator to be typed.
- Center Based families receive the minutes from the center through direct contact or children's backpacks.
- Center news and any decisions made by the parent committee are included in these minutes.
- Meeting minutes are also reviewed at the next month's meeting.

POLICY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

- Council Secretary takes minutes of each meeting and submits them to the Family & Community Partnership Coordinator to be typed.
- Minutes are sent to each Council member, Center, Staff Development Specialist and are posted at each center on the Parent Bulletin Board.
- Your Policy Council Representative reviews the minutes at the Center Parent Meeting.
- Policy Minutes are published monthly and sent to all families.

Center Calendar

A center calendar is sent home monthly. It includes:

- Center days
- Parent Meeting days
- Policy Council days
- Other special events

COMMUNITY COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

1. All community complaints will be presented in writing to the Policy Council Chairperson through the Family & Community Partnership Coordinator. The Coordinator will notify the Council Chairperson immediately upon receiving the complaint.
2. The Family & Community Partnership Coordinator (acting for the Chairperson) will schedule a meeting to take place within five working days. The Council Chairperson and Family & Community Partnership Coordinator will meet with the Director of Children Services, Head Start Program Operations Manager and/or Content Area Manager, and the WCA Chief Executive Officer to discuss the nature and detail of the complaint.
3. At the next Policy Council Meeting, the Chairperson, Director, Program Operations Manager, and/or Content Area Manager will present a verbal and written summary of the community complaint to the Council Members.
4. At this same meeting, the Policy Council Chairperson will assign a Resolution Committee to hear the community complaint and seek a mutually agreeable outcome. Members of this committee will be the Chairperson, a second parent council member, a Community Representative to council, the Director, the Program Operations Manager and/or the Content Area Manager.
5. Within three working days of the Council Meeting, the initiator of the community complaint will be notified by a Central Office Resolution Committee member of their opportunity to present their complaint to the Resolution Committee in a formal meeting.
6. Within ten working days, a formal Resolution Meeting will be held between the Resolution Committee and not more than five representatives of the community complaint. The results of this formal Resolution Meeting will be the resolution of the complaint or an agreement on a method of resolution.
7. Minutes will be taken at this meeting for Council documentation and the resolution or agreement will be put in writing.
8. The Director of Children Services will immediately inform the WCA Chief Executive Officer of the decision verbally.
9. If an agreement or method of resolution cannot be reached at this meeting, the complaint initiator can request to go before the WCA Board of Director's and the Chief Executive Officer for further action.
10. The Director of Children Services will notify the CEO for this further action.
11. If an agreement is reached at the first meeting, the Council Chairperson will inform the Council members and the WCA Board verbally and in writing at their next regularly scheduled meetings. If WCA Board action is needed on the issue, the Chairperson will continue to inform council members at their monthly meetings of any outcome, until the issue is settled.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

All information given to us by you when we collect applications, health records, and do home visits is considered to be confidential. We will not release this information to other agencies, persons, or school districts without your written permission. If you have any questions about our confidentiality policies, please feel free to contact your Teacher.

Westmoreland Community Action has decided to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. All families or clients who participate in any of W.C.A.'s programs are required to receive our Notice of Privacy Practices Booklet and sign a document acknowledging that they have received this information.

Volunteers are a part of the Head Start team. Like Head Start staff, our volunteers may not talk with anyone about other children, families, incidents, or information that is deemed confidential. A volunteer with a question or concern should address it to the Teacher in private, when in the center. Questions or concerns outside of the center should be directed to the appropriate staff.

Parents are reminded not to repeat any information overheard at the center. All Parent/Guardians sign a confidentiality form upon enrollment. **A VOLUNTEER OR INTERN WHO VIOLATES THE PROGRAM'S CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE VOLUNTEERING IN THE PROGRAM.**

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY POLICY

Our goal is to ensure the safety of the children. Every year we have a number of parents who are not home when their child returns from Head Start. Therefore, staff and parents have found it necessary to put together a bus safety policy.

It is very important to have a consistent adult physically put the child on and off the bus. This person must come to the bus to get the child. Adults meeting the bus are required to take the child's hand as they walk safely away from the bus. A child may be returned to the center if the adult does not come to the bus. Any time you are unable to put your child on or take your child off the bus, you must make prior arrangements with the Teacher and identify the person who will take your place. That person must then show a photo I.D. (such as a driver's license) before your child can be released to them. In addition, children cannot be dropped off at a different location. They must ride their assigned bus. With prior arrangements, children may be dropped off at childcare that is along the center bus route.

Please note that every center has an answering machine on 24 hours a day to handle calls when your child will be absent. **Please call at least one hour before your child's scheduled pick up time.**

We have also assigned bus aides to every bus to provide supervision for the children. The aides are not permitted to leave the bus; therefore, the driver may blow the horn and will wait no longer than two minutes. With other families waiting for the bus, we need to keep on schedule. We realize everyone gets busy with other things, but we urge you to watch for the bus. Aides are not permitted to leave the bus to knock on doors. If you miss the bus or you are not home when your child returns from the center, we are required to have the bus return your child to the center. We will make every effort to reach you or your emergency contact to come to the center to pick up your child within one hour. Your phone number and your emergency person's phone number must be kept up to date to avoid delay in reaching you. **If we are unable to reach you or someone approved by you to take your child at the end of one hour, we will have to contact the Children's Bureau.**

We realize that parents may get caught up in traffic or an appointment could cause you to be late getting home for your child. **You would need to make arrangements ahead of time with the person you have identified to get your child off the bus if you think that might happen. The first time a parent or approved adult is not home when the child arrives, there will be a verbal reminder. The second time would result in losing bus privileges for one week. The third time could result in losing bus privileges permanently.**

Additional safety measures include requiring the Head Start bus aide to walk the length of the bus to ensure no child is left on the bus. The bus aides will seat the children from front to back and sit behind all the children to better monitor and supervise the children on the bus. Also, there will be safety drills three times a year and staff will receive training on use of equipment.

We have provided training for the children on bus safety and hope you will also talk to your child about seat belts and safety vests and remind them not to unbuckle their belts when the van is moving. Bus aides ensure all children are securely buckled in and remain in their seats. All children under 50 pounds are required to wear safety vests as per federal regulations. Bus aides and other adults riding the bus are also required to wear seat belts. **Please do not send food, gum, cough drops, or drinks with your child on the bus.**

We encourage the children to enjoy the ride by talking and looking out the windows. We ask them to keep their voices at a normal level and keep their hands to themselves to avoid accidents and fighting. Also, finger plays and songs are incorporated into the ride. Staff may also intervene with behavioral concerns as needed.

SELF TRANSPORTATION

Adults must bring the child inside the building to a staff person. Children must arrive within 30 minutes past the starting time of the center, ex. center starts at 9am, child must be at center by 9:30. Should the child have a medical/dental appointment, parents must speak with the teacher to make special arrangements for arrival time. If the child arrives late it will be the parents responsibility to wash their child's hands, help with serving the child at meal times, etc. until the child is caught up to the daily routine. It is important to have a consistent adult transport the child to and from the center. If staff are unfamiliar with the adult picking up the child they will ask for identification. Please be sure and hold the child's hand for safety purposes when entering and leaving the building.

Parents are expected to pick up their children on time. We realize that at times, you may be running late due to some extenuating circumstance (late appointment, traffic jams, alarm that did not go off, etc.). If this should occur, you will need to make arrangements ahead of time for your emergency contact person and please call the center to let them know your arrangements.

Each time you are late, you will be expected to sign a form acknowledging that you were late. The child should be brought to the center the next day by the parent so we can discuss the matter with them. If the parent does not bring the child to the center the next day, your child will not be allowed to attend for that day. If you are late two times with no phone calls to the center you will be warned that if there is a third occasion the Children's Bureau will be contacted. The fourth time you are late for pick up your child will be withdrawn from the center.

Thank you for reviewing these guidelines and for your cooperation in helping us to keep your child safe.



The Head Start staff will not release children to parents or other designated adults who appear to the center staff to be in an impaired condition.



PA SEAT BELT & CAR SEAT INFO

When transported to and from the center:

- According to Pennsylvania law, all children **must be properly restrained in car seats.**
- Keys may not be left in vehicles and cars may not be left running.
- No children may be left alone in cars.

CHILD RESTRAINT LAW

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury to children in the United States. In Pennsylvania each year, approximately 7,000 children under five (5) years of age are involved in crashes. Children who weigh less than 20 pounds and are under one (1) year of age should ride in rear-facing child safety seats. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ride rear-facing for as long as possible in rear-facing seats designed to accommodate weights up to 35 pounds. **Never install a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat if an air bag is present.** In a crash, the air bag will hit the back of the child seat with tremendous force, which will be transmitted to the infant's head causing severe injury or death.

CHILD PASSENGER PROTECTION ACT 229 REQUIRES:

- Children under the age of four (4) must be buckled into a federally-approved child passenger restraint system (child safety seat), which must be secured to the vehicle by the seat belt system (or using the vehicle's LATCH system, available in newer vehicles), no matter where they ride in the vehicle (front or back seat).
- Children ages four (4) and older, but under the age of eight (8) must be buckled into a federally-approved child booster seat, which must be secured to the vehicle by the seat belt system, no matter where they ride in a vehicle (front or back seat). Booster seats must be used in conjunction with lap and shoulder belts.
- Children ages eight (8) and older, but under age 18 must be buckled in a seat belt, no matter where they ride in the vehicle (front or back seat).
- Drivers are responsible for securing children into an approved child passenger restraint system and ensuring children under age 18 are buckled up.

VIOLATORS MAY BE FINED AND WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL COURT COSTS

If you are transporting children under age eight (8) who, by law, must ride in federally-approved child safety seats or booster seats, read your vehicle owner's manual and the directions that came with the seat so you know how to tightly attach the seat to your vehicle's seat and how to secure the children snugly in their child seats.

