

# Douglas-Cherokee Head Start & Early Head Start



**Parent Handbook**

**2024-2025**



---

## My Child's School

Center : \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Hours: M – Thur. \_\_\_\_\_

Friday \_\_\_\_\_



Parent Committee Officers:

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Vice Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

*You are valued and needed, you have an important voice, and your engagement makes a difference for your child.*

# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Parent and Family Engagement	3
Volunteers Needed	4
Family Partnerships/Communication	5
Families as Learners	6
School Readiness	7
Education & Early Childhood Development/Dual Language Learners	8
Health Services/Disabilities Services	9
Mental Health Services/Nutrition Services	10
Transportation Services	11
Transition Services	12
Center Policies	13
Attendance	15
The Reporting of Child Abuse	16
Abusive Head Trauma & SIDS	17
Releasing a Child to an Adult "Under the Influence" or a Non-Custodial Adult Policy	18
Access to Campus Policy	18
Discipline Management Policy	19
Code of Conduct/Confidentiality Policy	20
No Smoking/Lice Policy	21
Procedure for Hearing/Resolving	
Parent and Community Complaints/Grievances	22
Fund Raising Policy	23
Holiday Celebration Policy	24
Parent Suggestion Form	26
Space for Notes	27

Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, genetic information, age, disability, or military service in its policies, or in the admission, participation, or employment in, its programs, services, or activities.



# Head Start

Early Head Start

Dear Head Start/Early Head Start Family,

Welcome to the Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start (DCHS/EHS) program. We are excited to have your child in our program. We are equally as excited to have your family in our program.

Our program serves eight counties in upper east Tennessee. Those counties are: Blount, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Monroe, Sevier and Union. There are 765 preschool children and 72 pregnant mothers, infants and toddlers in our program. That is 837 total slots. There are Head Start classrooms in all eight counties and Early Head Start classrooms in Hamblen County.

All basic services are provided at no cost to enrolled families. The program is funded with federal grants but requires parent and community support, usually in the form of donations that include space in buildings and volunteer services in support of children.

We hope the information in this book is helpful and useful to you and your family as you and your child begin a new experience with HS/EHS. No handbook can give you all the information you will need in the coming year but we hope this book gives you an idea about the program and how we can work together to make this a successful year. Remember, if you have any questions; do not hesitate to ask your Teacher or Family Advocate.



### Mission Statement

To provide resources, tools, and opportunities that help low-income families and individuals of all ages achieve personal, economic, and social stability.



### Mission Statement

To be a quality-focused organization in order to bring about a greater degree of social competency in children and self-sufficiency of families.

### Philosophy

To be respectful of all, empower children and their families, and to be a positive influence in the community we serve.

# Parent and Family Engagement

Parent and family engagement in Head Start/Early Head Start is about building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between parents and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. Each family's experience is uniquely determined by their own interests, needs and goals.

We believe the partnership with parents is essential to providing quality early childhood services. Evidence demonstrates that when the partnership is strong, children form better relationships, feel good about themselves, and do better in school. Both teachers and parents have the knowledge, expertise, and experience that are needed for the best education, care, and support to ensure that children are healthy, emotionally secure, and ready for school. To achieve this, we invite your family to actively engage in our program. Head Start and Early Start staff engage parents as advocates, lifelong educators, and first teachers of their children. Fathers, male family members and father figures serve key roles in the healthy development of their children and families, and have much to add to their Head Start communities.

## **Your child needs you to be involved.**

As a HS/EHS parent you are part of your child's classroom Parent Committee. Parent Committees consist of all the parents of enrolled children in each classroom. Your first Parent Committee Meeting will be at Parent Orientation which will be held sometime during the first month of attendance. Each Parent Committee will elect officers and a representative who will be a candidate for Policy Council membership. Parent Committee meetings give parents the opportunity:

- To assist in planning and making arrangements for activities for the children.
- To examine the curricula or instructional materials.
- To extend their knowledge and understanding of the educational and developmental needs of their children.
- To talk with other parents and staff about the program and ways they can help.
- To share information about program and ideas on ways to improve the program.
- Keep up with what's happening in the program.
- To work together with staff and with other community members on activities they have helped develop and in which they have expressed an interest.

## Families as Advocates and Leaders

**Policy Council** is a group that works in partnership with key management staff of the Head Start program with program design and operation, the planning of goals and objectives and self-assessment of the program. The group is made up of parents of children enrolled in the program and members from the local communities (who are familiar with resources and services for children and families) served by the Head Start agency. Minutes from the Policy Council meetings are posted on our website for parent review and discussion at Parent Committee meetings.

# Be a Volunteer

Every Head Start program must receive at least 20% of the total dollar amount that is awarded to the program in donations. Donations can be in several forms including time and goods. These donations are called "In-Kind."

## **Ways you can volunteer**

Volunteers can serve as little as 15 minutes or up to a full classroom day. Here are a few examples of ways you can volunteer.

- Working in the classroom with the teachers and children
- Helping the teacher prepare classroom materials
- Reading a book to the children in the classroom, donating books, assisting with reading activities
- Landscaping or beautifying centers
- Leading physical activities (ex. Sports)
- Sharing cultural and community experiences
- Participate in our self-assessment for program improvement

Creating a quality Head Start/Early Head Start Program requires Staff and Volunteers to work together, sharing their talents, knowledge and energy so that the children can receive the greatest benefit. Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start staff would love for you to offer your services in helping to prepare children for school and a lifetime of academic success. When you donate your time and talents, your contribution is assigned a dollar value. *You will not get paid, but this dollar amount helps this program meet the federal grant requirements for matching funds.*

## **Volunteer Qualifications?**

Volunteers should have a desire to work with children and staff to learn about child development and enhance parenting skills. You must be willing to be a team member and focus on the children's needs while in the classroom and have a positive attitude when working and assisting with the group and with individual children. Classroom volunteers must complete volunteer orientation available at [www.dceaheadstart.org](http://www.dceaheadstart.org).

## **Parents as Employees**

In addition to volunteering in your child's classroom, you can be a substitute! Substitutes are paid to work as needed in classrooms when there are staff vacancies, or when staff are out for the day. Substitutes can work a flexible schedule. Ask your classroom staff, family advocate or area coordinator how you can get started subbing! Historically, 1/3 of our employees have been parents or former parents.



# Family Partnerships

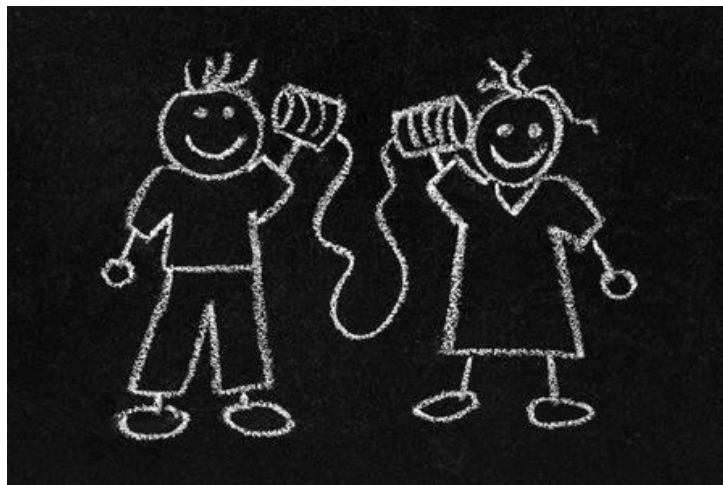
The Head Start/Early Head Start Program offers every family an opportunity to participate in a family assessment, discuss family's goals, and develop a family partnership agreement. The most important aspect of working with families is our ability to develop trusting relationships that allow each family to determine what they want to accomplish, how our staff can assist, and to what extent other community agencies will be involved.

Parents are encouraged to focus on their strengths and priorities when developing Family Partnership Agreements (FPA). The Family Advocate is available to assist and support parents' efforts in achieving their goals. This process is ongoing throughout the year.

We know that your family may have many needs, and that one organization cannot hope to meet all of them. Each year HS/EHS conducts a review of community resources in order to build a comprehensive network of services and supports for pregnant women and families with young children. The goal is to increase your access to community supports and help you make the most of the resources available.

## Communication

A child's healthy development is promoted through ongoing communication between families and staff. HS/EHS encourages open and continuing communication about home and classroom childrearing practices to help minimize potential conflicts and confusion for children. We have many ways to communicate with you: personal contact during morning greeting and afternoon departure, family mailboxes, parent-teacher conferences, portfolio assessments, personal notes, daily experience reports, classroom newsletters, parent information boards, phone calls and e-mails, home visits, and parent information meetings, just to name a few.



# Families as Learners

## **Families**

The Head Start/Early Head Start program works with the family as a whole and provides opportunities for parents to advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals. The Family Advocates will assist families with their education and training goals, and provide referrals to educational resources (GED, adult education, ESL, employment opportunities, parenting skills, job training, and job preparation skills).

## **Active Parenting**

Your child's first few years are so important! Learn how to make the most of them with Active Parenting: First Five Years. Active Parenting: First Five Years is a research-based and proven effective parenting curriculum. You will have the opportunity to participate in sessions that will show you how to nurture your child with a "just right" combination of freedom and nonviolent discipline. Positive parent-child relationships set the stage for children's success in school and in life.

### **REMEMBER:**

***You have brains in your head.***

***You have feet in your shoes.***

***You can steer yourself, any direction you choose.***

**~ Dr. Seuss ~**

## **Children**

Families are encouraged to observe and participate in child learning and development during home visits and in classrooms. **You are your child's first teacher**, and we know you want to help them succeed. Parents play a key role in their children's reading development at every stage. A strong start to reading directly impacts a child's long-term learning and life success. Reading aloud to children helps stimulate brain development. Did you know if a child reads for 20 minutes every day, they are exposed to about 1.8 million words of text every year? That is 137 new words per minute! If families read together for 20 minutes a day, 7 days a week, they get more than 121 hours of bonding time every year!

Make reading an important and pleasurable experience in your home. Reading not only stimulates development of your child's brain, but also fuels a close emotional relationship between you and your child. So, set aside a special time each day and READ, READ, READ! Reading books is one of the most important ways to help your child prepare for success in school. To promote reading, all our classrooms send home a book bag. *Please* read the book to your child or have another adult or sibling read to your child. Your active involvement in your child's learning will have long-term benefits, including higher self-esteem, feelings of greater accomplishment, and a life-long enjoyment of learning.



# School Readiness

Children are born ready to learn and school readiness begins at birth when babies are forming secure attachments and trusting relationships with their families. As children develop strong social emotional connections with their families and caregivers they feel safe and secure to explore and learn about the world around them. The early learning experiences that are supported by loving adults are critical to healthy brain development needed for learning and future school success. Secure attachments with adults and early learning experiences that support healthy brain development establish the foundation for school readiness.

School readiness simply means that children have the age appropriate skills and knowledge in all developmental domains that indicate they are "ready to learn" when they enter Kindergarten. The earliest years of a child's life are a time of rapid growth and development that establish a foundation for future school success. It is important for the program and families to work together to provide experiences that support each child's development across the five learning domains of language & literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches toward learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social & emotional development.

Children demonstrate school readiness when they are able to communicate and engage in play with others, follow simple rules, participate in group activities, take care of their personal needs, label and control their emotions, demonstrate small and large motor skills, possess a positive self-image, demonstrate problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills, and show enthusiasm and curiosity for learning.

A child's social and emotional learning is just as important to school success as learning letters and numbers. A child's success in school largely depends on learning how to regulate their emotions, control impulses, interact with peers in a positive manner, accept limits, and solve problems. Teacher's place a heavy emphasis on teaching these skills throughout the year but especially at the beginning of the school year. The **three basic classroom rules** support these skills; **we take of our friends, we take care of ourselves, and we take care of our classroom.** These three simple rules can easily be used at home as well to teach appropriate limits and care for self and others.

To ensure that the children enrolled in Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Start enter Kindergarten ready to learn the program has developed specific school readiness goals across these five domains. These goals align with the Tennessee Start Early Learning Standards and the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework. Throughout the school year we will monitor the children's progress towards the achievement of these goals and report these results to families. The program will also provide families with available resources that support these school readiness goals. As we partner together toward this shared goal, we can be sure that every child enrolled in Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start will enter Kindergarten "**ready to learn.**"



# Education & Early Childhood Development

## Creative Curriculum Overview

Young children are active hands-on learners. Therefore, early learning experiences can be supported best in an atmosphere where children are allowed to freely explore their environment, make independent choices, and participate in meaningful experiences in a play-based atmosphere that supports individual learning styles and stages of development.

## Objectives of the Services in Education and Early Childhood Development

1. To promote school readiness by providing children with a learning environment that offers a variety of experiences to develop their skills socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally so they will enter Kindergarten ready to learn.
2. To provide learning experiences in a manner appropriate to their age, stage of development, temperament, and learning style.
3. To promote physical health and well-being by incorporating health, nutrition, and safety activities into the daily routines.
4. To involve parents in educational activities and encourage your role as the child's main influence in their development and education.
5. To involve parents in the assessment of their child and increase your observation skills, knowledge, and understanding of growth and development.
6. To assist parents in identifying learning opportunities within the home and daily family routines to support their child's growth, development, and school readiness skills.

## Dual Language Learners

The term Dual Language Learners (DLL) refers to young children who are learning two or more languages at the same time. It also refers to the children who are learning a second language while still developing vocabulary and literacy skills in their first language. Over the past few years, we have had a growth in the number of children who are learning English as a second language. These children and families make up a diverse group who have different languages, experiences, strengths, and gifts. Children who speak more than one language are often very creative, can switch between the two languages, develop strong thinking skills, and have stronger social skills because they can talk to more diverse groups of people. Understanding these unique differences helps us provide each child support in developing skills in both languages.

The connections made between teachers, children, and families are extremely important when providing high quality learning experiences for all children. It is important to us that we learn about each child's culture, rules, and values of their individual families. Bilingual Assistants routinely visit classrooms to work individually and in large groups with our Dual Language Learners. These Bilingual Assistants also assist children and families during home visits, screenings, health/dental appointments, child testing, and parent conferences. You may ask to speak to a Bilingual Assistant at any time if assistance is needed. Parent volunteers are also always welcome and can provide a valuable learning experience to all children in the classroom.

# Health Services

Head Start/Early Head Start's commitment to wellness embraces a comprehensive vision of health for children, families, and staff. Our objective is to support healthy physical development by encouraging practices that promote early identification of problems, and prevent illness or injury, and by promoting positive culturally relevant healthy behaviors that enhance life-long wellbeing. For pregnant mothers, it is important that you have a primary health care provider and go to your prenatal visits.

## **Screenings**

Screenings are done to identify concerns regarding a child's development, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive and emotional skills and to identify the number of parent and child Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). After explaining the screenings to the children, they will be screened in vision, hearing, speech, language, height/weight, and developmental. Parents will receive the results of all screenings.

## **Physical Examination**

In order to comply with licensing and Head Start requirements, all children enrolled in the program must have on file the following:

- A physical examination, current and up-to-date within the last 12 months and updated annually. Physical examinations may be obtained from a child's regular physician or possibly from your County Public Health Department.
- Up-to-date, age appropriate immunizations throughout the school year.

## **Dental Examination**

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends a dental exam with the eruption of the first tooth, and no later than 12 months of age. Children should have a dental exam every six months after the first one. Dental health is important because it can affect your child's overall health, and his or her ability to concentrate while at school. Your Family Advocate can assist you with getting your child an exam if needed.

# Disabilities Services

Head Start/EHS welcomes and fully includes children with disabilities. The individual needs of each child are evaluated and responded to in a way that builds upon individual strengths. Each child with special therapy needs may receive this through the local school system from the time they are three years old. For infants and toddlers, EHS partners with Tennessee Early Intervention Services.

If determined that Douglas Cherokee is the appropriate placement through the IDEA process, the program can continue coordinating services with ongoing engagement of the family.

All disabilities are diagnosed by a professional in the field of concern. During our screenings you may find your child will need further evaluation and these will be completed as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child, please ask your Family Advocate or Teacher.

# Mental Health Services

Head Start provides mental health services for Head Start children and families. A consultant is available to help teachers and parents encourage behaviors which move children in the direction of cooperation, making friends and appropriate choices, developing a strong sense of self-esteem and coping with life's challenges. A Consultant will periodically visit the classroom to work with the staff, families and children. If it seems your child could benefit from individual attention, your signed permission will be requested before any further services are offered.

Young children are just learning social skills and need adult guidance to obtain these skills. Some young children have challenging behaviors and we at Head Start and Early Head Start work with these special children and families. Challenging behavior is defined as being hurtful to self or others, persistent, disruptive, destructive, or interfering with their own or their friends learning.

Head Start and Early Head Start Staff work very hard to make sure no one is injured in our classrooms but sometimes it does happen. We work with families and children on any issues that arise. We cannot discuss any issues that happen in the classroom as this is confidential information and ask you as parents not to discuss outside of Head Start. Young children are impulsive and quick to anger and we work with children on controlling these impulses.

Remember: If you have concerns talk with your teacher or Family Advocate.

# Nutrition Services

The Head Start Program provides a foundation for your children to experience positive attitudes towards foods and an understanding about good nutrition and eating habits.

Family style meal service is an integral part of our food program; children are encouraged to serve themselves and try all foods, but are never forced to eat. If your child has an allergy to a specific food, we must have an official written statement from your doctor that a particular food should not be served to your child, otherwise all foods will be offered.

Food is never used as a reward or punishment in the program. Children attending Head Start will be served breakfast, and a nutritious lunch daily. Infants and Toddlers will be served age appropriate foods.

In HS/EHS centers, meal time is also learning time. For infants, this is a time to bond with their primary caregiver. For older children, opportunities are available for children to try and taste new foods, set the table, and assist in serving themselves food and clean-up. All meals claimed must meet USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Guidelines.

## **No Outside Food**

Due to the increasing number of children who have food allergies, parents may not bring any food items into the classrooms, at any time, including celebrations.

# Pedestrian/Vehicle Safety

Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from the Head Start center on a daily basis.

**When dropping off your child in the morning, you must hold your child's hand until the child is safely in the building. This same rule applies when picking up your child. You must hold your child's hand until he or she is safely buckled in your vehicle. Children should be transported in a car seat that is age and weight appropriate for the child.**

The center sign in log will be completed to assure that all children have accurately been accounted in the adult/child ratio. The center sign out log will be completed at departure to assure each child has safely exited the classroom with an authorized individual thereby eliminating the possibility that any child would be left unattended in the classroom.

Children cannot be accepted earlier than the designated arrival time for the center. If you arrive before the designated arrival time, you will be expected to wait in your car with your child.

Safety tips around vehicles:

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle
- Make it a habit to always look in the back of your vehicle before walking away
- Keep vehicles locked when not in use to prevent a child from getting inside the vehicle

**Parents must notify the center of any changes in work/cell phone numbers so that you may be reached in an emergency.**

# Transition Services

Transition is a process, not a one-time event. Head Start/Early Head Start facilitates the successful transition of children and their families into, through and out of the program. At enrollment, parents are provided with information about HS/EHS and the services provided. Parent involvement is an integral part of a successful program for you and your child. Home visits build strong, supportive relationships between staff and parents. Home visits are important because they help us get to know you and your child.

Families are also welcomed into the program through Open House/orientation activities. Young children need the support of their parents when going to new places or when having new experiences. As a parent, you can be a great help to your child adjusting to the new experience of HS/EHS.

## **Early Head Start**

Our mission is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning. When your infant/toddler is accepted into the program, you are asked to spend some time in the classroom with your child. This gives you and your child time to get to know his/her Teacher and become familiar with the classroom environment. Smooth transitions are important to ensure that each child continues to receive enriching early child development services and each family continues to receive the support services necessary to healthy family development. Infants and toddlers are active learners, exploring their environment, manipulating objects, and establishing relationships with adults and peers. We provide a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment where your child can freely explore, discover, and learn. Working with families, EHS supports the healthy physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development of each child to his/her fullest potential.

Healthy pregnancy's lead to healthy newborns. Our staff work with the pregnant mommies using the Partners for a Healthy Baby Curriculum to support healthy birth outcomes, bonding and attachment, and doctor visits. During this home visiting stage, the families receive face-to-face support with their Family Advocate and are encouraged to visit their child's future classroom.

## **Head Start**

Throughout the school year, your child will be learning school readiness skills including social skills, which prepare him/her for kindergarten. Teachers will be discussing your child's growth during home visits and parent conferences, so that you can follow your child's progress in skills such as getting along with others, listening, and using words to express feelings or ideas. Classroom transition activities will be provided so that children can learn about kindergarten behaviors, expectations, and express feelings about going to kindergarten.

Head Start supports parents in preparing children for public school kindergarten by providing information, making connections, and asking local school personnel to speak with parents. There will be meetings for parents to share concerns, ask questions, and support each other during the months before your child enters public school.

# Center Policies

1. Children cannot be accepted earlier than the designated arrival time; therefore, you will be expected to wait in your car with your child. In case of extreme emergency, parent must call the center for child to remain past closing time.
2. Each child should have on file an emergency contact information. Parents must fill out an authorization form or send a note to give a person (other than the parents) permission to pick up their children. The person picking up the child must show identification, sign the child out of the center, be at least 16 years old.
3. In the event of an emergency, fire, flood, structural damage to the building or another disaster that makes it necessary to evacuate the building, the staff will stay with the children at the designated location until their parents arrive.
4. During operating hours, parents/guardians shall be permitted immediate access to their children, unless an order of protection or other legal document otherwise restricts or prohibits such access. Unexpected visitors, people who turn up at the center and claim to be visiting grandmothers, aunts, absent fathers, etc., will not be permitted to have any contact with a child unless prior arrangements have been made with the parent who placed the child in the center.
5. Parents are asked to see that children do not bring food, backpacks, money or toys to the center; however, infants and toddlers are allowed to bring special snuggle/security blankets or toys.
6. Parents will be responsible for ensuring that their child does not bring to school any dangerous items such as guns, knives, etc. It would be advisable for parents to check their child's pockets before coming to school.
7. Outdoor play is an important part of our program. Please see that your child is suitably dressed to play outside except in extremely bad weather. We go outside every day except when it rains. Tennis shoes are an excellent choice for outdoor play. Sandals, flip flops, etc. are not safe for running, climbing, and other outdoor activities.
8. Parents are to notify the center of any changes in work/cell numbers so that you may be reached in an emergency.
9. There must be no smoking or vaping on the grounds while children are present.
10. The program will announce school closings as soon as possible.
11. A current physical exam and immunization record signed and/or stamped by a health care provider must be on file in the child's Head Start health record and classroom file before he/she may attend the center. Each child must receive all immunizations at entry and remain on schedule unless there is a medical reason certified by a health care provider, or a religious exemption as to why these immunizations should not be given.
12. A current dental examination is required by Head Start. Your child is expected to follow the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommendation to be seen by a dentist every 6 months. Your Family Advocate can assist you in this if needed.
13. Non-prescription drugs such as aspirin, cold tablets, cough syrup, Tylenol (acetaminophen), Motrin (ibuprofen), ointments, etc., may not be given unless written physician's orders so advises.

14. A brief health check will be conducted on each child daily. A child may not remain at the center if he or she is thought to be ill. Any sick child will be isolated from the group with adult supervision until arrangements are made for the child to go home.
15. A child will not be allowed to attend the Head Start Center if they have a communicable disease, diarrhea (2 episodes), or vomiting. Also, a child will not be allowed to attend if they have an axillary (under-arm) temperature of 99 degrees F or more, or oral temp of 100 degrees F or more, with other signs or symptoms of illness. Furthermore, the child needs to be free of diarrhea, vomiting and fever (without medication) for at least 24 hours prior to returning to the center.
16. Parents will be notified of the occurrence of a communicable disease among the center children.
17. All children and staff must eat only the food prepared at the center unless specific instructions are prescribed by a physician and documentation is on file at the center.
18. EHS recognizes the importance of breast-feeding. We support your choice to breastfeed by providing a private nursing room and by storing and using your frozen or refrigerated breast milk for your infant.
19. Pacifiers are permitted in EHS but cannot be attached to the child's clothing.
20. Infants and Toddlers in EHS are fed and nap "on-demand", and are not forced to eat and sleep on adult designed/rigid schedules.
21. All children will be provided with developmentally appropriate transition activities that promote a successful move from preschool to kindergarten. Our program does not participate in activities that are not age appropriate, including formal graduations, cap and gown ceremonies, or extravagant presentations.
22. Due to Tennessee Child Care Licensing, non-enrolled children are not permitted to be present during meetings or special events that are held in the classroom.
23. During a time of unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, the Program will follow guidance from federal, state, local authorities, and funding sources to incorporate those recommendations and resources into classroom specific plans. It may be necessary, to modify the classroom environment and/or change practices to provide additional protection for children, families and staff. Staff may be assigned alternative work locations or telecommunicating to work toward program objectives, engage families and deliver services to the maximum extent possible.



# Attendance

An essential ingredient in the learning process of a child is regular attendance to the program in which he/she participates. Attendance is important to your child's enrollment in the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. Federal law mandates that we maintain high attendance levels. But more importantly are the benefits your child receives in school readiness skills by attending class on a daily basis. Studies show when children miss 10% or more of the school year they have much lower gains in math and literacy.

Now is the time to instill in your child the importance of attending school every day he/she is physically able to attend. **It is your responsibility as the parent/guardian to contact the Teacher or Family Advocate concerning absences.** Knowing the reason why a child is absent increases the Teacher's and Family Advocates opportunity for providing support to your family thus increasing your participation in program activities. It is important that you are aware and understand the Head Start/Early Head Start policies (this can be found in your Parent Handbook) and follow the guidelines of the program while your child is enrolled.

Follow-up will be completed and documented if attendance issues become a concern. In circumstances where a child has chronic absenteeism, where staff have supported and encouraged parents with no improvement in attendance, the program will assume you are no longer interested in our services and the child's spot may be declared vacant. A new application would have to be completed for the child to be eligible to reenroll. Please avoid any action by the program, as outlined in the policy for attendance, by simply notifying your child's Teacher or Family Advocate any time an absence is necessary.

## **Guidelines for absence from class:**

1. Notify your child's Teacher or Family Advocate **before** class starts of an unavoidable absence.
2. Inform the Teacher or Family Advocate of the reason of the absence (ex. symptoms if sick).
3. Inform the Teacher or Family Advocate when you expect your child to return to class.



# Identifying & Reporting Child Abuse and/or Neglect

It is the mission of DCEA Head Start/Early Head Start to promote, protect, and provide for the physical, mental, and emotional health and safety of our children; and to cooperate with individuals, organizations, and agencies who share the responsibility with us. We will assume our duty to identify abused and neglected children, to support the local child protective service program, and otherwise encourage prevention in the all-important parent-child system in which our children develop.

Tennessee Code Annotated § 37-1-403(a)(1) states “Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect.”

1. If any staff person has knowledge or reasonable suspicion that a child has been mistreated, abused, or neglected based on personal observation or disclosure by the child, they must report immediately, or as soon as practically possible, to the Department of Children’s Services at 1-877-237-0004 or call local law enforcement.
2. At no time will anyone from DCEA ask anyone not to report suspected abuse or neglect! If that occurs, disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will result.
3. The program will preserve the confidentiality of all records pertaining to child abuse or neglect problems; and, will cooperate fully with the Department of Childrens Services and other child protection agencies.
4. Douglas-Cherokee will make every attempt to retain children in the program, recognizing that the child’s participation may be essential in assisting families with abuse or neglect problems. Also, additional priority points are provided to families or legal guardians of abused/neglected children.

## **Training:**

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start provides initial orientation and annual training for staff, and any interested parents, on the identification and reporting of child abuse and neglect.

# Shaken Baby Syndrome/Abusive Head Trauma

Shaken baby syndrome or abusive head trauma are terms used to describe a wide range of signs and symptoms resulting from violently shaking or shaking and impacting of the head of an infant or small child. Shaking a baby for only a few seconds can cause permanent neurological brain damage and even death. Head trauma is the leading cause of death in child abuse cases in the United States.

The main cause that triggers a person to shake a baby is frustration with infant crying. Crying is normal but shaking is not! All babies go through a normal period crying that can be especially frustrating and stressful for parents and caregivers. It's important to have a plan when you feel stressed or overwhelmed from caring for a new baby. Simple things like going for a walk, taking some deep breaths, or calling a friend to talk with can help relieve stress.

Shaken baby syndrome is 100% preventable so let's all work together to keep our children safe and protected! Please visit: [dontshake.org](http://dontshake.org) for more information or to become involved in preventing shaken baby syndrome.

## SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)

**(Information from [sids.org](http://sids.org))**

Use SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES

- Don't Smoke – Don't expose your baby to cigarette smoke before or after birth.
- Don't Bed-Share – Never fall asleep with your baby in your bed or in a chair or sofa. (DO put baby's crib in the same room as parents.)
- Place in Bare Crib – The baby should be placed in a crib with no cover, pillows, bumper pads or positioning devices.
- Place on BACK to SLEEP – Always place your baby, day or night on his back to sleep
- Offer a pacifier
- Breastfeed
- Give tummy-time when baby is AWAKE and supervised or being played with.
- Do NOT put baby in room that is too warm or in too many clothes. (If baby is sweating, remove some clothes.)
- Discuss with pediatrician IMMEDIATELY if baby
  - Has periods of not breathing, going limp or blue
  - Gags excessively after spitting up

# Releasing a Child to an Adult 'Under the Influence' Or a Non-Custodial Adult

The well-being of all children under the care of Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start is of primary importance. To adequately protect the child while in HS/EHS care staff will use every precaution in releasing a child. We will not release a child to any person suspected to be "under the influence" or to a non-custodial adult.

If there is a custody issue, the program will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent has legal custody where there is no court document. The program will accept the information given by the enrolling parent unless presented with a court document that shows otherwise.

The custodial parent will be notified if an unauthorized adult attempts to pick up a child without written approval.

Staff will not accept telephone authorization unless it is an emergency and the staff person can readily identify the caller without question. Staff will verify the identification (i.e. driver's license) of anyone they have not met and do not know, but their name is on the emergency list, who attempts to pick up the child.

## Access to Campus

For persons with a prohibited criminal history/registered as sexual offender/violent sexual offenders.

In compliance with Tennessee Licensure Rule 1240-04-03-.07, Douglas-Cherokee Head Start will restrict persons with a prohibited criminal history and persons registered as Sexual Offenders/Violent Sexual Offenders from access to Head Start/Early Head Start campus and off-campus events. Tennessee Code Annotated defines "registered person" as:

A "sexual offender" is any person who has been convicted in this state of committing a sexual offense as defined by T.C.A. 40-39-202 (20); or has another qualifying conviction as defined by T.C.A. 40-39-202 (2). A "violent sexual offender" is any person convicted of a violent sexual offense as defined by T.C.A. 40-39-202 (28); or has another qualifying conviction as defined by T.C.A. 40-39-202 (2).

A person who has a prohibited criminal history or is registered as a "sexual offender" or "violent sexual offender" must confidentially disclose such status to Douglas-Cherokee Head Start immediately upon enrollment of his/her child(ren). Failure to do so can result in a violation of Douglas-Cherokee Head Start policy.

Access to Head Start/Early Head Start Campus will be restricted for all persons with prohibited criminal history and all "registered persons" by limiting involvement to dropping off and picking up only. No registered person may attend any Douglas-Cherokee Head Start events on campus or off-campus.

# Discipline Management Policy

We believe that children learn best through experiences. We believe our staff must guide and redirect the children to help them learn to cooperate with their peers. Positive educational experiences, encouragement, good health practices, and a supportive home will enhance a child's development. We believe we can best accomplish this by:

1. Having a variety of activities and experiences for children.
2. By using group management techniques, limiting the number of children in each area of the room to avoid overcrowding and to allow sufficient materials and opportunities for positive interactions.
3. By using below state recommended adult/child ratio in most classrooms.
4. By speaking with a child if their behavior is inappropriate or if they are using materials inappropriately. Modeling acceptable behavior and using calming techniques.
5. By using positive language with the children to give praise for appropriate behavior. For example: "I like the way Sue is listening." "We walk inside" instead of don't run.
6. After using the above techniques, if a child is still having a problem in an area of the room, she/he may be asked to play in another area. For example: "John, this is not the way we play in the sand, please go to the puzzle table or library." As the year progresses children will learn the rules and what behavior is accepted.
7. Sometimes just a touch on the shoulder can let a child know of your presence and this will in turn put him/her back in task.
8. After exhausting the above mentioned methods, a child may still be having behavior issues. If this is the case, the child may be placed in "time-out". "Time-out" can last 3 to 5 minutes depending upon the age of the child. **Time out will only be used on children 3 years old and up.** The child will be informed that when they have calmed down they may return to play. If the child begins to tantrum aggressively (hurting others, materials, or themselves) or trying to run from staff and not calm themselves after a warning, then the parent may be called. Our goal is for the child to learn self-control and to learn to calm themselves. If the child displays extreme behavior issues then a parent/teacher conference will be requested so a plan to address behavior issues will be completed.
9. If a child has consistent difficulties in the class, the child and parents would discuss the concerns with the Mental Health Consultant. A child will not be referred without parental permission. A team decision is made as to referral process and if Head Start is the appropriate placement for the child.
10. According to Child Care Licensing and Head Start regulations any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh or humiliating or frightening treatment, is not tolerated. **This applies to staff as well as parents volunteering in the classroom.**

Remember, we try to be consistent in our behavior techniques and class rules so children will know what we expect of them. If you have any questions about your child's behavior, please don't hesitate to ask the teacher.

# Code of Conduct for all Persons on Head Start Property

Courteous and respectful behavior between and among all program participants is essential for Head Start/Early Head Start to achieve the program's mission and to provide a safe and positive environment for the children, families and staff. Employees, parents/guardians, volunteers, participants, and anyone else involved with the program are expected to follow the Code of Conduct outlined below.

1. Observe posted safety rules and regulations.
2. No alcohol, illegal drugs or weapons while on Head Start premises or while participating in a Head Start event.
3. Parents/Volunteers/Staff may not use abusive, obscene, and/or profane language on Head Start property or while participating in a Head Start event.
4. Parents/Volunteers/Staff may not threaten, coerce, intimidate, or harass others on Head Start property or while participating in a Head Start event.
5. Physical violence, quarrelling, verbal fighting, loud shouting, and inappropriate displays of anger will not be tolerated.
6. Please refrain from inappropriate dress, including, for example, a low-cut top, bare midriff or clothes with words or pictures inappropriate for young children.

## Confidentiality Policy

Head Start/Early Head Start collects and maintains information about enrolled children and their families. All information that is obtained orally, in writing, or through observations is considered confidential.

Families have the right to protection of personal information in their relationship with Head Start/Early Head Start during and following the process of obtaining services.

1. DCHS/EHS will collect all information that is relevant and necessary to accomplish the goals of HS/EHS families.
2. Parents and other volunteers are prohibited from viewing records other than those of their own children.
3. Any information received in confidence that could lead to a person being harmed must be brought to the attention of Central Office.
4. DCHS/EHS will impress upon parents and staff the importance of confidentiality and work together to maintain confidentiality.

# No-Smoking Policy

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start strives to provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment for children. It is with this in mind that a No-Smoking/Vaping Policy was adopted.

There will be **NO SMOKING or VAPING on the grounds** of any DCEA Head Start/Early Head Start facility **when children are present** on the premises. (This includes children who may still be in their parent's vehicle, or children visiting with a parent filling out an application.) Staff may leave the premises when on their 30 minute break to smoke or vape. Staff may only smoke or vape in the designated areas when there are no children on the premises.

**Parents, volunteers, and visiting community members are also expected to follow this policy.**

# Lice and Other Insect Policy

If a child has lice or nits, the parent should be informed when the child is picked up or taken home. The child must be treated before returning to school. If your child has head lice, he/she must be treated, with all nits removed. Your child's head will be rechecked by a staff member before coming back to the classroom. Anyone can get head lice, and we can offer more help and information on how to get rid of them.

The teacher will notify all parents when a case of lice is discovered by sending home the notice typically used to inform parents of infections and/or diseases. The Family Advocate and/or Teacher will provide information on getting rid of lice to parents on an as-needed or requested basis.

Bed Bugs/Ants/Fleas/Roaches/Other Pests. A child WILL NOT be excluded for living in a home which is infested with pests. If the child attends school and has two or more individual pests crawl off of the child, or be found on the child or in the child's clothing or hair, the parent will be called and asked to pick up the child and make sure the child does not have pests on their person when returning to school. Your Family Advocate may assist you in finding pest control resources if needed.

# Written Procedure for Hearing and Resolving Parent and Community Complaints/Grievances

The classroom teacher should be contacted or consulted if there is a complaint/ grievance by a parent or community person.

If the nature of the complaint/grievance is such that it can be answered by applying the Head Start/Early Head Start Policies, this information should be given to the parent or community person.

If the nature of the complaint/grievance is not covered by a Head Start/Early Head Start Policy, the Area Coordinator must be contacted immediately.

All complaints/grievances will be brought to the attention of the Area Coordinator.

The Area Coordinator will address the situation with the person making the complaint/grievance.

The Head Start/Early Head Start Director will be consulted. At the director's request appropriate Managers may meet with the director to review the complaint/grievance.

At the discretion of the Head Start/Early Head Start Director and the Douglas- Cherokee Executive Director, the Policy Council may be made aware of the complaint/grievance.

The Head Start/Early Head Start Director will then take action to resolve the complaint/grievance. The final action will be based on the information received, existing Head Start/Early Head Start Policies, and advice of Policy Council and/or Executive Director.

An appeal of the decision of the Head Start/Early Head Start Director may be made to the Policy Council, and after review the decision of the Policy Council will be final.

➤ **Must Be Voted On by Policy Council and Board Annually**



# Fund-Raising/Donation Policy

Our program does not participate in fund-raising activities. Donations of cash/goods done in the name of Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start must be handled in a consistent and professional manner.

Staff and parents cannot solicit funds; however, it is appropriate to make the public aware we accept donations through personal contacts. Examples might include:

- VAP (Volunteerism Always Pays) program through local Walmarts encourages employee volunteerism in the community. A monetary donation may be made based on the volunteer time given by the Wal-Mart employee.
- Staff or parents may be affiliated with or have contacts with community leaders and civic organizations that may have an interest in making a donation.
- Local churches may be interested in contributing to a classroom (especially during the holidays).
- Local restaurants may offer to donate a meal or give a discounted rate to provide a cultural experience for the children and/or parents.
- Relatives of staff or parents may be interested in sponsoring a special activity for the children and/or parents.

Any monetary donation must be treated as program income and can only be spent for purposes related to the Head Start/Early Head Start program to be counted as In-kind. There are some activities that are acceptable but not allowable as In-kind (i.e.-Christmas gifts, T-shirts for End of Year Celebration). Teachers must work with the Parent Committee and should ask for assistance from the Parent Involvement Manager if any questions arise or if parents have ideas/suggestions in conflict with established policies/Head Start Performance Standards.

# Holiday Celebration Policy

To select and celebrate holidays that are culturally relevant to the group for the overall purpose of building a sense of community, family, and togetherness without consuming the curriculum.

## Holiday Celebration Objectives

- To demonstrate that different beliefs are valued and appreciated
- To respect the diversity of a particular group
- To validate a child's and family's holiday experiences
- To expose children to different ways of celebrating the same holiday
- To connect children's lives at home with relevant school experiences
- To affirm a family's values
- To promote thoughtful and meaningful dialogue between staff and families
- To limit the number of holiday celebrations to ones that have significant meaning to the children and families.

## Procedures

1. Obtain information from families about their holiday customs and traditions.
2. Discuss and decide which holiday celebrations will be included in the long-range curriculum plans.
3. Obtain accurate information about holiday customs and traditions as it relates to how individual families celebrate.
4. Involve parents/guardians in the implementation of holiday activities.
5. Select activities that are developmentally appropriate and within the scope of young children's understanding (see attached Holiday Ages & Stages).
6. Select a few activities and/or experiences that are related to the holiday celebration rather than planning a week long theme around a particular holiday.
7. Provide nutritional foods in relation to the holiday celebration.

## What to Avoid

- Candy Treats (All Holidays)
- Stereotyping a particular ethnic group or culture
- Portraying one holiday as more important than another
- Requesting money or treats from parents for celebrations/field trips
- Masks, capes, etc. including most super hero/villain costumes
- Excluding children or families
- Teaching religious aspects of holidays
- All outside food purchases or donations

**Note:** The overall purpose of developing a Holiday Policy for Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start is to improve the quality of services to the children and families by providing "more appropriate holiday celebration experiences."

**Early Head Start:** Infants and Toddlers can be easily over stimulated and do not react well to drastic changes in their environment and routine.

# Holiday Ages and Stages

## Two Year Olds

- Enjoy being with family on holidays
- Catch excitement from adults but do not understand what is going on
- May be over stimulated or upset by too much change in their routine

## Three Year Olds

- View holiday celebrations in terms of their own family experiences
- Are egocentric and think that everyone celebrates what they do and in the same way
- Need to see their family's special holidays reflected in their school environment, especially if the holidays are not usually visible in our society
- Learn from holiday activities that are concrete, accurate, and connected to their own experiences
- Understand and respond to the feelings holidays bring, rather than to the reasons people celebrate
- May not remember anything about a particular family celebration from last year

## Four Year Olds

- Continue to view holidays primarily in terms of their own family experiences
- Continue to need to see their family's special holidays reflected in their school environment
- May remember a celebration from last year and look forward to it
- Begin to realize that some people celebrate holidays other than their own, and celebrate in different ways
- Can talk about similarities and differences among holidays that connect to their own experiences
- Understand simple (and accurate) information about the meanings of holidays

## Five Year Olds

- Enjoy celebrating holidays with friends as well as with families
- Continue to need to see their family's special holidays reflected in their school environment
- Enjoy preparing for celebrations by making special foods, decorating, etc.
- Want celebrations to be consistent "like last year"
- Begin understanding the historical or social reasons why a holiday is celebrated

**Taken from Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays. By Julie Bisson**

## Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start Parent Suggestion Form

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start is always striving to do a better job for our children and their families. As a Head Start parent, we welcome your suggestions/concerns anytime. We are always looking for new ideas to use in our classrooms, parent trainings and staff trainings. Please send in any suggestions/concerns that you have. Turn this form in to your teacher, Family Advocate or mail to:

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start 127 Cedar St. Morristown, Tn. 37814  
Attn: Parent Involvement Manager

Parent/Child Name \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions for classrooms \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Enrichment activities \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Trainings \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As a parent, I'd like to learn more about: (Please list specifics)

My rights as a parent: \_\_\_\_\_

How to further my own education: \_\_\_\_\_

Head Start's Menu: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteering in classroom: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting my child interested in learning i.e. home activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: explain \_\_\_\_\_

We also realize that you may want to express some concerns that you may have. Please feel free to let us know those too.

Concerns \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for all that you do for your child and for our program. Without your help and support our program could not function. Again, thank you!! Remember, we welcome volunteers daily! Parents are invited to visit the classroom and examine the curricula and instruction materials at any time.*

**\*Policy Council Minutes and Parent Resources are located on the  
Douglas-Cherokee HS/EHS website at [www.dceaheadstart.org](http://www.dceaheadstart.org)\***

