

**Minutes**  
**Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start**  
**Policy Council**  
**January 9, 2025**

Members Present

Casey Brown	Danielle Smikle
Scharanda Brock	Carla Testerman
Sheri Arden	Krista Warner
Tamra Williamson	Melissa Logan
Jessicia Walker	Jessicia Burnett
Patrick Tackett	Kelly Ritenour
Tina Patterson	Cheyenne Wright
Molly Scaff	

Members Not Present

Stacey Inman	Stacy Inman
Amber Capps	Jaimaine McNamara
Candiacce Winstead	Jamie Jackson

Employees Present

Kristie Woolard	Melody Cantrell
Amber Brobeck	Jennifer Coopman
Arlene Radcliff	Brittany Turner
Emily Kelley	

Guests Present

Jessica Cameron

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start held a Policy Council Meeting on January 9, 2025, at Shoney's, located at 120 Sharon Dr. Dandridge, TN 37725.

Jessicia Walker, Policy Council Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM and announced that we had a quorum.

Kristie Woolard, Parent Involvement Manager, presented Mindful Moments and spoke about the importance of keeping your mind focused on the present.

Emily Kelley, Assistant Director, provided the Literacy Reading with the book, *The Rabbit Listened* by Cori Doerrfeld.

Jessica Cameron, DCEA Family Centered Employment Manager, presented the DCEA Program Spotlight. She shared information about the Families First SOAR program that is partnered with the Head Start/Early Head Start program. SOAR stands for Self-Sufficiency Opportunities to

Achieve and Reinvent. Handouts were provided to all members. For more information email Jessica at [jcameron@douglascherokee.org](mailto:jcameron@douglascherokee.org).

Kristie announced that Grainger County Community Representative resigned, and we will be looking for a replacement. The chairperson, Candiace Winstead, had to step down. Kristie called for volunteers to be the new chairperson. Jessica Walker volunteered. Kristie asked for approval to elect Jessica Walker as the new chairperson. Molly Scaff, Monroe County, made the motion for approval and Patrick Tackett, Hamblen County seconded the motion. The motion carried. Jessica Walker was elected to be the new chairperson, leaving the vice chairperson position vacant. Kristie called for volunteers to be the new vice chairperson. Molly Scaff volunteered. Kristie asked for approval to elect Molly Scaff as the new vice chairperson. Cheyenne Wright, Union County, made the motion for approval and Tamra Williamson, Cocke County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Jessica asked for the approval of the December 4, 2024, Policy Council meeting minutes. The minutes are available to all Policy Council members on the website. Molly Scaff, Monroe County, made the motion for approval and Scharanda Brock, Blount County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Casey Brown, Secretary, announced that the Personnel Committee met, ratified, and approved all hiring decisions. Jessica asked for a second. Molly Scaff, Monroe County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Krista Warner, Treasurer, announced that the Finance Committee met and approved all budget and finance reports. Jessica asked for a second. Casey Brown, Blount County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Tina Patterson, Tennessee Department of Health Dental Hygienist, presented the Community Spotlight. Tina works for the East Tennessee Regional Health Office. She spoke about the free dental prevention program in the school systems. For more information email Tina at [Tina.Patterson@tn.gov](mailto:Tina.Patterson@tn.gov).

The Management Team presented the Grant Preparation topics.

- Overall, Grant Process & Program Goals/Budget- Emily Kelley and Melody Cantrell
- Selection Criteria/Enrollment- Jennifer Coopman
- Community Assessment/Self-Assessment/ T&TA Plan- Brittany Turner and Emily Kelley
- Written Plans/Compliant Procedure- Kristie Woolard

Arlene Radcliff, Education Manager, presented the Early Head Start outcomes.

- We have 9 EHS classrooms in Hamblen County.
- She discussed the EHS demographics.
- Language and Literacy continue to have the highest percentage of children falling below expectations.

Amber Brobeck, Curriculum & Assessment Manager, provided a brief School Readiness update.

- Every classroom was provided with free materials through the Tennessee Child Care Resource and Referral program (CCR&R).

Brittany Turner, Family Community Partnership Manager, provided everyone with information about the earned income tax credit and advice on how to file taxes at a low cost or no cost.

Emily Kelley, Assistant Director, presented the Director's Report.

- There was an "offensive odor" issue at the Maryville Center. Maintenance has since corrected the issue. The smell seems to be external.
- We are finishing up the Laura J. Kress Angel Tree Grant. We had approximately \$400 left to spend. We are using the money to purchase coats for the Head Start children in Cocke, Hamblen, Grainger, and Union Counties who need a coat.
- The North Hamblen center was closed due to an accident at the center that resulted in loss of power. The school system is working to repair the issue.
- The Underwood center classrooms will be merging into one classroom. We had another staff person leave. There could be some children displaced, and we are looking at all possible classrooms they could attend.
- We had an anonymous complaint to regional office. The assistant director has been working with the agency to collect requested documentation to respond to the complaint. The Board of Directors has reviewed and approved the response to the Office of Head Start. We are waiting for feedback from OHS.
- Action Items: We are asking for Policy Council's approval to complete an In-Kind waiver for the current program year. We are asking for approval to prioritize children who will be eligible for kindergarten in the next school year to fill vacancies in the six classrooms we will be closing next year.

Jessica asked for approval of the Director's Report and action items. Patrick Tackett, Hamblen County, made the motion for approval and Jessica Walker, Hamblen County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Kristie presented the MVP awards for the classrooms with the most volunteer hours for November.

- Blount            Maryville 3
- Cocke            Northwest
- Grainger        Central Point
- Hamblen        Learning Center 2/Early Head Start 1
- Jefferson       Cherokee
- Monroe         Mount Vernon 1
- Sevier          Oak Cluster
- Union          Cross Creek

Kristie asked for approval to adjourn the meeting. Jessica Walker, Hamblen County, made the motion for approval and Krista Warner, Sevier County, seconded the motion. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 12:45 PM.

# Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start

## Policy Council Members

2024-2025

*Pending approval 2/6/25*

### **Blount County**

Casey Brown – Personnel  
Scharanda Brock – Finance  
Sheri Arden – Community Rep (5)

### **Cocke County**

Jamie Jackson – Personnel  
Stacey Inman – Finance  
Tamra Williamson – Community Rep (2)

### **Grainger County**

**Misti Eubanks** – Personnel  
– Community Rep

### **Hamblen County**

**Emily Galban (FDY)** – Personnel  
Patrick Tackett - Finance  
Jessica Walker – Finance  
Carla Testerman – Community Rep (2)

### **Jefferson County**

Jaimaine McNamara – Personnel  
Tina Patterson – Community Rep (2)

### **Monroe County**

Molly Scaff – Personnel  
Jessica Burnett – Community Rep (2)

### **Sevier County**

Danielle Smikle – Personnel  
Krista Warner – Finance  
Kelly Ritenour – Community Rep

### **Union County**

Cheyenne Wright – Personnel  
Melissa Logan – Community Rep

**Douglas-Cherokee Head Start  
Policy Council Officers and Committee Members  
2024-2025**

**Policy Council Officers**

Chairperson: Jessica Walker

Vice Chair: Molly Scaff

Secretary: Casey Brown

Treasurer: Krista Warner

**Personnel Committee**

Blount County	Casey Brown
Cocke County	Jamie Jackson
Grainger County	<b>Misti Eubanks</b>
Hamblen County (FDY)	<b>Emily Galban</b>
Jefferson County	Jaimaine McNamara
Monroe County	Molly Scaff
Sevier County	Danielle Smikle
Union County	Cheyenne Wright

**Finance Committee**

Blount County	Scharanda Brock
Cocke County	Stacey Inman
Hamblen County	Patrick Tackett
Hamblen County	Jessica Walker
Sevier County	Krista Warner

## Douglas Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start Year 2025-2026 Selection Criteria

Date Given to Policy Council for Input \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Approved by Policy Council \_\_\_\_\_  
Policy Council Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Director \_\_\_\_\_  
DCEA Board Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

The Douglas Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start Program has an active recruitment process designed to seek out and enroll disadvantaged preschool children who are in need of comprehensive services. No child will be denied enrollment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, or disability.

The selection criteria will take into account a careful analysis of the family situation as a whole. Children will be served according to the availability of appropriate slots; the demographic make up of the community as addressed in the Community Assessments; family income; parent status; the needs of the children and families; children with disabilities; and the appropriate age of children.

Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council will have input in the development of the priority criteria and give final approval for its use in the selection of children when more children are recruited than slots are available.

The eligibility priority will be determined using the following categories and points (pts):

### 1. Parent Status:

- foster parent - 90 pts
- kinship care - 90 pts
- homeless - 90 pts
- teen parent - 80 pts
- guardian other than natural parents - 80 pts
- one parent - 75 pts
- two parents - 60 pts

### 2. Disability:

- confirmed - 90 pts
- suspected - 30 pts
- low developmental score -20 pts (screened by health dept. or school system)
- non-disabled - 00 pts

### 3. Eligibility Categories:

- Homeless Eligibility – 110 pts
- Foster Care Eligibility - 110 pts
- Kinship care – 110 pts
- TANF Eligibility – 100 pts
- SSI Eligibility – 100 pts
- SNAP – 100 pts

- 75% to 100% below – 90 pts
- 50% to 74% below – 80 pts
- 25% to 49% below – 75 pts
- 0% to 24% below – 70 pts
- Over-income (101-130%) - 25 pts
- Over-income (131% and Above) – 00 pts

**4. Social Service Needs:**

- combination of two factors - 90 pts
- protective services - 80 pts
- high social service need - 70 pts
- high risk - 50 pts
- referral from other agency/professional - 40 pts
- family crisis - 30 pts
- health problem - 20 pts

**5. Age - Early Head Start:**

- Returnee 250 pts
- 1st Trimester - 80 pts
- 2nd Trimester - 70 pts
- 3rd Trimester - 60 pts
- Child is 6 weeks to 11 months - 50 pts
- Child is 12 months to 23 months - 40 pts
- Child is 24 months to 29 months - 30 pts
- Child is 30 months to 36 months - 20 pts

**6. High Priority:**

- Combination of 2 or more below scoring items – 80 pts
- Homeless - 40 pts
- Foster Care - 40 pts
- Kinship Care – 40 pts
- Applying for Pregnant Mommy slot – 40 pts
- Current Incarceration of parent/legal guardian – 40pts
- None – 00

**7. Extended Duration Classrooms:**

- Single Parent working or attending school – 30 pts
- Two Parents – both working or attending school – 20 pts

**8. State of Emergency:**

- Explanation of Cause – 40 pts

**Head Start Age Eligibility**

Performance Standards Section 1302.12(b)(2) states: "For Head Start, a child must be at least three years old, or turn three years old by the date used to determine eligibility for public school in the community in which the Head Start Program is located". Therefore, children who are three years of age upon entry into the program, or will be three by the school cut-off date, may be enrolled in Head Start.

Kindergarten is mandatory in the State of Tennessee and a child must have kindergarten experience in a school approved by the Department of Education to qualify for entrance to the first grade. Children who are of kindergarten age by the school cut-off date are not eligible to remain in Head Start. Douglas Cherokee Head Start will serve children from three years to compulsory school age although efforts will focus primarily on four-year-old children.

**Early Head Start**

Douglas Cherokee Early Head Start provides family-centered services for low-income families with very young children designed to promote the development of the children, and to enable their parents to fulfill their roles as parents and to move toward self-sufficiency.

Early Head Start accepts applications for possible enrollment of prenatal women and children from birth through 36 months of age. When feasible, the following ages and slots will be maintained in order to (1) facilitate individual child transitions into, through, and out of the program (PS 1302.7(c); (2) to meet Tennessee Department of Child Care Licensure Rules and Regulations regarding multi-age group size and adult: child ratio for child care centers serving pre-school children (1240-4-3-.07); and (3) to meet Head Start Performance Standards regarding the use of age as part of the selection criteria (PS 1302.14(a)).

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Number of Slots</u>
Prenatal – 23 months	32
24 months – 36 months	40

**Eligible Children**

Performance Standards Section 1302.12(c)(2) states: "a program may enroll a child who would benefit from services, provide that these participants only make up to 10 percent of a program's enrollment".

Administration for Children and Families recognizes that an increasing number of Head Start families are returning to work and there are, in some communities, fewer families with incomes below the poverty line. The Head Start Act of 2007 (Section 645(a)) provides several ways in which families can be deemed eligible for HS/EHS:

- Families that have annual incomes that fall within the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- Families that are determined homeless according to the McKinney Vento Act definition
- Children that are in a foster care or a kinship placement
- Families that are receiving on-going TANF benefits which is Families First benefits through The Department of Human Services
- Families that are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

**Ten Percent (10%) Over**



Ten percent (10%) of the children Douglas Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start serves may be from families with incomes above the poverty line. The ten percent (10%) over-income allowance may be used to enroll over-income children who could benefit from the HS/EHS services such as:

1. Disabled and high risk children
2. Single parent/working parent
3. Children of HS/EHS staff, who because of their employment with Head Start are now income ineligible
4. Children of families who are just above the poverty guidelines (e.g. grandparents, aunts and other relatives raising the child, parents who are working in need of full day care).
5. Reenrolling over income children. The program will use discretion in these situations.

### **Thirty-five Percent (35%) Poverty Line to 130% (WE DO NOT USE THIS)**

Following the new guidelines set forth in the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, additional children may be served under Head Start guidelines and be considered income eligible. The program must serve all the homeless families and all the income eligible children less than 100% of the poverty guidelines that they are aware of in the service area. If the children that meet the aforementioned guidelines are shown to be exhausted through our continuous recruitment efforts, our program may then serve up to 35% of enrollment with the population that falls within the 100% to 130% range of the poverty guidelines. This is in addition to the 10% we are able to serve that exceed the income guidelines. All funded slots will be filled from the application list according to the current federal regulation guidelines with no more than 35% from 101% to 130% of poverty level, no less than 10% children with disabilities and no greater than 10% children from over-income families.

### **Selecting Children with Disabilities**

Since Head Start was established in 1965, and Early Head Start in 1995, it has become a national leader in providing services to young children with disabilities and their families. Developmentally appropriate programming and inclusionary classrooms makes HS/EHS an attractive placement for preschool children with disabilities.

In recognition of the value and worth of all children, HS/EHS requires inclusion of children with disabilities.

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires that no less than 10% of the total number of children enrolled are children with a certified disability.

Children with disabilities must have a professional diagnosis of any of the following:

- Visual Impairment or Blind
- Hearing Impaired or Deaf
- Health Impairment (impacting normal development)
- Autism
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Speech/Language Impairment
- Learning Disability
- Developmental Impairment

Children with disabilities are defined as those children who are eligible for services under state regulations governing Part B & C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(IDEA). IDEA is a Federal law that is implemented at the State and local levels to provide screening, assessment and, for eligible children, early intervention services based on Individualized Family Service Plans

(IFSP) for infants and toddlers and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for pre-school age children. Children with disabilities requiring special education or related services (as determined by a multidisciplinary team), the local Education Agency (LEA) must be assured of a free and appropriate public education beginning with that child's third birthday. Since the LEA is obligated to assure special education for children with disabilities upon their third birthday, their eligibility for public education begins on that date.

If an eligible child with disabilities is three years of age, and is therefore eligible for special education and related services under IDEA, the Head Start Program may enroll that child if his/her third birthday does not occur by the cutoff date which the school system uses to determine eligibility for its regular public school program.

Therefore, these children should be considered age-eligible for Head Start as of their third birthday. To enroll children in this situation, the Head Start Program will acquire the evaluation team's findings which indicate that this child has a disability for which special education/related services are needed before enrolling. The recruitment of children with disabilities will be a part of the entire recruitment enrollment process.

Once HS/EHS has reached the 10% of its enrollment of children with disabilities, children who have a disability and non-disabled children will compete equally for the available enrollment opportunities according to priority points without counting the points for a disability.

### **Families Income Verified**

Families income shall be verified and a signed statement by an employee of Douglas Cherokee HS/EHS, identifying which document was examined and stating that the child is eligible to participate in the program, shall be maintained to indicate that verification has been made. Once a child is determined eligible for, and enrolled in, HS/EHS, that child remains eligible for the remainder of that program year and for the subsequent program year.

### **Returning Children**

Families with a child returning to the program for a second year, enrollment information will be reviewed and revised, as necessary. Income of returning families will not be re-verified the second year. When a child transitions from Early Head Start to Head Start, the income of the family must be re-verified.

Whenever possible, we will ensure a child who has been enrolled in Early Head Start will receive Head Start services until enrolled in school.

If a child is enrolled as income ineligible but due to age could return for another year, that child will receive returning points in the age category and an enrollment slot will be available (as part of the 10% over income) to ensure continued school readiness for the child and family.

**New: Housing cost Adjustment Calculator** : Performance Standards now allow programs to consider excessive housing costs in their family eligibility verification process. Families who are above the Federal Poverty Guidelines where the child's eligibility fell into the Foster/Kinship section or a DCEA staff person applying whose income is above the Federal Poverty Guidelines can now use the Housing cost adjustment calculator.

**Douglas-Cherokee Economic Authority, Inc.**  
**Head Start/Early Head Start**  
**Program Goals Grant Cycle 2025-2030**  
**Year 1**

Program Goals	Measurable Objectives	Data Tools and Methods used to Track Progress	Progress/Outcomes	Challenges
<p><b>Goal 1:</b> DCEA will utilize funds allocated to effectively operate the program and meet new HSPPS by looking at each component area to determine what changes or improvements are needed to operate efficiently.</p>	<p>A. Work toward pay parity as required by the HSPPS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of Scope submission</li> <li>• Pay Scale</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing 6 classrooms in 25-26</li> <li>• Reducing staff</li> <li>• Reducing number of children served</li> <li>• Reducing costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional funding</li> <li>• Negative impacts on staff</li> <li>• Negative impacts of families</li> </ul>
	<p>B. Support classrooms to meet the required In-Kind amount</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring In-Kind Pro reports</li> <li>• Training for staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More In-Kind hours from classrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing classrooms have caused loss of In-Kind hours and donated space</li> </ul>
	<p>C. Begin restructuring the program as necessary to be in compliance with HSPPS and meet budgeting constraints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change of Scope submission</li> <li>• Budget report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing classrooms</li> <li>• Cutting positions</li> <li>• Prioritize displace staff</li> <li>• Conversion of Ray's Preschool to infant room</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional funding from OHS</li> <li>• Staff moral decreased</li> <li>• Negative impact on families and communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 2:</b> DCEA will prioritize the mental well-being of staff and children by cultivating a program-wide culture of wellness that empowers staff as professionals and supports staff to efficiently accomplish their job responsibilities in a high-quality manner.</p>	<p>A. Develop plans for allocation of staff wellness funds and ideas to involve staff in wellness activities each program year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellness funds budget report</li> <li>• HS/EHS program calendar</li> <li>• Wellness surveys</li> <li>• Wellness Team meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TBD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to locate non-federal funding that can be allocated to wellness</li> <li>• Too many federal wellness funds spending restrictions</li> </ul>
	<p>B. Prioritize supporting staff in classrooms where children with severe behaviors are present</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health Consultant schedule</li> <li>• Tracking Behavior Incident Reports</li> <li>• PBSA monthly calendars</li> <li>• Training to help support staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin plans to reduce case load of PBSAs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PBSA have increased case load because of increase in number of children with needs</li> <li>• Only have one Mental Health Consultant</li> <li>• Finding time for training</li> <li>• Negative impact on staff mental wellbeing</li> </ul>