

534 East 1st North St. Morristown, TN 37814 (423)587-4500



March 31, 2025

Head Start and Early Head Start Staff Qualifications

- Early Head Start Teacher: must have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or comparable credential
- Head Start Teacher: must have at least an associate's or bachelor's degree in child development or early childhood education, or equivalent coursework
- Head Start Teacher Assistant: must have a CDA credential or a State-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, [or] enrolled in a program that will lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree or, are enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.

<https://headstart.gov/human-resources/article/head-start-staff-qualifications>

Although not required, our program only hires child care aides and substitutes with a high school diploma or equivalent to ensure they meet child supervision requirements for state licensing.

Our goal is to keep every classroom open to serve our children and families. On occasion, a classroom may close for the following reasons:

- Weather – Head Start follows your county school system for weather-related closings, Early Head Start only closes when the DCEA executive director closes the agency
- Disruptions in utilities services (i.e. electricity, gas, water, sewer)
- As directed by federal, state, or local officials (emergencies)
- Staff shortages
 - For staff absences requested in advance, we can typically keep classrooms open
 - When staff 'call out' it can be more difficult to stay open, especially if there are no substitutes available for that center
 - We will close unless there are at least two staff who meet all state licensing requirements

Providing resources, tools, and opportunities that help low-income families and individuals achieve personal, economic, and social stability.

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Adult/Child ratios and staffing requirements:

- Early Head Start: ratio is 1:4 with a maximum group size of 8 children with two teachers
- Head Start: classrooms have a teacher and assistant; ratios are 2:17 for 3-year-old classrooms and 2:20 for 4–5-year-old classrooms. Although not required, when fully staffed, our program has an additional childcare aide in every classroom.

Head Start and Early Head Start Adult/Child Ratios <https://headstart.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-21-center-based-option>

Tennessee Child Care Licensing Ratios <https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules/1240/1240-04/1240-04-01.20220629.pdf>

In the absence of the classroom teacher, the teacher assistant assumes responsibility for the classroom. All center staff, including cooks and substitutes, meet state licensing requirements to be counted in the adult/child ratio. No classroom will stay open without having at least two fully trained staff.

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