Minutes
Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start
Policy Council
October 1, 2026

Members Present

Anna Uptain	Tina Patterson
Josh Turner	Michaela Pennicott
Christy Barnes	Adam Hopkins
Missy Mathis	Natalie Jones
Carla Testerman	Melissa Logan
Jennifer Wright	

Members Not Present

Kayla Massingale	Amber Capps
Tamra Williamson	Laura Holland
Emily Cornett	

Employees Present

Melody Cantrell	Billie Epps
Kristie Woolard	Brandy Legg
Emily Kelley	Curt Amos
Amber Brobeck	Ginny Ritchea

Guests Present

Haley Moore
Megan Barnard
Rene Tabor

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start held a Policy Council Meeting on October 1, 2026, at Shoney's, located at 120 Sharon Dr. Dandridge, TN 37725.

Christy Barnes, PC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM and announced that we had a quorum.

Kristie presented Mindful Moments and discussed the importance of relaxation and demonstrated breathing techniques.

Emily Kelley, Assistant Director, provided the Literacy Reading with the book, *Skeletons Are Not Spooky!* by Duds & Kaine.

Megan Barnard, DCEA Executive Director, provided the DCEA Program Spotlight presentation. She shared information about the agency, the programs, and current employment perks.

Kristie announced that there are no new Policy Council Members to approve.

Christy asked for approval of the Policy Council minutes from September 3, 2026. The minutes are uploaded on the dceaheadstart.org website. Adam Hopkins, Sevier County, made the motion for approval and Josh Turner, Cocke County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Ginny Ritchea, HR Manager, provided the personnel report. Everyone received a copy of the report, and the report was uploaded to the website. Christy asked for a motion to approve the personnel report and approve all hiring decisions. Josh Turner, Cocke County, made the motion for approval and Natalie Jones, Union County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Melody Cantrell, Finance Manager, discussed the budget overview. Everyone received a copy of the budget, and the report was uploaded to the website. Christy asked for a motion to approve the budget report. Josh Turner, Cocke County, made the motion for approval and Natalie Jones, Union County, seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Anna Uptain, Blount County Public Library, presented Community Spotlight. Anna gave insight into the many events and community gatherings offered by the Blount County Library. For more information call 865-982-0981.

Training/Reports

- Active Parenting First Five Years: Kristie Woolard
    - Each county will provide an Active Parenting session for their parents September-December.
    - There is a total of four sessions.
- Billie Epps, Disabilities and Mental Health Manager, provided updates and information about the mental health and disability services.
    - All children are screened for speech and language delays.
    - We have partnered with the McNabb Center for Mental Heath and Behavioral Support in the classroom.
    - Every classroom now has a Special Service Assistant.
    - We currently have 9.6% of the children in our program with a diagnosed disability.
    - The Social Emotional Learning Video was shared.
- Screening Processes: Bille Epps, Brandy Legg, Health and Nutrition Manager, Amber Brobeck, Curriculum and Assessment Manager
    - Dental Exams and screenings/evaluations must be obtained in 45 days after enrollment.
    - Physicals must be obtained before entering the program.
    - The Brigance is a screening tool the program uses to identify possible developmental delays.
    - Dual Language Learners are screened in their home language with a bilingual assistant.
- Health/Nutrition Report: Brandy Legg
    - Scheduled Dental Exams were all completed by September.
    - Menu Changes were discussed.
    - Individual Health Plan process was discussed.
    - Shot record audits are being completed.
- Parent Conferences: Amber Brobeck
    - The program is required to complete two parent/teacher conferences in November and May.
    - An optional parent/teacher conference is offered in February.
- Curriculum Training/School Readiness Plan: Amber Brobeck

    - The program uses the Creative Curriculum.
    - This curriculum focuses on the whole child and incorporates Dual Language Learners.
    - Learning through play is the center of the curriculum.
    - Teaching Strategies Gold is the assessment tool that the program uses.
- Staff Education & Professional Development: Ginny Ritchea
    - A handout was provided for all members.
    - The report covers the education of all teachers, teacher assistants, and family advocates as required by the Office of Head Start.
- Program Goals Update: Emily Kelley
    - All members were provided with a copy of the current program goals.
    - Updates and progress toward reaching the goals were discussed.

Old Business
- None

New Business
Curt Amos, Program Director, presented the Director's Report
- The report was uploaded to the website for Policy Council to review before the meeting.
- Angel Tree will no longer be providing grant funding for Christmas gifts.
- NPRM: October 6th is last day to submit comments
- Child Care Licensing annual training requirements are due on September 30, 2026.
- Enrollment for September was 96.4%.
- Safety plans have been lifted at Early Head Start.
- The parent complaint about the Individual Health Plan concern has been closed.
- We had an anonymous OHS complaint at Maryville Head Start.
    - The complaint was about safety and communication concerns.
    - The program is currently working on a response.
- We are on a safety plan for cooperation with DCS following a parent complaint about a child injury at Central Point Head Start.

Kristie provided County Reports for Blount, Cocke, Grainger, and Hamblen Counties.

Kristie presented the MVP awards for the classrooms with the most volunteer hours for August.
- Blount Maryville 3
- Cocke Northwest
- Grainger Central Point
- Hamblen Learning Center 2/Early Head Start 2
- Jefferson White Pine
- Monroe Sweetwater
- Sevier Oak Cluster
- Union Corryton

Unanimous consent to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:49 PM.

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Michaela Pennicott, Secretary

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start
Policy Council Officers and Committee Members
2026-2027

Policy Council Officers

Chairperson: Christy Barnes
Vice Chair: Josh Turner
Secretary: Michaela Pennicott
Treasurer: Natalie Jones

Douglas-Cherokee Head Start/Early Head Start

Policy Council Members

2026 - 2027

Pending Approval

Blount County
Laura Holland
Anna Uptain – Community Rep (2)

Cocke County
Josh Turner
Tamra Williamson – Community Rep (4)

Grainger County
Christy Barnes
Missy Mathis – Community Rep

Hamblen County
Amber Capps **(FDFY)** (3)
Emily Cornett
Carla Testerman – Community Rep (4)

Jefferson County
Jennifer Wright (2)
Tina Patterson – Community Rep (4)

Monroe County
Kayla Massingale
Melanie Miller – Community Rep

Sevier County
Michaela Pennicott
Adam Hopkins – Community Rep

Union County
Natalie Jones
Melissa Logan – Community Rep (3)