



# Parent Handbook

2024-2025



MCCAA Head Start/Early Head Start  
WHERE EVERYONE COUNTS



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## WELCOME TO HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START!!!

We want to make sure Head Start/Early Head Start is a positive, pleasant experience for your child and for you. What can we do together to make this happen?

**Education Home Visit** – Before your child can begin school, you will be contacted by your child’s teacher to set up a home visit. This will allow the teacher to gather important information about your child so that (s)he can set up the classroom and plan activities to meet his or her educational needs.

**Family Orientation** – You will complete a Family Orientation at one of our centers. If your child transfers during the school year to another center, you do not have to complete another orientation. However, you are always welcome and encouraged to visit your child’s new center and meet the staff.

Family Orientation is where you receive basic information about the services your family will receive while enrolled in our program. You will have a chance to ask questions, take a tour of a center, and meet staff.



We encourage you to keep all information received during Family Orientation and refer to it throughout the program year if you have questions.

**Separation Anxiety** – It’s Going to Be O.K.! - Our staff are trained to work with young children. We understand that children may cry or cling to mom or dad the first few days. For some parents, separation from your child can be challenging. We will work with your children to help them settle and feel better. Usually, children calm down within minutes of the parent leaving. Make sure we have your current phone number so we can contact you if there is any reason for concern.

**School Supplies** – you won’t need any! We’ll provide everything your child needs in the way of food and education supplies. If your child needs diapers while in the center, we provide the diapers. We keep a range of sizes to make sure we have the ones that fit your child.

During center hours, we provide formula and/or meals for your child. Please do not send food. *Exception: If your infant is on breast milk, we will work with you and provide the support necessary.*

**How should my child dress?** We want them to be able to move comfortably – crawl, run, jump and play. They need to be able to use paints and markers without worrying that they’ll mess up their clothes. So – don’t send or bring them in their “best” clothes that you don’t want to get dirty.

Send or bring a change of clothes (especially underwear) in case your child has a toileting accident, gets wet while playing in the water table, or spills something during meals. Write your child's name on the clothes and place them in a sack/bag with your child's name on the bag. Label all clothes, including sweaters and jackets. Sometimes we are able to wash the soiled clothing before we send it home – if it's labeled, it won't get mixed up with another child's clothing. For infants and toddlers, you may need to send several changes of clothing and can pack them in a sack, Ziploc bag, or diaper bag – write your child's name on the bag and the clothing.



**Shoes are an important part of playing safely.** It helps if toddlers and preschoolers wear tennis shoes or shoes with rubber soles that allow them to run and play – no flip flops or crocs, please. Infants who are not yet wearing shoes should wear booties or socks.

**Personal Items** – Our classrooms are well-stocked with toys and learning materials. We ask that personal toys and items be left at home unless otherwise requested by the teacher. Teachers will sometimes request that children bring an item from home as part of an activity or project. Teachers will sometimes request that children bring an item, such as their favorite stuffed animal to show during a pet theme, from home as part of an activity or project.

The first few days of school, however, can be scary for children who have not been away from home. Some children need a special blanket, stuffed animal, or toy. It's o.k. to send those with your child at the beginning of the year (especially if your child won't go without it!). Make sure to label the item with your child's name.

**If you need assistance** and are not sure who you should talk with, contact the Site Manager or Family Service Advocate at your child's center. We look forward to working with you this year!

### **What Is Head Start/Early Head Start?**

Our Head Start/Early Head Start is an eight county, federally funded infant, toddler, and pre-school program within the Mid-Cumberland region. Head Start programs operate under annual grants from the Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children and Families. Head Start is a federally funded program. Services to families and children are at no cost during the operations of the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Head Start serves three and five-year-old children, while the Early Head Start serves infants and toddlers six weeks up to age three.



**Head Start:** is a preschool program that provides educational services to children between the ages of 3 and 5. This preschool program operates Monday – Friday during the typical school year (beginning and end dates differ by county).

**Early Head Start:** provides educational services to pregnant moms and children between the ages of 6 weeks to 35 months. Early Head Start is a year-round program that operates Monday- Friday.

Before entering into the program, parents will receive a letter that includes the actual time of center operation for Head Start and Early Head Start. Our program also serves children with special needs, such as hearing or visual loss or impairment, learning disabilities, orthopedic problems, emotional disturbances and other chronic health impairments.



Our program partners with families to provide the following services:

- **Education** – a comprehensive, individualized, research-based and developmentally appropriate curriculum which encourages self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity and self-regulation. Parents are provided with information, resources and training on child development, behavior and developmentally appropriate activities.
- **Health** – comprehensive medical/dental screenings and follow-up services for all enrolled children. Parents are provided with dental health education and are encouraged to attend medical/dental appointments with their child.
- **Nutrition** – a comprehensive nutrition program consisting of two well balanced meals (breakfast and lunch), parent education, and nutrition counseling when needed.
- **Exceptional Needs (Disabilities)** – identification, evaluation/therapy, and follow-up for children with special needs; individualized education is provided to ensure needed services are adequately provided for enrolled children. Parents are provided with Head Start and community resources as needed.
- **Mental Health** – parent and agency consultations, referrals, support groups, staff attendance with parents at M-Team meetings; psychological screenings, assessments and evaluations when needed.
- **Social Services** – through a strengths-based approach, families are assisted in identifying resources to meet their needs and encouraged to take greater responsibility toward social and economic empowerment.
- **Family Engagement** – parents have opportunities to learn Leadership and Citizenship skills through the local Parent Committee and various community activities to enhance their skills and knowledge in decision-making, planning and advocacy.

## **What can the Head Start/Early Head Start program offer to your child?**

Head Start/Early Head Start provides children with activities that help them grow mentally, socially, emotionally and physically. The Head Start/Early Head Start staff recognizes that as parents, you are the first and most important teachers of your children. They welcome your involvement in all Head Start/Early Head Start activities, and will work as partners with you to help your child progress.

Head Start/Early Head Start staff members offer your child love, acceptance, understanding, and the opportunity to learn and experience success. Head Start/Early Head Start children socialize with others, solve problems, and have experiences that help them become self-confident. The children also improve their listening and speaking skills. The children spend time in activities where they form good habits and enjoy playing with toys and working on tasks with classmates. Your child will leave Head Start/Early Head Start more prepared for kindergarten, excited about learning, and ready to succeed.

Your Head Start/Early Head Start child will also participate in medical and dental screenings to identify any potential health problem they may have (vision, hearing, dental and any needed immunizations). A mental health professional is also available for children and families that are experiencing any special situations or needs in this area.

### **Center-Based Program**

Children enrolled in the center-based program will be assigned a classroom with a group size based on their age. Group sizes for children in Early Head Start are eight children with two Teachers. Group sizes for Head Start are 16-20 children, depending on the age of the children, with one Lead Teacher and a Teacher Assistant. Once children arrive at these centers, they are greeted warmly by the Head Start/Early Head Start staff and their teachers. They put their coats and personal items in a cubby which is their own to use daily. They may have time to join other classmates at tables to play, or they could join a circle group to share ideas or experiences with other children before they have a nutritious breakfast in a family-style setting.

Classroom time includes many different activities. They may have group activities to begin the day, such as singing or story time, with the whole class participating. Each classroom is arranged with learning centers where children can freely explore and learn together. They may choose from art, playing with blocks or table toys, science activities, looking at books, or 'pretending' in the dramatic play area. Each day the children have time to work in small groups with other children and to play outside on safe, age appropriate playground equipment. At lunch time, the children receive a nutritious meal. Children brush their teeth once a day at the center. All of the children are taught to wash their hands before meals, and are encouraged to develop good, healthy personal habits.



### **School Readiness**

One of the primary goals of the HS/EHS program is to ensure that by the time children leave Head Start, they are prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. The program enhances children's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development in the learning environment. Children will gain skills in language, literacy, mathematics, science, social and emotional functioning, creative arts, physical skills and approaches to learning.

Families are a part of developing school readiness goals, identifying individual goals for their own children, and learning about their child's progress throughout the year. Children's individual progress is shared with parents and families throughout the year. In the Early Head Start program, teaching staff meet with the parents monthly to discuss the Collaborative Education Plan for Individualization. This plan identifies for the parents the most recently accomplished skills in each domain and also emerging skills that should be worked on both at school and at home. Parents are partners with teachers in determining the role each will play in helping the child advance in his or her development.

In the Head Start program, school readiness progress is shared during the second Home Visit and both Parent Teacher Conferences. Parent Teacher Conferences and the second Home Visit are scheduled following each of the 3 assessments so that teaching staff and parents can identify accomplished skills in each domain and also emerging skills that should be worked on both at school and at home. The program has developed school readiness goals for Head Start and Early Head Start children.

Progress is shared in both programs by sending home a development and learning report twice a month. This report will share information about each child's accomplished and emerging skills.

### IMPORTANT - Sign In & Out Procedures

Our agency implements the following sign-in/out procedures mandated by the Tennessee Department of Human Services as a safety precaution for the children in our care:

- **SIGNING IN** - Upon arrival, children will be signed into the classroom on the sheet provided by the teacher. Children riding the bus will be signed in on the sheet provided by the bus driver.
- **CHILD SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT** - As a safety precaution, the DHS mandates that children be accompanied by an adult to and from the bus or the classroom. The person picking up must be at least 18 years old. Exceptions to this are only if the legal custodial parent is under the age of 18.
- **PHOTO I.D.** - When picking up a child, we will need you to present a photo I.D. (i.e. Driver's license).
- **MUST BE ON PICK UP LIST** - The name of the person picking up must be on the contact & release form; otherwise the child will **NOT** be released.
- **NO VERBAL PERMISSIONS ACCEPTED** - For safety reasons, no verbal permissions to release children are permitted. If you are unable to pick up your child, you cannot call the center to add someone to the pick-up list. A change of status form must be completed in advance in order for someone new to pick up your child. A written and signed note from the parent/guardian will be accepted in emergencies. You should inform any person picking up your child that they will be asked to provide identification and will be required to sign the child out from the center.
- **EASY TO READ** – The Tennessee Department of Human Services requires that you print and sign your name as well as include times on the sign in/out sheets.
- **CHANGE OF STATUS** – Please complete a change of status form if:
  - You change your name, phone number or address.
  - You want to add or remove someone from the pick-up list.
- **CHILD SAFETY**– A child will not be released to a person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If the person becomes hostile, 911 will be called.

## Technology in the Classroom

Classrooms with children ages 24 months and older may be equipped with one or more of the following pieces of technology:



Hatch Ignite software on Tablet  
 Hatch Ignite software on Computer  
 TeachSmart Interactive Display or Whiteboard



The following software and websites are approved for use in our classrooms:

<b>Software</b>	
Hatch Ignite	
EC Launch	
<b>Websites</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Web Address</b>
American Museum of Natural History	<a href="http://www.amnh.org/ology">www.amnh.org/ology</a>
Go Noodle	<a href="http://www.gonoodle.com">www.gonoodle.com</a>
Discovery Kids	<a href="http://kids.discovery.com">kids.discovery.com</a>
IXL	<a href="http://www.ixl.com/math/pre-k">www.ixl.com/math/pre-k</a>
Nancy Stewart- Children’s Music	<a href="http://www.nancymusic.com/Som-Cat.htm">www.nancymusic.com/Som-Cat.htm</a>
The Learning Station	<a href="https://www.learningstationmusic.com/">https://www.learningstationmusic.com/</a>
National Geographic Kids	<a href="http://kids.nationalgeographic.com">kids.nationalgeographic.com</a>
Patty Shukla	<a href="http://www.pattysuklakidsmusic.com">www.pattysuklakidsmusic.com</a>
PBS Kids	<a href="http://pbskids.org">pbskids.org</a>
Seussville	<a href="http://www.seussville.com/play">www.seussville.com/play</a>
Sesame Street	<a href="http://www.sesamestreet.org">www.sesamestreet.org</a>
Sheppard’s Software- We make learning fun!	<a href="http://www.sheppardsoftware.com">www.sheppardsoftware.com</a>
Starfall	<a href="http://www.starfall.com">www.starfall.com</a>

Teaching staff must get additional software, websites or videos approved and will send home a Technology Notification form to parents before using them in the classroom.

### Overview of Screenings and Assessments

The following screenings and assessments will be conducted throughout the year to support your child's development and learning. Screenings identify any areas that may require more in-

depth assessment. Assessments allow adaptation of teaching practices and the environment to meet your child's specific rate of development.

<b>SCREENINGS</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>PURPOSE &amp; USE</b>
Vision	Within 45 days of entry	Identify any vision concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Dental		Identify any dental concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Hearing		Identify any hearing concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Lead (Toddlers Only)		Identify any health concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Tuberculosis (Head Start Only)		Identify any health concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Hemoglobin/ Hematocrit (Toddlers Only)		Identify any health concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Height/Weight/BMI		Will be collected three times a year and BMI will be calculated; refer to Nutritionist if necessary
Blood Pressure		Collected from the physical or blood pressure is taken; refer to physician if necessary
Fluharty Speech & Language Screen or Preschool Language Scale, Fourth Edition (Head Start Only)		Identify any speech, articulation and comprehension concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Brigance		Identify any developmental concerns and refer for follow-up if necessary
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment	Within 45 days of entry; Second assessment completed in five months or end of year	Measures the presence of protective factors (self-control, initiative and attachment). Helps to identify children who are low on the protective factors so that targeted classroom and home-based strategies can be implemented leading to the strengthening of these abilities.
My Teaching Strategies GOLD®	Ongoing assessment; information collected within 8 weeks of enrollment, Jan, April	Measures children's accomplished and emerging skills in the areas of social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts and English language acquisition.
Portfolio Assessment	Information collected	A collection of your child's artwork, drawings, name writing samples, self-portraits and pictures.
Development & Learning Reports	Twice a month	MTSGold® report used to share information with families from teacher observations of children's accomplished and emerging skills.

## Field Trip Guidelines

1. Adults on field trips are there to supervise children and to ensure their safety at all times. Children are never to be left alone or unattended. Children are not to go anywhere without an adult present.
2. Children should be kept within reach at all times (it is often best to hold their hand)
3. An adult serves as a positive role model for children, by using manners and appropriate language. The adult should be an example for the children to follow.
4. Adults are not permitted to smoke in the presence of children on field trips.
5. Adults eat and drink the same foods and beverages that the children eat and drink.
6. Adults (even parents) cannot buy item(s) for any child unless approved in advance of the field trip, and arrangements are made for every child to have the same item(s).
7. Adults must not use any type of physical punishment (even with their own child) at any time they are involved in a program activity.
8. Everyone must abide by the rules of the public place that is visited and respect our community.
9. Adults must stay with the group until they arrive back to the center unless prior arrangements have been made with staff.
10. Everyone must wear a seat belt while riding to and from the field trip destination.
11. Additional children may not be brought on the field trip unless prior approval has been received.

## Services for Children with Exceptional Needs

Services for children with exceptional needs include outreach and recruitment, screening, professional diagnosis, development and implementation of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for 0-3 yo and Individual Education Plan (IEP) for 3-5 yo. If needed the IEP will transition with the child into local school districts (or other settings) after attending the program. Head Start/Early Head Start offers services for children with exceptional needs and their families through a four-step process involving:



1. Recruitment of children with exceptional needs.
2. Screening and assessment of all children and, when needed, referrals to the local school system or the Tennessee Early Intervention System.
3. Implementation of Individual Education Plan (IEP) or individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children with a confirmed diagnosis.
4. Referral to the public-school system for children who may need assistance upon their entrance into kindergarten.

### How does this process affect me as a parent?

All children will be screened for speech/language delays and developmental delays. Should the screening show further testing is needed, we will ask for parental permission for further evaluation. Parents will be informed of all screenings and testing results.

### **What happens after the tests are completed?**

If the tests or evaluations indicate help is needed, the Tennessee Early Intervention System will develop an individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children 0-3 yo. The Local Education Association (LEA) will develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for children 3-5 yo. This plan is designed to enhance the child's learning and development.

### **Do I need to attend the IEP/IFSP meetings?**

In order for an IEP or IFSP to occur, the parents must be involved. We encourage parents to participate in the entire process and become informed. Your input about your child's needs and goals are very important at these meetings. Your ideas and suggestions about how to achieve these goals are put into a working plan.

### **What happens after the meetings?**

Everyone involved with the child helps implement the IEP/IFSP. It is important for parents to know what their children are working on so you can encourage your child's development through appropriate activities at home.

### **What can I do to help as a parent?**

1. Talk often with your child's teacher about the child's progress.
2. Work to develop a good relationship with professionals working with your child. Don't be defensive. We need your cooperation and your honest opinions.
3. Return all permission slips as soon as possible because we can't serve your child without your written permission.
4. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
5. Don't be shy about requesting needed services for your child.
6. Spend time with your child doing activities and games that will help him/her grow and learn.

## **Behavior Management and Discipline**

One of the main objectives of the program is to support the social and emotional development of every child. The overall goal of any behavior management plan is not to control child's behavior, but instead, to help children to manage their own emotions and behavior. Teachers and staff are expected to support the development of social and emotional skills, such as self-regulation, in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior; redirecting children to a more acceptable activity; setting clear, consistent limits; having realistic expectations; and by implementing preventative strategies and teaching replacement skills for unacceptable or harmful behavior. Adults assist children to develop these skills by:

1. Providing activities and a daily schedule that engages the child academically and physically and which is developmentally appropriate for the attention span of each child;
2. Utilizing a process of observing, anticipating/preventing and redirecting;
3. Teaching and reinforcing our S.T.A.R. program-wide expectations, "I am Safe. I am a Team Player. I am Active. I am Respectful."
4. Providing Positive Behavior Support for children's development of age-appropriate acceptable behaviors;
5. Assisting children to develop age-appropriate problem-solving skills by guiding them and by modeling how to solve problems and to resolve differences;
6. Using books, stories, puppets, and other experiences to reinforce positive social behaviors; and



7. Collaborating with parents about Positive Behavior Support practices that support the child, and ensuring that the bridge between the home and program environments provide consistency for the child.

### **Unacceptable Behavior Management Activities**

Time out, as defined below, is not an acceptable form of discipline at Head Start/Early Head Start. *Time out includes forcing a child to sit in a chair away from the group and/or isolating the child to another part of the room.* It is permissible to have a designated, comfortable place, (such as a plastic swimming pool filled with a few books and stuffed animals, or other clearly identifiable area, such as library corner) in the classroom for the overwhelmed and/or upset child to calm himself or herself down. The children should be told in advance that they may utilize this space when they need to “calm down,” “regroup” or “cool out.” It is a good idea to have a selection of age-appropriate books, drawing supplies, stuffed animals and soft pillows to facilitate the calming down process. Other unacceptable forms of discipline include humiliating the child, threatening the child, withholding food or outdoor play from the child, physically hitting or “spanking,” grabbing, yelling at, or verbally abusing the child. We also do not speak harshly or yell at children. In other words, no corporal punishment is permissible. When parents are in our center, we require that they, as volunteers, follow the same policy.

### **Suspension/Expulsion Policy**

Head Start and Early Head Start recognizes that that a child's school readiness is linked to social competence and emotional well-being. Classrooms will be designed in such a way to promote and support the development of prosocial and cooperative behavior. Teaching staff will be intentional in using strategies that support the enhancement of social competence. Our multi-tiered system of intervention allows for all children to have the opportunity to develop healthy social, emotional and behavioral skills.



A number of steps are taken to decrease the likelihood of unsafe, harmful behaviors that include, but are not limited to:

1. An individual safety plan is developed to describe actions that need to be taken immediately to decrease the opportunity and likelihood of specific unsafe behaviors. The Mental Health Team will be responsible for carrying out the plan and providing information on the next steps.
2. A Positive Behavior Support Plan is developed to equip children with the social-emotional and communication skills needed to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop healthy behavior. The process puts an emphasis on preventative strategies and supportive responses from adults. The plan is facilitated by the Staff Resource & Behavior Coaches who provide modeling and coaching to teaching staff. The plan is implemented by teaching staff, the child's family, and leadership staff. The Staff Resource & Behavior Coaches and Staff Development and Education Coaches provide ongoing support to teaching staff as the plan is implemented and adjusted as needed to meet the child's individual social, emotional and behavioral needs. Parent input is also gathered on an ongoing basis throughout the year.
3. Head Start and Early Head Start secures the services of a Mental Health Consultant, in accordance with Head Start Program Performance Standards, to assist and support staff as they implement strategies to identify and support children with mental health and social and emotional concerns; work to improve classroom management and teacher practices through strategies that include using classroom observations and consultations to address teacher and individual child needs and creating physical and cultural environments that promote positive mental health and social and emotional functioning; address prevalent child mental health concerns, including internalizing problems such as appearing withdrawn and externalizing problems such as challenging behaviors; and, help both parents and staff to understand mental health and access mental health interventions, if needed. Parent permission is gained during enrollment to allow for the Mental Health Consultant to conduct classroom and individual observations in order to provide information, strategies and recommendations to parents and staff on how to best support children in need of social, emotional, and behavioral intervention.
4. Reviewing the child's developmental assessment information and consulting with both the parent and teacher, along with other program staff, to determine if a referral to the LEA/TEIS is appropriate. If the child already has an IEP or an IFSP, the program will consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services. If recommended by the program's Mental Health team, a referral to an outside Mental Health/Behavioral agency is given to the parent/guardian and support is provided to the family as the referral is processed and services begin for the child and/or family.

It is the procedure of Head Start and Early Head Start, in accordance with Office of Head Start Program Performance Standards, to severely limit the use of suspension or other modifications of services due to a child's behavior. Such safety measures may only be used temporarily and only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications. The steps listed above are required to take place before a determination can be made whether a temporary suspension or other modification of services is necessary.

Furthermore, if a temporary suspension or modification to services is deemed necessary, the program will help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety.

Additionally, Head Start and Early Head Start does not expel or unroll a child from the program because of a child's behavior. If, after a program has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described above, a program, in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program will work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

### **Parent Committee Meetings**

The Parent Committee is made up of parents (or guardians) whose children are enrolled in Head Start/Early Head Start. The staff assists the Parent Committees in planning workshops, activities/crafts; community, center and parent projects. The Parent Committee performs the following tasks:

- Aid staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities, and services to ensure they meet the needs of children and families.
- Have a process for communication between the policy council and parent committee.
- Participate in the recruitment and screening of Early Head Start and Head Start employees. This must be within the guidelines established by the governing body or policy council.
- Help plan, conduct, and participate in parent/staff programs and activities.
- Initiate suggestions and ideas for program improvements.
- Communicate with other parents and encourage their participation in the program.
- Aid in recruiting parent and community volunteers.
- Assist in the identification and participation of community resources and agencies to meet identified needs.
- Advocate, with other parents and staff, regarding community problems of common concern such as health, housing, educational and welfare reform.
- Sponsor activities and programs around interests expressed by parents.

### **Policy Council**

The Policy Council consists of two elected parent representatives and alternates from each of the eight (8) counties represented by Head Start and one community representative from each county. The Policy Council meets regularly to discuss and make decisions regarding Head Start/Early Head Start program plans, policies, budgets and concerns. Policy Council representatives will provide a report at their Parent Committee Meetings.

The Council meetings are held once a month for about 2-3 hours. Lunch is always provided for Policy Council meetings. Reimbursement for childcare and travel is also provided, if needed, while attending Policy Council meetings.

Some information discussed during the meetings will be confidential; therefore, members are asked to sign a general statement regarding confidential information.

All policy Council members will serve on at least one committee.

These committees are:

- Personnel Committee
- Program Planning Committee
- Family & Community Partnership Committee
- Finance Committee

## **Parent Trainings**

Head Start has developed a plan for parent education and information. Trainings will be provided to parents on various topics in group settings as well as individually. Some trainings are available online using Mind Flash. Your Family Service Advocate will give you more details as to which trainings are available online as well as other trainings offered on site.



## **Family Connections**

Family Connections is an opportunity for families to come together and discuss common life situations while building connections with their peers. These life situations include life experiences, skills, attributes, ideas, knowledge and even challenges. During a group meeting, parents are encouraged to discuss topics that are interesting to them and affect their daily life. Parents share their experiences and group members offer support, encouragement, and possible solutions to their situation, if requested.

## **Volunteering in Our Program**

### **Head Start Needs Your Help!!!**

We want and need Head Start parents to assist in the classroom, on field trips and to be actively involved in Parent Committees and the Policy Council. The Policy Council assists in the planning and decision-



making process of the Head Start program as described on the previous page. We also need your participation during each home visit and in working with your child on the at-home activities developed by staff and parents.

Each volunteer is encouraged to attend a Volunteer Training Session before volunteering at the center. This training is offered both during day and evening hours. You will learn about the many volunteer opportunities in Head Start and specific duties you can assist with in the classroom. Dates and times for your county's Volunteer Training is listed on the calendar of events you receive each month.



**You can help in many ways:**

- Classroom Volunteer
- Office Assistant
- Field Trip Assistant
- Policy Council
- Recruitment
- Special Projects
- Parent Meetings
- Center Maintenance
- And the list goes on...



## Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

All day care centers, including Head Start agencies are required to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. All reports are kept confidential and are made in good faith. Suspected cases are reported to the Department of Child Protective Services.

Because we believe every child has the right to be safe and free from abuse and neglect, it is our goal to assist families by providing preventative services through education, counseling, emotional support, utilization of community resources, information and materials. If you would like more information about how to recognize signs of abuse or how to get help for children and/or adults, please contact the Site Manager at your center.

## Attendance



Attendance is important to your child's enrollment in the Head Start Program. As a group, our children always make great progress during the year - but only if they attend regularly. When your child misses' class, he/she misses the consistency of a structured schedule, differentiated developmental skills, social skills from teacher and peer interactions, and crucial language skills. Bringing your child to school regularly will promote responsibility and allow your child to be successful now and in the future.

Most children have some "separation" symptoms and should be given at least three weeks to settle into a comfortable routine.

Separation symptoms may also occur after schedule changes, and especially after long holidays or fall break (sometimes even after illnesses). Head Start staff will work with you to help your child feel comfortable at the Center again.

### What You Can Do to Help Your Child Attend Regularly

- Make sure your child is asleep at the same time each night ... early.
- Lay out clothes the night before classes
- Set an alarm each morning for about the same time.
- Don't let your child stay home unless she is truly sick.
- If your child seems nervous about going to school, talk to your teacher or your family worker. Together, we can figure out how to make your child feel more comfortable.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Plan in advance so if you need to you can call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.

### Absence from Class or Home Visit:

1. Notify your child's teacher whenever your child is absent. Notification as early as possible in the day allows time to adjust the bus routes or home visit schedule. Please inform your child's teacher of the reason for the absence and when you expect the child to return to the Head Start/Early Head Start Program.
2. Please send in a doctor's note for your child when they return to school to document the days they missed. If your child is out for quarantine purposes due to a family member being sick, a doctor's note for that family member will suffice for your child. Parent notes will not be accepted.

### Procedure When Children Miss Consecutive Days with No Contact from Parent/Guardian:

1. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the program within one hour of program start time, center staff will contact you to ensure everything is ok.
2. If a child is unexpectedly absent for two consecutive days and center staff are unable to reach you or make other direct contact with you, a home visit will be conducted. If no one is at home, a message will be left at the home requesting you to contact Head Start staff.
3. The Head Start/Early Head Start Program is funded to serve only a small number of children that both need and want the services. Therefore, extended or repeated absences may force us to drop your child from the program.

## Sick Child/Child Exclusion Policy

At the beginning of each program day, staff will complete a daily health check on each child. The purpose of the daily health check is to minimize the spreading of illness. Any child who has exhibited signs of communicable disease should be temporarily excluded, or sent home, from the program. The length of time the child should be excluded will depend on both the medical provider's recommendation as well as state licensing requirements and Office of Head Start performance standards.

When a child becomes ill during the program day, but does not need immediate medical help, a determination must be made regarding whether a child should be temporarily excluded, or sent home. A sick child will be isolated from the group with adult supervision until arrangements can be made for the child to go home. Parents will be expected to pick up any child that is sick or plan for someone else to do this. Ultimately, the determination of whether or not a child can remain with the group will be based on the following considerations:



- Does it prevent the child from participating comfortably in activities?
- Does it result in a need for care greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children?
- Does it pose a risk to spread a harmful disease to others?

### **Symptoms that would indicate a need to temporarily exclude a child include, but not limited to,**

- A fever of 100° F (using ear thermometer) for children over six months of age. Children younger than six months who have a fever above 100° F should be medically evaluated. Children under two months of age with any fever should receive immediate medical attention,
- Diarrhea of three (3) or more watery stools, or any with blood or mucus.
- Vomiting two (2) or more times in the previous 24 hours, unless it can be determined that the cause is a non-infectious condition,
- Abdominal pain that continues for more than 2 hours or is associated with other signs or symptoms of illness,
- Unexplained rashes or a diaper rash that show no sign of improvement,
- Evidence of Scabies, Chicken pox, Rubella, Mumps, Measles until the child is on appropriate treatment and medically cleared to return,
- Other unexplained skin conditions (such as oozing sores) until seen by the child's medical provider and on appropriate treatment,
- Head Lice until after the first treatment (exclusion is not necessary before the end of the program day),
- Oral pain, redness, swelling or sores in the mouth, and/or
- An acute change in behavior, such as lethargy/lack of responsiveness, difficulty breathing, unusually pale skin.

## Parent's Daily Health Check

Check your child each day for the following conditions. Please **DO NOT** send your child to school if she/he has any of the following:

- ✓ **General:** Any child with a fever, severe coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, or extreme irritability or unusual drowsiness.
- ✓ **Skin:** Unusual paleness or an ashy color for dark skin tones, a rash or a boil.
- ✓ **Scalp:** Nits, lice, bald spots, or areas of broken skin suggesting ringworm.
- ✓ **Eyes:** Inflammation, discharge, or very water eyes.
- ✓ **Ears:** A discharge from the ear (unless it is under medical care).
- ✓ **Nose:** A thick mucus discharge-either yellow or green.



## Medical and/or Dental Emergencies

Emergency information is kept on file for each child who is enrolled in the program. This emergency information includes, but is not limited to:

1. Emergency Contact information for the parent/guardian as well as other adults the parent/guardian has listed in the event that the parent/guardian cannot be reached;
2. Emergency Consent signed by the parent/guardian. The Emergency Consent form grants permission to Mid Cumberland CAA Head Start and Early Head Start to take emergency measures (e.g. first aid, disaster evacuation) as judged necessary for the care and protection of a child while under our supervision of the center in the event that the parent/guardian cannot be contacted when an immediate decision must be made concerning the child's treatment and/or safety;
3. The child's health provider and oral health provider's contact information;
4. The child's insurance information;
5. Health history information for all children; and
6. Health condition(s) information, including the health provider and parent/guardian's input, as well as emergency/rescue medication information, if applicable.

**In the event of an individual child's medical or dental emergency, staff are instructed to:**

1. Assess the condition of the child and ensure that one staff member will stay with the child at all times.
2. Apply necessary emergency measures, such as first aid treatment. Staff members must maintain current CPR and First Aid certification.
3. Notify the parent/guardian.
4. Contact Site Manager/Designated Site Leadership, if not on site.



5. Determine the severity of the condition and call 911 for Emergency Responders if deemed necessary.
6. Provide emergency information on file for the child to Emergency Responders.
7. Notify the Central Office.

Additionally, all classrooms must maintain an Emergency Board which displays the Emergency/Disaster Plans for the site, contact information for emergency services (such as the police department, fire department, poison control, etc.), emergency evacuation procedures, and safety drill documentation worksheet.

### **Notice of Privacy Practices**

Head Start/Early Head Start is required by applicable federal and state laws to maintain the privacy of your child's health and family information.

To protect the privacy of information on children and families served by Head Start/Early Head Start, our program will continue to abide by HIPAA regulation.



### **Parent Concerns/Complaints**

Head Start/Early Head Start promotes two-way communication between staff and parents, and encourages parental in-put in all areas of the program. Please feel free to discuss your concerns with program staff at any time.

A process is in place for Head Start parents to express their concerns or complaints about the program. This process begins with communication between the classroom teacher/caregiver and parent(s). The next step is for the parties involved to work together on problem solving. Finally, a Parent or Community Problem Resolution Form is available in each classroom. This form should be completed **ONLY** after all other efforts have been made at the center to resolve concerns through problem solving. The procedure for reporting concerns and complaints is as follows:

1. The parent should contact the teacher or caregiver immediately about any concerns.
2. The teacher/caregiver will address parent concerns. If the issue is not resolved, the teacher and parent will begin the process of problem solving.
3. If the concern is not resolved after the problem-solving process has been evaluated, the parent will be asked to complete the Parent or Community Problem Resolution Form.
4. The Site Manager will work with the parent, and other staff as necessary, to satisfactorily resolve the concern.

***If you have any questions about this process, please ask your child's teacher.***

## Head Start Transportation Procedures

1. Your child should be picked up and dropped off at approximately the same time each morning and afternoon. Please have him/her ready and be looking and listening for the bus. The driver and/or monitor must see an adult when they pick your child up and when they bring your child home. If at all possible, parents should bring their child(ren) to the bus.
2. We cannot leave your child in the care of another child. An authorized adult must be at home to receive the Head Start child.
3. We need your help in making sure that children do not have food, drink or small items that could cause choking if swallowed on the bus (i.e. candy and/or gum, pennies, pens, etc.).
4. Children often take their coats and sweaters off while riding the bus. The driver and monitor will try to see that your child remembers to take his coat, jacket, sweater, etc. However, it will help if you can put your child's name on these articles of clothing.
5. It is very important that you contact the Head Start Center or your child's bus driver as soon as possible when your child is going to be absent. This helps us keep the bus route running smoothly and in a timely manner.
6. It is also important for you to be at home to receive your child. We understand that occasionally there could be an emergency that would not permit you to be at home at the time of drop-off. It is vital that in an emergency situation, you make arrangements for your child, and contact the center concerning the arrangements made. Children cannot be delivered outside of the transportation area, and the drop-off person must be on your emergency release authorization.



If you know in advance that you cannot be at home to receive your child please have an authorized adult there to receive them, or make arrangements for your child to be taken to the emergency drop-off location by:

1. Making sure the emergency drop-off person will be in their home to receive your child at the drop off time.
2. Giving the Head Start driver, at the time of pick-up, a signed note authorizing the delivery of your child to the emergency drop.

If an emergency occurs after your child has been taken to the Head Start and you cannot send a note, please call the Supervisor at your child's center. Let them know about your emergency and authorize delivery of your child to the emergency drop-off.



## Transitioning

Throughout life, children will experience many types of transitions. These transitions often include transitioning from home to an early childcare or education program, transitioning between age groups while participating in a program setting and one of the biggest childhood transitions, going to kindergarten. Because the early childhood years are so formative for children and its impact plays a large role in how children start to view the world, supporting families and children during transitions is extremely important. Positive transitions have far-reaching effects on children’s well-being and their academic success. For this reason, our program strives to support children and families by trying to improve how they connect and communicate during times of transitions and beyond. Our Family Service Advocates make every effort to provide families with relevant resources and materials to assist them as they transition to help make the process as positive and beneficial as possible.



# Parent/Child Guidelines

The following is some of the information that every parent should know about the Head Start Program to ensure a successful year for the parent and the child.

1. The parent will follow the attendance and absentee procedure and take responsibility for child's attendance in the Head Start Program.
2. The parent is to call the center prior to the time class begins if a child will be late or absent.
3. Any changes in parent circumstances (address, telephone numbers, employment, emergency contact information, authorization of release of child) must be reported immediately to the teaching staff or family service staff.
4. Any changes involving the legal custody of children are to be reported immediately to teaching/family service staff and copies of legal documents related to these changes must be provided.
5. Decisions concerning parental custody and visitation rights are the responsibility of the court, not program staff. To protect staff, when a question of custody occurs the following steps are taken:
  1. The parent is required to provide a certified copy of the court orders showing that he or she has legal custody of the child.
  2. In TN, when a child is born to unmarried parents, Tennessee law automatically grants legal and physical custody of the child to the mother unless paternity has been established by a court order and unless the court order changes custody.
  3. In TN, married parents (who are not legally separated or divorced) automatically share equal rights and access to children in most cases.
  4. A grandparent, other relative or foster parent is also required to provide certified court orders that show they are the legal guardian of the child.
  5. A certified copy of the court orders is filed in the PFCE File.
  6. The program is bound by law, and will comply with court custody orders.
6. For the safety of your child, you will be asked to fill out a Change of Status form or a new Contact and Release Form if you want someone other than the person designated on your enrollment form or emergency information to be allowed to pick up your child from the center. We do not accept verbal authorizations over the phone – it must be in writing. You should inform this person they will be asked to provide identification and will be required to sign the child out from the center.
7. Unexpected visitors who come to the center claiming to be relatives to the child will not be allowed to have contact with the child unless prior arrangements have been made by the custodial parent. Please discuss any situations that you think might arise with your teacher

at the initial home visit. It is best to discuss this policy with your family members, so that there won't be any situations that make your child, relative, or staff uncomfortable.

8. A child will not be released to a person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If the person becomes abusive or hostile, the child is released and 911 is called.
9. In the event that an Emergency/Disaster situation has occurred affecting the entire center, center staff will stay and care for the children while following the procedures posted in the site's Emergency/Disasters Plans that are reviewed each program year by site staff. Plans are posted in all classrooms and offices in the center and include evacuation procedures and locations as well as reunification plans and locations.
10. Unless specifically pre-arranged, no child is to bring food, toys, etc. on the bus or to the school. The agency assumes no responsibility for the loss of or damage to personal possessions of the child.
11. Children should wear comfortable, washable play clothes. Parents are to provide one extra set of play clothes, socks, and underwear for the child to use as needed. These are to be kept in the classroom.
12. Parents who transport children to and from the center are to take their child to the classroom when they arrive at the center in the mornings. All children must be signed in by the adult accompanying the child immediately upon arrival at the center (except in instances where enough staff are not present to maintain required ratios, in which case the parent would need to wait until the appropriate number of adults are present). The teacher is to be informed when the child arrives and leaves. When parking a car, the ignition is to be turned off, the emergency brake put on (if parking at an incline or decline parking area) and the key taken out of the car. **DO NOT LEAVE CHILDREN IN A VEHICLE THAT IS NOT ATTENDED BY AN ADULT.**
13. Children under the age of one and weighing twenty (20) pounds or less must be secured in a child passenger restraint system in a rear facing position in a rear seat. If the child safety seat has a higher rear facing weight, usually 30-35 lbs., it may continue to be used in a rear facing position so long as the child's weight permits. Children ages 1 through 3 and weighing more than 20 pounds must be secured in a child safety seat in a forward position in the rear seat. Children ages 4 through 8 and measuring less than four feet nine inches in height must be secured in a belt –positioning booster seat in the rear seat of the vehicle. Parents of all Head Start/Early Head Start children must agree to abide by Tennessee's child passenger protection law.
14. When requested, parents are expected to make and keep scheduled appointments with center staff.
15. A brief health check will be conducted on each child daily. This is to reduce the spread of communicable diseases. Any child who has exhibited signs of communicable disease should be temporarily excluded, or sent home, from the program. A sick child will be isolated from



the group with adult supervision until arrangements can be made for the child to go home. Parents will be expected to pick up any child that is sick or plan for someone else to do this. A sick child sent home must be fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before he/she may return to school.

16. All parents will be notified in writing of any communicable disease identified in children at the center.
17. The parent is to notify the center staff of any medical or other special needs of the child.
18. Head Start / Early Head Start does not administer non-prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol).
19. If a child must be given medication at the center, an Individualized Health Care Plan form must be completed. This form includes the medical provider's instructions and signature, the parent/guardian's permission to administer the medication during the program day, and a checklist for staff to complete to ensure all information is complete. As medication is administered, staff will review with the parent/guardian the Individualized Health Care Plan. Medication must be in its original bottle and clearly labeled with:
  - a) Child's Name
  - b) Drug Name
  - c) Dosage
  - d) Expiration Date
20. Head Start/Early Head Start is a smoke free environment. No one is allowed to smoke around the children or in facilities that serve Head Start/Early Head Start children. Smoking is not allowed on Head Start property. This also applies to e-cigarettes, as they also produce chemicals that pose serious hazards to children and others.
21. MCCA Head Start and Early Head Start centers close in inclement weather when the local school system closes. School closings due to inclement weather are announced on the local television stations and social media. In the event of predicted inclement weather conditions, children will take child tablets home to complete remote learning while schools are closed.
22. All meals served must follow guidelines of the Child and Adult Care Food Program. It is necessary that cooks or other personnel purchase and prepare all the food that children receive at the center to comply with guidelines. Children will always be allowed seconds as they request, however, no food may be sent home. Parents may eat breakfast or lunch at the center when volunteering. Due to planning requirements, no more than 2 volunteers may eat per meal.
23. Meal substitutions are made for any child who cannot consume a food item, (for medical or other special dietary reasons) and/or must have special types of foods or adaptive feeding equipment. These situations must have an Individualized Health Care Plan specifying those

special dietary needs signed by a physician or other recognized medical authority. The meal must still meet CACFP requirements.

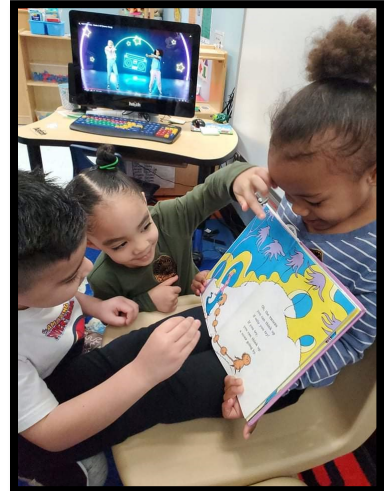
24. Parents and staff **may not bring** any homemade or purchased prepackaged food into the center for children's consumption. This includes but is not limited to foods, sweets, candy, or chewing gum.
25. Research based curriculum is not "holiday focused" and therefore classroom staff will not teach or plan curriculum activities that promote specific holidays. Families are encouraged to share their culture and traditions that may be introduced as part of the curriculum. Just as with holidays, birthday celebrations are not part of the program curriculum. Children are recognized by the teacher regularly for the special people they are.
26. Because Head Start is a federally funded program, organized prayer in the school is not allowed due to the differences in cultural and religious beliefs.
27. Head Start is a free program to the children and families we serve. We may not ask for any supplemental funds (except where full-day, day care services are provided). Parents may not be asked to bring money for parties, pictures, or gifts. Head Start teachers and staff are not allowed to accept gifts or gratuities from children or families. These guidelines will be discussed at the first parent meeting.
28. Procedures and guidelines for parties, field trips, and end of year activities must be followed. No formal graduation ceremonies (caps and gowns) will be allowed. These procedures will be discussed at the first parent meeting.
29. Parent participation in the Head Start Program is very important, and parents are encouraged to spend time in some of the many activities scheduled, in and out of the children's classrooms.
30. Permission for the observation of children will be obtained through written consent by the child's parent/guardian for all Non-Head Start and Early Head Start Staff, including contracted consultants and outside community partners.
31. You have been provided with a Tennessee Department of Human Services Requirements Summary Sheet for child care centers. Please read this document very carefully and ask your child's teacher any questions you may have about the guidelines. We are licensed by the State of Tennessee, so we must follow these requirements as a minimum. There are some instances where Head Start Program guidelines are stricter than licensing requirements.
32. No Head Start child is to be hit, spanked, yelled at, or spoken to in a degrading manner by anyone, including Head Start staff and parent volunteers. "Corporal Punishment" as a form of discipline is not allowed in any form in the Head Start Program. Center staff have been trained in positive behavior support strategies, such as modeling and encouraging expected

behavior; redirecting children to a more acceptable activity; setting clear, consistent limits; having realistic expectations; and by implementing preventative strategies and teaching replacement skills for unacceptable or harmful behavior. Positive Behavior Support trainings and information are available to all parents and families.

33. All Head Start staff abides by Federal and State of Tennessee laws in regard to the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Any and all suspected signs/incidents of child abuse and neglect will be reported by center staff to the Tennessee Department of Child Protective Services for investigation.
34. All disruptive behavior (yelling, threatening another person, etc.) by parents (or other relatives of children) is not acceptable and could result in denial of access to premises and grounds. Use of abusive, profane/obscene language is not allowed. No alcoholic beverages, other drugs, or firearms are permitted on property. No one is allowed to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs while on the center property.
35. All questions that concern policies/procedures or activities of Head Start should be discussed with staff. Procedures for hearing and resolving a parent's complaint details how the complaint should be resolved at the center level using the problem-solving resolution plan.

The Site Manager is the leader of the program for your area. Please let him/her know if you have questions or concerns.

Thank you for choosing Head Start & Early Head Start. We look forward to serving your child and family during this exciting new school year!





## Tennessee DHS Summary of Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers

This summary is a guide for parents of children in licensed child care agencies and it outlines some of the requirements child care agencies must meet in order to be licensed. **The purpose of licensing is the protection of children while under the care of child care agencies licensed by the Department of Human Services and to promote developmentally appropriate practices that enhance early learning and foster parental engagement.** The Department of Human Services licenses child care agencies with five (5) or more unrelated children operating for three (3) or more hours per day unless exempt. Questions about these requirements or concerns about an agency's compliance should be referred to the local DHS office. This summary does not contain all of the requirements for licensed child care agencies detailed in the Department's child care law and rules; therefore, you may ask your agency for the complete set of licensure rules for child care agencies or you can access the rules through the [Department's website](#)

### **Ownership, Organization, and Administration**

- General liability, automobile liability and medical payment insurance coverage shall be maintained on the operations of the child care agency's facilities and vehicles.
- Enrollment of children less than six (6) weeks of age is prohibited.
- Children shall not be in care for more than twelve (12) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period except in special circumstances.
- The agency must maintain written documentation that the parent performed an on-site visit to the agency to review the agency's facility and parent engagement strategies prior to enrolling the child (not required for children of homeless families).
- Child care agencies shall establish a drug testing policy for all staff having direct contact with children.
- A copy of the agency's policies, procedures, and the Department's Summary of Licensing Requirements shall be supplied to the parent upon admission of the child.
- Parents shall be permitted to see the professional credential(s) of staff upon request.
- During operating hours, parents shall be permitted immediate access to their children, unless legal documents prohibit or restrict access.
- Agency shall have ongoing communication with parents/guardians to include curriculum, changes in personnel, changes in policies and/or substantive licensing requirements, and any changes affecting children's routine care, and shall document such communication in writing.
- Child care agencies shall provide information about the benefits of immunizing children against influenza and other communicable diseases each August or September to parents/guardians of all children enrolled in the child care agency and document such communication in writing.
- The licensee and agency staff shall not disclose or knowingly permit the use by other persons, any information concerning a child or family except as required by law.
- The child care agency's current license and quality rating improvement system score shall be posted near the main entrance.
- A written expulsion policy shall be clearly articulated to parents and staff.

### **Staff**

- Family and group home child care agencies must notify parents in advance of the person in charge during primary educator's absence.
- A staff member shall be designated to be in charge of the child care agency in the absence of the primary educator/director and the name of the person shall be communicated to staff. Such person shall be familiar with child care agency policies/procedures.
- Prior to having unsupervised contact with children, new

employees shall receive orientation and pre-service training.

- Substitutes and practicum students providing services for more than 36 hours in a calendar year shall meet background check requirements and have a physical exam prior to beginning duties.
- Volunteers cannot be counted to meet the adult: child ratios and shall never be left alone with children.

### **Criminal Background Check**

- Criminal background checks are required for all staff at least every five (5) years.
- The following persons are required to have a background check no more than ninety (90) days before having access to any child care agency: any person who owns or operates a child care agency; any person who applies to work in a child care agency; any person who will provide substitute services to a child care agency for more than thirty-six (36) hours in a calendar year and who is counted in the adult:child ratio; and any person who is fifteen (15) years of age or older who will reside in a child care agency.

### **Record Keeping**

- A record for each child shall be maintained within the child care agency.
- All records shall be maintained in an organized manner onsite, in a centralized location, or available electronically, and made readily available upon Department request.
- Written plan of action must be endorsed by a physician for a child with life threatening allergies.
- Parent must provide written consent for emergency medical care/treatment.
- Written statement must be on file that lists to whom the child shall be released
- Written transportation agreement between parent and the child care agency regarding daily transportation shall be on file.
- Daily attendance records that include the full name and time in time out for each child shall be maintained on site.
- The child care agency shall obtain individual permission slips signed and dated by the parent for each field trip prior to the activity.
- Each infant, toddler and preschool child shall have a written transition plan for moving from one age group to another.
- The records of any child who is five (5) years old in an agency which lacks approved kindergarten status shall include a signed acknowledgment by the child's parents that recognizes that the child's attendance does not satisfy the mandatory kindergarten prerequisite for the child's enrollment in first grade.
- Children of homeless families and/or children in state custody may receive care for up to sixty (60) days prior to providing documentation of immunizations and well-child examinations.

### **Incident Reporting**

- Incidents, accidents, injuries and signs of illness shall be reported to the parent no later than the child's release on the date of occurrence and documented immediately with specific



information; such information shall be provided to the parent the same day of the incident and filed in the child's record.

- The child care agency shall notify the Department of all serious incidents the same day of the incident by contacting the Complaint Hotline or submission via the parent portal.
- Serious incidents involving suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to the Department of Children's Services.

**Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect**

- Every operator, owner, licensee, director, primary educator or staff member of, or substitute staff member or volunteer in, a child care agency licensed by the Department of Human Services is individually responsible and required to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to either the Department of Children's Services and/or local law enforcement or the judge of the juvenile court in the county of the child's residence, pursuant to T.C.A. §§ 37-1-403 and 37-1-605.
- All child care agency staff shall receive training annually regarding proper procedures to report child abuse and neglect.

**Supervision**

- All areas of the building and grounds shall be visually inspected after closing for the day to ensure no children have been unintentionally left in any part of the facilities.
- Children shall be released to only the child's parent, or other person authorized by the parent in accordance with child care agency's policies.
- Child care agencies shall maintain a daily sign-in and sign-out sheet or electronic sign-in or sign-out record that includes each child's printed or typed full name, date, time of entry, time of departure and the name of the individual who brought the child and picked the child up.
- Educators providing supervision to children during meal and snack times are prohibited from engaging in activities unrelated to mealtime while children are eating.
- Child care agencies shall develop, follow and post a written mealtime supervision plan.
- Child care agencies shall develop and follow a written playground supervision plan.
- During field trips, the adult:child ratios shall be doubled, and attendance shall be checked prior to leaving the child care agency, upon arrival at each destination, at the beginning and end of each activity; upon departing each destination and upon arrival at the child care agency.
- For family and group homes the adult:child ratio shall be increased by one (1) during field trips.
- When children are engaged in activities in or near a body of water, the following requirements shall be met:

Age Group	Adult:Child Ratio
6 weeks–12 months	1:1
13 months – 35months	1:2
Three (3) years	1:3
Four (4) years	1:4
Five (5) years	1:5
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:10

- One (1) adult present shall have a current certificate in advanced aquatics lifesaving skills and shall supervise above the level of the swimmers.
- Safe sleep practices must be followed to prevent suffocation and deaths in infants:
  - ✓ Infants shall sleep in cribs or play yards with a firm sleep surface with a fitted sheet.
  - ✓ Infants shall not sleep on a sofa, soft mattress, adult bed, in a car seat, swing or other restraining devices.
  - ✓ Infants shall be positioned on their backs for sleeping
  - ✓ Bibs shall be removed prior to placing infants in a crib for sleeping.

- ✓ Soft bedding, mobiles and other toys that attach to any part of the crib are prohibited.
- ✓ Infants that arrive asleep in car seats or fall asleep in any piece of equipment other than a crib must be immediately removed and placed on their back in a crib.
- ✓ Avoid letting the infant overheat and ensure infants are dressed appropriately for the environment (no greater than 1 layer more than an adult would wear in the same environment).

- Any practice that is an exception to the Department's safe sleep supervision procedures shall not be used without written authorization from a physician.
- If there is a sleeping or resting child during nighttime, there shall be at least one (1) adult educator awake and supervising.

**Health and Safety**

- Children shall be checked upon arrival each day for signs of illness and injury.
- The receiving educator shall document any obvious marks or injuries and shall note any comments from the parents pertaining to the marks or injuries.
- A child showing signs of illness shall be cared for apart from other children to the extent that supervision can be maintained for all children, and the parent shall be contacted and arrangements made for pick up.
- At least one staff with certification in first aid and one certified in CPR shall be present on site at all times.
- A child diagnosed with a communicable disease shall have proof of treatment prior to readmission if necessary.
- Parents/guardians of every child enrolled shall be notified immediately if a diagnosed communicable disease has been identified in the agency.
- All medications shall be received from the parent by a designated staff person and administered by staff persons who have received training in medication administration.
- Unused medication shall be returned to the parent.
- Medication shall never be administered in bottles or infant feeders unless authorized by a physician.
- All medications shall be inaccessible to children unless a physician's authorization for the current school year is on file that allows a school-age child to have self-administered medication.
- Diaper cream, ointments, sunscreens and lotions shall be inaccessible to children.
- Smoking/vaping is not permitted in any indoor area or vehicle of the child care agency at any time.
- Smoking/vaping is not permitted on the playground or in any outdoor area accessible to children during the time children are present.
- The use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted in a child care agency during the hours of operation.
- Firearms shall not be on the premises of a child care agency, in any vehicle used to transport children or in the presence of a child.
- In a private residence, firearms shall be locked and unloaded with ammunition locked up separately.
- All items labeled "keep out of reach of children" shall be inaccessible to children.
- Personal belongings of residents and staff shall be inaccessible to children.
- Children's diapers shall be checked regularly throughout the day to determine if they are wet or soiled.
- Educators shall provide rich social interchanges and engaging eye contact during diapering.
- Educators shall utilize sanitary diapering procedures.
- Pre-school and school-age children requiring assistance with toileting, shall receive assistance in a location designated for

that purpose which provides privacy.

- Child care agencies shall use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- registered products for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.
- Staff members with signs of a communicable disease shall not be present.

#### **Food and Food Service**

- Educators and children shall wash their hands with soap and water.
- Children shall be seated at tables and chairs of appropriate size, and an educator shall be near any table or high chair where a child is eating.
- An infant shall be held while drinking from a bottle if the infant is too young to use a high chair.
- Educators shall ensure that infants have completed feeding and swallowed all milk/formula prior to being laid down.
- Bottles shall not be propped or given to a child while lying flat.
- Children shall not be permitted to carry a bottle with them throughout the day.
- Children shall not have food or drink while in beds, cots, cribs or on mats.
- In order to prevent injuries related to bottle warmers, crock pots and microwaves:
  - ✓ Crock pots are prohibited for use as bottle warmers.
  - ✓ Crock pots shall be kept in kitchen and inaccessible.
  - ✓ Microwave ovens and surrounding area, including cords, shall not be accessible to children.
  - ✓ School-age children shall use microwaves only under direct supervision.
- In order to prevent choking:
  - ✓ Solid foods, including cereal, shall not be given to children with normal eating abilities in bottles or infant feeders unless written authorization on file from doctor.
  - ✓ Food shall not be accessible/served until cut, chopped, diced, mashed for each child's age, chewing and swallowing ability.
  - ✓ Educators shall check to ensure that no food is left in the mouth of a child prior to placing down for sleep.
  - ✓ Educator is prohibited from performing classroom duties unrelated to food service during mealtime.
  - ✓ Children shall not wear teething necklaces, pacifiers, or any item around their neck or attached to their clothing.
- Breast milk/formula remaining in bottles after feeding shall be disposed of in accordance with timeframes recommended by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Frozen breast milk shall be labeled with date expressed and name of child.
- Food, formula, milk or breast milk brought from home shall be labeled with the child's name; the date received and shall be refrigerated immediately.
- Previously opened baby food jars shall not be accepted in the child care agency.
- If food is fed directly from the jar by the educator, the jar shall be used for only one feeding and discarded.
- Food provided by the agency shall be in accordance with the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutritional guidelines.
- No sugar sweetened beverages shall be served to children at any time by the child care agency.
- Children shall be given adequate time to eat.
- Food shall not be used as a reward and should not be forced or withheld.
- Each child's food allergies shall be posted where food is prepared and served.
- For a child with life threatening allergies, a written plan of action should be posted where the educator has immediate

access.

- Agency shall make accommodations that support and facilitate a family's decision to continue breast feeding.
- Home preserved food and raw milk are prohibited.

#### **Equipment for Children**

- Developmentally appropriate equipment and furnishings shall be available for each age group.
- All indoor and outdoor large and heavy equipment, appliances and furnishings shall be secured to prevent falling or tipping over.
- Electrical cords and cords on window blinds or curtains shall be inaccessible to children.
- Indoor equipment, materials, and toys shall be available to provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities so that each child has at least two (2) choices during play time.
- In infant/toddler rooms, equipment and a safe space shall be provided for climbing, crawling, pulling up and exploring without the use of confining equipment.
- Trampolines are prohibited.
- Climbers, swings and other heavy equipment that could cause injury if toppled shall be securely anchored.
- Climbers and swings shall have a protective fall zone surface recognized by CPSC as a shock absorbing, resilient material.
- Portable equipment shall be securely anchored or rendered immobile if required by manufacturer.
- A quiet rest area and cots or mats shall be available for all children who want to rest or nap.
- For health and safety reasons each crib, cot, bed or mat shall be labeled to assure that each child naps on his/her own bedding.
- Cribs and play yards must comply with CPSC requirements.
- Mattresses and foam pads shall fit the crib without any gaps or spaces to prevent suffocation.
- A blanket or covering shall be available to each child sleeping on a mat.

#### **Program, Language and Literacy Development**

- Every child should have an opportunity to participate in program activities.
- The educator(s) shall give individual attention to each child throughout the day.
- Upon arrival, infants and toddlers shall be removed from car seats immediately.
- Child shall never be left unattended in any restraining device and shall not be kept in any restraining device longer than fifteen (15) minutes, except when eating while in a high chair.
- The use of electronic media and other electronic devices is prohibited for children less than two (2) years of age.
- Programs, movies, computer games, and music with violent or adult content shall not be permitted in children's presence.
- Child care agencies shall inform parents in writing of any scheduled media program viewing.
- Other activity choices shall be available to children who do not wish to participate in media time.
- Children of all ages who are in care more than three (3) daylight hours shall have a daily opportunity for outdoor play.
- Weather permitting, infants shall be taken outside two to three times per day.
- Children shall be properly dressed, and the length of time outside adjusted according to weather and age of the child.
- During outdoor play educators shall be alert for signs of weather-related distress such as dehydration and frostbite.
- Children in care for six (6) hours or more shall have an opportunity for a reclining rest period.
- No child shall be forced to lie down/nap or stay on a cot/mat for an extended period.
- Nap areas shall have adequate lighting to allow the educator to



see each child with a quick glance and respond appropriately to the child's physical and emotional needs.

- If music is played in areas where children sleep, it should be soothing and soft enough so children can be heard.
- Potentially shaming, humiliating, frightening, verbally abusive, injurious discipline methods, and/or techniques that isolate children are prohibited.
- Discipline shall not be related to food, rest, or toileting.
- Food shall not be used or withheld as a form of discipline. Active play opportunities shall not be withheld from children who have misbehaved.
- Spanking and all types of corporal punishment are prohibited.
- Toilet learning shall be done in cooperation with parents, and communication with parents maintained during the process.
- Activities shall be intentionally planned based upon the developmental age of the child.
- Infants, less than six (6) months of age shall have direct supervised tummy time every day when they are awake.
- During floor time/tummy time, the floor shall be clean and safe.
- Infants should be placed on a firm, safe surface for tummy time, with no soft materials placed under or around the infant during tummy time.
- If the infant falls asleep during tummy time, educators shall immediately place the infant in a crib on their back and follow all safe sleep procedures.
- For ages three (3) through school-age, a personal safety curriculum shall be provided annually.
- For school-age children the curriculum shall include instruction on reporting physical, sexual or verbal abuse.
- Parents shall be consulted in developing a plan to meet the individual needs of a child with special needs.

#### **Physical Facilities**

- All facilities shall annually pass an inspection verifying compliance with all applicable state and local fire and environmental requirements.
- At least one (1) working telephone shall be available at the agency and the telephone number made available to parents.
- Outdoor play areas shall contain a minimum of fifty (50) square feet of usable play space for each child using the area at one time.
- The outdoor play area shall be enclosed by fence or barrier at least four (4) feet in height.
- Pre-play inspection of outdoor play area shall be completed prior to each use.
- Sandboxes must be covered when not in use.
- Children shall not be present if an adequate water supply is not available.
- Children shall not be present if the sewage system is not operating.
- All rooms used by children shall be maintained at a temperature of between 68 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Children shall not be present if indoor temperature cannot be maintained between 68 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Unvented fuel burning heaters and portable heaters are prohibited.
- Swimming pools shall be made inaccessible to children by use of fences and locked gates.
- Swimming is prohibited in drop-in care.
- Swimming pools and/or wading pools shall not be used without prior approval by the Health Department.
- Animals shall be in good health and immunized; free of fleas/ticks; kept away from food storage/ preparation areas and contained in a way that does not allow unsupervised access.
- Reptiles and amphibians shall not be kept as pets.

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#### **Transportation**

- Child care agencies shall not transport children without prior written approval by the Department.
- Agencies shall conduct vehicle emergency evacuation drills quarterly.
- Use of cell phones and texting is prohibited while driving.
- Routine transportation is limited to forty-five (45) minutes each way (does not apply to field trips for school-agers).
- Agencies shall maintain documentation of daily inspections and necessary repairs
- The interior temperature of the vehicle shall be monitored during extreme weather to ensure child safety.
- An adult must be in the vehicle whenever a child is in the vehicle.
- A passenger log with the first and last name of each child shall be used to track the loading and unloading of children during transport.
- If the child was loaded from home, the parent or other authorized person will additionally sign the log indicating that the child was placed on the vehicle.
- The log shall be updated as children are released from the vehicle.
- When the child is released to a parent or other authorized person, that person must sign the log indicating the release of that child to them.
- Immediately upon unloading the last child the driver must walk through the vehicle to confirm that all the children are off the vehicle.
- A staff person designated as reviewer shall walk through the vehicle to confirm that all the children are off the vehicle. The reviewer shall have no other responsibilities during the walk through of the vehicle.
- Family and group homes with a single educator shall develop a Department approved alternative system for ensuring all children are off the vehicle.
- When children are transported to school, they shall be unloaded only at the location designated by the school and only at the time the school is officially open with staff present to receive them.
- Drivers must submit to an annual health examination and pass a drug screening test.
- Drivers and monitors shall hold current certification in CPR and First Aid.
- The following equipment shall be maintained in the vehicle and stored in a manner which is not readily accessible to children: fire extinguisher, emergency reflective triangles; first aid kit; seat-belt cutter or similar device manufactured and designed to immediately release the vehicle's child restraint system(s) in an emergency; blood borne pathogenic clean-up kit; and working flashlight.
- All vehicles utilized by a child care agency which are designed to carry ten (10) or more passengers shall conform to all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses.
- All child care vehicles designed by the vehicle manufacturer to carry ten (10) or more passengers shall be inspected as required by the Department.
- Child passenger restraints must be used in accordance with state law and federal law.
- Signage that includes the agency name, phone number and the Department's toll-free Child Care Complaint phone number must be on child care vehicles.

#### **Emergency Preparedness**

- The agency, in consultation with appropriate local authorities and local emergency management, shall develop a written multi-hazard plan to protect children in the event of emergencies.
- All child care agencies shall also inform parents and guardians

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of children attending the child care agency of the plan.

**Specific Requirements For Family Child Care Homes**

- Adult:Child ratios shall be maintained at all times.
- Licensed capacity shall not be exceeded.
- Family Child Care Home Ratios and Group Size Chart

Maximum Number of Children and Ages (Including children "related" to the primary educator under nine (9) years of age)	Educators Required
Seven (7) or fewer children; and no more than four (4) under two (2) years	1
Seven (7) or fewer children; and five (5) or more under two (2) years	2
More than seven (7) children; and no more than four (4) under two (2) years	2
More than seven (7) children; and five (5) or more under two (2) years	3

- A qualified educator shall be on site any time the primary educator is not on site during child care operating hours.
- The maximum number of children present inside a physical space shall be determined by minimum square footage requirements.
- If the number of children exceeds seven (7) at one time or care is provided in one room of the home, the area shall provide thirty (30) square feet per child of usable play space.

**Specific Requirements For Group Child Care Homes**

- Adult:Child ratios shall be maintained at all times.
- The maximum number of children present shall not exceed twelve (12). Exception: Three (3) additional school-age children may be in care before/after school, school holidays/snow days and during summer vacation.
- Group Home Ratio and Group Size Chart:

Number of Children	Ages of Children	Educators Required
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	No more than twelve (12) children three (3) years of age or older	1
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	Up to nine (9) children under three (3) years of age; and no more than four (4) present under two (2) years of age	2
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	Ten (10) or more under three (3) years of age	3

- If school-age children are enrolled, a school-age program shall be provided.
- If four (4) or more infants/toddlers attend, they shall have a separate and distinct space and their own educator.
- When children are sleeping or resting, there shall be at least one (1) adult awake and supervising and adult to child ratios shall be maintained.
- Primary educators shall have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Owners who are employed elsewhere shall ensure that the primary educator is always on-site.
- The primary educator shall not be employed at any other job during the hours of operation unless the Department has approved the primary educator's employment in a program sponsored or recognized by the Department.
- A qualified educator shall be on-site any time that the primary educator is not on-site during child care operating hours.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.

**Specific Requirements For Child Care Centers**

- Adult: child ratios must be maintained at all times.
- When more than twelve (12) children are present a second adult must be physically available on the premises.
- Child Care Ratio and Group Size Charts

Age of Children	Adult:Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks – 15 months	1:4	8
12 months – 30 months	1:6	12
24 months – 35 months	1:7	14
3 years	1:9	18
4 years	1:13	20
5 years	1:16	20
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:20	No max

Age of Children	Adult: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks – 30 months	1:5	10
2 years – 4 years	1:8	16
2 ½ years – 3 years	1:9	18
2 ½ years – 5 years	1:11	20
2 ½ years – 12 years	1:10	10
3 years – 5 years	1:13	22
4 years – 5 years	1:16	24
5 years – 12 years	1:20	No max

- Ratio Chart first/last hour and one-half (½) of each day only:

Age of Children	Adult: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
2 ½ years – 5 years	1:10	10
3 years – 12 years	1:15	15
4 years – 12 years	1:20	20

- Each child must be on roll in a defined group and assigned to that group with a specific educator(s).
- Infants shall have a separate space and shall never be grouped with children older than thirty (30) months of age.
- Children shall not be promoted to a new group until required based upon the age and developmental needs of the child.
- Groups, excluding infants & toddlers, may be combined for short periods for a special activity no more than sixty (60) minutes per day as long as adult:child ratios are met.
- Each group shall have a designated classroom with enough space for the entire group.
- Child care centers shall provide written lesson plans for each group of children.
- When more than twelve (12) children in first grade and above are present, a separate educator, group, space and program shall be provided for them.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- Each nap room shall contain a minimum of thirty (30) square feet of floor space per child.
- In an infant or toddler room with more than one educator, each educator shall be responsible for providing consistent care for a specific infant(s)/toddler(s) which includes but is not limited to: planning and record- keeping, communication, etc.
- Following the issuance of a license, a child care center may operate without an on-site director for a period of not more than sixty (60) days total within the licensing year.



**Specific Requirements For Drop-In Child Care Centers**

- Before accepting a child for care, the parent shall provide a statement regarding the estimated amount of time that the parent anticipates that the child will be in attendance.
- The child care agency shall familiarize staff with personal safety material and be prepared to discuss them with parents.
- The drop-in center shall have an on-site director and the director shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.
- The director shall have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent and one (1) year of full-time work experience with children in a group setting.
- Each educator who is used to meet the minimum required adult:child ratio shall have a high school diploma.
- Children shall be placed in age appropriate groups and with adequate adult educator supervision:

Age Grouping:	
Age of Children	Adult:Child Ratio
Six (6) weeks –Fifteen (15) months	1:4
Twelve (12) months – Thirty (30) month	1:8
Two (2) years	1:12
Three (3) years	1:15
Four (4) years	1:18
Five (5) years (not in Kindergarten)	1:20
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:22

- The adult:child ratio for a multi-age group containing infants:

Majority Age of Children Present	One Infant	Two Infants
12 months – 30 months	1:8	1:6
2 years	1:10	1:8
3 years	1:12	1:10
4 years	1:15	1:12
5 years (not in Kindergarten)	1:17	1:13
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:19	1:15

- If food is provided by the agency, it shall meet the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program nutritional guidelines.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- Each nap room shall contain a minimum of thirty (30) square feet of floor space per child.
- Staff shall have documentation of all children's allergies and how to deal with any allergic reaction.
- Staff shall review emergency preparedness and fire procedures and shall physically walk through the evacuation process every quarter.
- Prohibited activities include swimming, transportation and the provision of specialized services.

Tennessee Department of Human Services  
 ChildCare Services website is located here:  
[Child Care Services \(tn.gov\)](http://ChildCareServices.tn.gov)

A wealth of child care information can be found on the Department's website.

You can:

- ✓ Learn more about the rules
  - ✓ Learn more about the types of regulated care
  - ✓ Locate a child care provider
  - ✓ Learn more about the Quality Rating and Improvement System (formerly Report Card and Star Quality Program)
  - ✓ Locate the local child care licensing office
  - ✓ Review the current personal safety curriculum
  - ✓ Read about new initiatives in child care
  - ✓ Locate the nearest child care certificate office
  - ✓ Find info on choosing child care
  - ✓ Locate a child care resource and referral center
- And much more!

**Child Care Resource and Referral Centers**

The Tennessee Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network has 9 CCR&R sites located across the state. Each CCR&R employs a team of highly qualified coaches who provide training and coaching to DHS licensed child care educators in their area. CCR&Rs also provide valuable resources to parents looking for quality child care. For more information visit the Child Care Services website or [tnccrr.org](http://tnccrr.org)

**kidcentral TN**

Information about child health, education, and development as well as available state services can be found at: <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/>

**Department of Children's Services Hotline**

Report Child Abuse or Neglect  
 1-877-237-0004

**Child Care Complaint Hotline**

Nashville Area: (615) 313-4820  
 Toll Free: 1-800-462-8261

If you have a concern about an existing child care agency or wish to report an illegal operation, call the Department's complaint hotline.