

PARENT HANDBOOK

EPIC HEAD START
2026-2027



Every child deserves to be a STAR!

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Leadership Team:

Director – Heidi Bach-Arvin ext.119
Child Development/Disabilities Specialist – Brooke Gamble ext. 121
Early Head Start Specialist – Anna Thurston 304-724-9188
ERSEA (Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, Eligibility, Attendance) Specialist – Jennifer Bennett ext. 143
Family Community Partnership Specialist – Gerri Haines ext. 145
Health & Safety Specialist – Sara Arrearan ext. 142
Mental Health Specialist – Erin Impellizzeri ext. 144
Program Operations – Hannah Beddow ext. 113

SECTION (1) CENTER LOCATIONS, DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION

**EPIC Head Start
Administrative Office**
109 South College Street - Martinsburg, WV 25401
(304) 267-3595 - Fax (304) 267-3599

***Early Head Start (EHS) by County (prenatal to 3yrs)**
Head Start (HS) Centers by County (ages 3-5 yrs.)

Berkeley County

Berkeley Heights Center (HS)

South Queen Street
Berkeley Heights Elementary Campus
750 Hack Wilson Way
Martinsburg, WV 25401
(304) 263-6222 – Fax (304) 263-6201
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 3:45

Hedgesville (HS & EHS)

143 School House Dr.
Hedgesville WV 25427
(304) 754-8192 (classroom)
(304) 754-3031 (Early Head Start)
Monday - Friday 8:30 – 3:30

Inwood Family Worship Center (HS)

28 Lafayette Lane
Inwood WV 25428
(304) 671-7150 (classroom)
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 2:45

James Rumsey (HS)

99 Cumbo Rd.
Martinsburg WV 25403
304- 582-2198 (classroom)
Monday – Friday 7:45 – 2:45

Spring Mills Primary (HS)

401 Campus Drive
Martinsburg WV 25404
304-582-3276 (classroom 1)
304-582-8176 (classroom 2)
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 2:45

Jefferson County

Blue Ridge Primary (HS)

175 Lowery Lane
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
(304) 724-3300 (school)
(304) 671-2351 (classroom 1)
Monday - Friday 8:00 – 3:30

Ranson Elementary (HS)

245 Ranson Campus Blvd.
Ranson, WV 25438
(304) 728-7310 (school)
(304) 582-1458 (classroom)
Monday - Friday 8:45 – 3:30

South Jefferson Elementary (HS)

4599 Summit Point Road
Charles Town WV 25414
(304) 728-9216 (school)
(304) 582-1664 (classroom)
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 2:45

T.A. Lowery Center (HS & EHS)

T.A. Lowery Elementary Campus
221 Warm Springs Rd
Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442
(304) 724-9942 – Fax (304) 725-7511
(304) 724-9188 (Early Head Start)
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 3:45

Morgan County

Berkeley Springs Center (HS)

50 Myers Road
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411
(304) 258-5335 – Fax (304) 258-0638
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 3:45

Great Cacapon Center (HS & EHS)

217 Spring St.
Great Cacapon, WV 25422
(681) 343-0102 – Fax (681) 343-0106
(681) 343-0108 – Fax (681) 343-0106
Monday - Friday 8:00 – 3:00

Little Learners Village (HS)

106 Oakland Road
Berkeley Springs WV 25411
(304) 258-0095 (center)
Monday - Friday 7:45 – 2:45



The mission of EPIC Head Start is to:

- **Deliver** high-quality services to Eastern Panhandle children and families in child development, health, social services, and parent involvement
- **Encourage and support** the development of staff professionalism and teamwork.
- **Involve** families and the community in the design and operation of our program, and to carry out that program in ways that are cost-effective and meet community needs.
- **Serve** as a model of excellence beginning with prenatal education continuing through early childhood development.

SECTION (2) PROGRAM OPTIONS

Early Head Start Home Based Program

The EHS home based option serves pregnant mothers and children ages zero to three delivered in the child's primary learning environment, their home. By recognizing the parent as the child's first teacher; the Home Visitor supports the child and their family through weekly, 90-minute home visits, that are divided into 3 parts: A) first 30 minutes parents work with the Home Visitor- planning activities, demonstration of materials and appropriate use for developmental age, resources and paperwork B) second 30 minutes parents work with their children with your Home Visitor's assistance on developmentally appropriate activities. C) third 30 minutes will be spent with your Home Visitor reviewing and commenting on the lesson and planning for next week. The Home Visitor and the parent work as a team to identify the child's strengths and needs. The Home Visitor will share their knowledge of child development and provide training to parents as they begin to set individual and family goals. Socializations (classroom visits) are held twice a month to provide an opportunity for children to interact and engage socially in a classroom setting. The Home Visitor will seek input from parents when planning socials. Parents are encouraged to attend socials to meet other parents, learn about social behaviors of children, and behavior management.

Head Start Center Based Program

The center program option provides children ages three to five with classroom experiences planned by qualified staff to promote developmental growth in all areas. Individualized planning ensures that the specific needs of each child are met in a safe, nurturing learning environment. Teachers and parents will meet at least three to four times per year to set and update goals for their child. Children will attend class Tuesday through Friday with Staff Only days scheduled for Mondays.

Sample Daily Schedule for Center Based Program

Time	Schedule
Arrival	<i>Attendance, Breakfast, Large Group Activity (Opening, Question of the Day, Weather, etc.)</i>
Mid-Morning	<i>Outdoor, Free Choice/Individualization, Small Group Activity (Literacy, Math, Science, Social Emotional, Nutrition, Arts, etc.)</i>
Afternoon	<i>Lunch, Toothbrushing, Rest Time</i>
Mid-Afternoon	<i>Outdoor, Free Choice/Individualization, Large Group Activity (Music/Movement, Read Aloud, etc.)</i>
Dismissal	<i>Read Aloud, Large Group Activity (Round Up, Review of the day, Pack up, etc.)</i>



Our agency will maintain the following adult-child ratios and maximum group sizes in all Head Start programs. Each center is licensed to serve these maximum group sizes:

County	Center	Age	Adult/Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Berkeley	Berkeley Heights	3 years – 5 years	1:10	6 classrooms, 19 children each
	Hedgesville	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children
	Inwood Family Worship	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children
	James Rumsey	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children
	Spring Mills Primary	3 years – 5 years	1:10	2 classrooms, 20 children each
Jefferson	Blue Ridge Primary	3 years – 5 years	1:10	2 classrooms, 20 children each
	Ranson Elementary	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children each
	South Jefferson Elementary	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children each
	T.A. Lowery	3 years – 5 years	1:10	3 classrooms, 19/19/15 children
Morgan	Berkeley Springs	3 years – 5 years	1:10	3 classrooms, 17/17/14 children
	Great Cacapon	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children each
	Little Learners Village	3 years – 5 years	1:10	1 classroom, 20 children each

SECTION (3) PARENTS RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Parent and family participation and involvement are essential to the success of the Head Start program. We believe that parents and family members are their child's first teachers and are valuable contributors to our program. For this reason, we have very high expectations for families.

Parent Rights

My rights as a parent or guardian in the program include:

1. To be recognized as my child's primary educator.
2. To be treated with respect by the EPIC EHS/HS program.
3. To be welcomed in my child's classroom.
4. To receive information and guidance about my child's progress and development.
5. To participate in discussions about my child's progress and setting goals for learning and development.
6. To be supported as an advocate for my child. If my child has a diagnosed disability or has been referred for a concern; I will be involved by the local school district in creating an Individualized Education Plan and will be kept informed on my child's progress in meeting his/her goals.
7. To take part in decisions regarding my child's center and the Head Start program. My ideas and suggestions will be valued, and I will have opportunities to share them with staff and other parents. Opportunities include Parent Committee and Policy Council meetings.
8. To participate in Mental Health Services offered by the program.
9. To be informed about community resources related to education, health, social services, employment, etc.
10. To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.
11. To review and ask questions regarding my child's records.
12. To submit and discuss any concerns, thoughts, and/or suggestions.



Parent Responsibilities

My responsibilities as a parent/guardian in the Head Start program include:

1. Ensure my child attends the program consistently and on time to support his/her development.
2. Participate actively in the program and take advantage of the opportunities that the program offers.
3. Work with teachers, staff, and other families in a cooperative manner.
4. Be open to new ideas and experiences that can benefit me and my children.
5. Help make the Head Start program better by offering my opinions, constructive criticism, and suggestions.
6. Ask questions of my child's teachers, Family Advocate, Child Development Manager, or other staff members.
7. Reinforce what my child learns at the program by working with my child at home.
8. Ensure that my child is up to date on all required medical and dental needs.
9. Participate in orientation process to assist my child with transitioning into the school year at his/her center.
10. Participate in up to two home visits each year with my child's teachers.
11. Participate in home visits with the Family Advocate assigned to my family.
12. Participate in two Parent Conferences per year.
13. Volunteer with my child's program. I will sign a Family Literacy pledge indicating how many reading hours I hope to do during the year and will inquire about other volunteer opportunities.
14. Ensure that my child has extra clothing at the center.
15. Follow transportation rules/regulations.
16. Keep the confidentiality of other children and the classroom.

SECTION (4) PHILOSOPHY & GOALS

Our Philosophy

Our approach is based on the following philosophy:

1. Parents are their children's first and most important teacher.
2. Children learn best through play! The early years of a child's life are critical for optimal development and provide the foundation for success in school and life.
3. Parents and educators work together as partners to prepare the child and families for school readiness.
4. All young children and families deserve the same opportunities to succeed regardless of demographic, geographic, or economic considerations.
5. An understanding and appreciation of the history and traditions of diverse cultures is essential in serving families.

Our Goals

Focus on the entire family as a unit. We believe each parent is their child's first and most important teacher. Our Family Engagement Plan highlights the parent's role in achieving the best outcomes for their child in achieving school success and establishing family life practices that impact not only the child's life during their head start years, but throughout their school career.

Consider assessment and evaluation results in making appropriate decisions to support children's learning, improve their performance and realize their individual potential.

Plan and **Provide** age-appropriate environments, activities and experiences focused on school readiness plan goals and the development of social and emotional, cognitive, language and literacy skills. .

Value the differences in children, building upon diversity rather than stressing conformity. Provide intentional, purposeful age-appropriate activities and experiences that engage children, interest them, and meet their needs across all learning domains.

Encourage children to engage and interact through play and exploration by providing children the time and opportunity to investigate creatively in a safe, healthy, caring and stimulating environment.

Incorporate appropriate special education and behavioral strategies to maximize success in the classroom setting.

Collaborate with local school districts to foster best practice in meeting the educational needs of children in the least restrictive environment.

Support parents in promoting optimal health for children to reduce barriers in development and learning.



At EPIC Head Start, we believe that everyone can be a...

Safety First

Take Responsibility

Always Work Together

Respect Self and Others

SECTION (5) GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Head Start Enrollment Process

Our program follows Federal Head Start enrollment guidelines. To enroll in our program, you must:

- Have a child that is three years old, meeting income eligibility requirements or four years old by June 30th. Priority will be given to four-year old's first in preparation for kindergarten transition.
- Live in Berkeley, Jefferson, or Morgan counties of West Virginia.
- Be eligible (foster children, receiving TANF or SSI, SNAP, homeless, or have income below the Federal Income Guidelines)
- Provide proof of eligibility (foster children, receiving TANF or SSI, SNAP, homeless, or have income below the Federal Income Guidelines) or income (pay stubs, 1040 tax statement, W2 forms, unemployment forms, public assistance forms, etc.) within the last month, if possible.
- Complete all health and enrollment forms required.
- Provide an up-to-date physical, dental and immunization record for the child, as well as proof of age, preferably a state issued birth certificate or affidavit.
- There is no tuition for enrolling and attending the EPIC EHS/HS program. USDA meal forms may be required to determine free meal eligibility.

2026 FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES (Effective 1/20/2026)

Persons in family/household	100%	Annual
1		\$15,960
2		\$21,640
3		\$27,320
4		\$33,000
5		\$38,680
6		\$44,360
7		\$50,040
8		\$55,720
9		\$61,400
For each extra person add \$5,680		
100% eligible applicable Head Start/Early Head Start		

Persons in family/household	130%	Annual
1		\$20,748
2		\$28,132
3		\$35,516
4		\$42,900
5		\$50,284
6		\$57,668
7		\$65,052
8		\$72,436
9		\$79,820
For each extra person add \$7,384		
130% eligible applicable Head Start only		

***Any Income over the amount specified as 130% is considered OVER INCOME and must meet program over income requirements (applicable for Early Head Start and Head Start children and families).**

Attendance Policy

Good attendance assures that your child will receive the greatest benefit from our program. We want your child to experience all the learning activities planned daily. Mildly ill children can attend center. Refer to "Sick Child" about symptoms that prevent your child from attending. Children are expected to attend **at least 90% of the time each month**, only missing one or two days for excused absences.

If a child will be absent, a parent is to **notify the center and bus staff (if transported) immediately** communicating the reason for absence. If we do not hear from you, the absence will be unexcused, and staff will call to determine the reason, ensure the safety of the child, and offer support as needed. After three (3) unexcused absences, the Family Advocate will work closely with you to help support improving and maintaining 90% attendance. Chronic absences may result in a meeting, home visit, Attendance Plan, and/or being placed back on the waiting list. We ask for your cooperation to help your child maintain good attendance and receive a head start as they prepare for kindergarten. **A parent or doctor's note is required to excuse an absence.** Please let us know if there are any family or medical issue making it difficult for your child to attend regularly so we can support you with resources and services to assist you during this time.

Late Arrival Policy

If a child will be late, a parent is to notify the center immediately to communicate. Prompt notification helps ensure the child receives meal services. If a child arrives more than 30 minutes late (**or the school policy if different**), three (3) or more times a month without explanation, the Family Advocate will work closely with you to address the circumstances that have prevented your child from being on time which may include developing a plan to address any barriers.

Disenrollment Policy

EPIC Head Start will make every effort to continue your child's successful enrollment in our program and facilitate a successful transition into kindergarten. However, we understand that circumstances may arise where the program can no longer meet the needs of your family. Please contact the center to discuss options that may be available to you.

Non-Custodial Parent

Non-custodial parents not listed on the Birth Certificate or Emergency Release form must provide written documentation from the custodial parent or court indicating that they have permission to access child's records or have access to child.

If there are court documents in the child's center file that deny/limit the non-custodial parent/guardian's right to visitation we **CANNOT** release the child. The staff will call the custodial parent and report the circumstances.

If the parent insists or is threatening, staff will call 911 immediately.

Inclement Weather & Center Closings

Our centers will be closed when the public schools in the area of the center are closed, delayed, or dismissed early due to bad weather. Please listen to your local radio/television station or subscribe to your county school notification system for these announcements as they will be your only notice of cancellations.

If the center is closed for other reasons, families will be notified at the contact numbers that the families provided on the Emergency Release form and through the classroom communication tool. **Families need to ensure that the centers have all updated information.**

When public schools in the county are closed because of bad weather, the EHS program in that county will cancel and reschedule Wee Plays. Home Visits may be offered virtually. When the county schools open two hours late because of bad weather, your home visit and/or Wee Play may be delayed, rescheduled or offered virtually. If early dismissal is announced, your home visit or Wee Play may also be rescheduled or offered virtually.

Statement of Confidentiality

All *records and information regarding children and families in the program are kept strictly confidential. Our program will not release information from a child's record or file without the consent of a parent or guardian. If the program receives a request for information about your child and/or our program would like to obtain information from an outside entity, we will request that the parent/guardian sign a consent form called a "Release of Information" that includes what kind of information we would like to release/receive and to/from whom.

Parents/guardians have the right to not sign this release consent form. The granting of this consent is voluntary and may be revoked at any time. If you revoke consent, the revocation is not retroactive and does not apply to actions that occurred before the consent was revoked.

Our staff members will not discuss you or your family members with other people unless a release of information is signed. Each family has a right to privacy. We will not talk to you about other families in the program. When you are volunteering at any Head Start activity, please do not discuss other children with other parents or adults. As a volunteer, you may see behaviors that need staff attention. Please share these concerns with a staff member in a private setting. All volunteers are asked to review and sign the EPIC EHS/HS confidentiality statement.

All information about your family and your child is kept in locked files and access to these files is limited to the appropriate staff members.

*Child records means records that: (1) are directly related to the child; (2) are maintained by the program, or by a party acting for the program; and (3) include information recorded in any way, such as print, electronic, or digital means, including media, video, image, or audio format.

Grievance Procedure

EPIC Head Start is required to comply with all state and federal regulations. If for any reason complaints arise, parents or members of the community should speak with center staff and/or call the Child Development Manager. They will be

happy to help. If the situation is not resolved, please call the office at (304) 267-3595 and ask to speak to a Head Start Specialist. Each complaint is documented and addressed. If the results are not satisfactory to you, you may contact the Program Director, Heidi Bach-Arvin at (304) 267-3595 x119. If after exhausting all channels the problem remains unresolved, the issue may be brought before Policy Council by the appropriate representative. Policy Council will attempt to satisfy the grievance for all parties concerned.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Our staff is responsible for the health and welfare of all children participating in the program, and as such are **mandatory reporters** of any suspected child abuse or neglect. EPIC EHS/HS staff will provide the following information to Child Protective Services (CPS) office on the child:

- Child's name, birth date, home address
- Parent's full name and phone number
- Time of incident and where it took place
- Any other relevant detail

Positive Behavior and Guidance Policy for Children

The Head Start program uses an approach to provide guidance that emphasizes respect for each child; developmentally appropriate expectations of children's behavior; and the use of positive guidance strategies.

Our staff members strive to create a relaxed, positive environment that enables children to explore and experiment while remaining safe and feeling well-supported. Through positive guidance strategies and modeling social skills, staff help children learn pro-social behaviors, build confidence and self-esteem, and develop greater respect for others' rights and feelings, as well as a sense that they are themselves respected.

Behavior concerns are handled by staff in a way that encourages children to solve problems and develop a sense of self-regulation. Children are given authentic choices and the opportunity to be an active part of decision-making in their environment, thus fostering a sense of personal responsibility. Staff help children to understand the reasons for rules and limits and to feel good about the choices they make.

Our staff will use a variety of strategies to encourage positive behavior in the classroom, including the following:

- Plan to anticipate problems.
- Limit expectations to what is realistic for the developmental level of each child (and make these expectations clear to children). E.g., understand that young children are not ready to share yet; model and encourage sharing, but do not insist on it.
- Create a positive environment: rather than telling children what they cannot do, give them choices of the things they can do.
- Talk about children's positive behavior: "Thank you for giving the truck to Daniel when you were finished with it."
- Set a few simple, clear rules, focused on health and wellbeing, safety, respect for property and respect for others.
- State rules positively rather than negatively: "Please walk" instead of "Don't run."
- Offer reasons for rules: "I know you really want to run, but it is not safe to run inside the classroom. I don't want you to slip and fall. Please use your walking feet when you are inside."
- Model behaviors that we wish children to use, e.g., always being courteous and attentive.
- Give children clear, simple directions and positive reminders.
- Pay close attention to children to prevent and/or intervene in challenging behaviors. (Especially important with children who are likely to escalate, hit or bite.)
- Redirect children from unacceptable to acceptable behavior: "I am going to help you stop kicking. We'll find something else for you to do." Walking away from an activity or situation can allow a child the chance to cool off and regain control.
- Share our own feelings about certain behaviors: "I get worried when you climb on the bookshelf."
- Help children deal with frustration and anger through words or pretend play.
- Focus on the child's behavior, not on the child's value as a person.

- Help children understand the consequences of their actions and use problem-solving skills to develop solutions.
- Encourage children's growing sense of independence and acknowledge when children show self-regulation.
- Help children refrain from dwelling on mistakes, so they can learn to move on.
- Some of the above strategies adapted from the Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (ECPBIS) Pyramid Model and Creative Curriculum® (Teaching Strategies, Inc.).

Unacceptable Discipline Methods

The following methods are always prohibited by staff, under any circumstances:

- Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, swatting, beating, shaking, pinching, squeezing and other measures intended to induce physical pain or fear
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom
- Use of food as reward
- Abusive or profane language
- Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment or emotional abuse, including shaming, humiliating, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child
- Punishment for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet
- Bribes, false threats, or false choices
- Retaliating or doing to the child what s/he did to someone else
- Labeling a child as "bad" or otherwise implying that she/he is a problem, rather than the behavior

If a child exhibits a consistent challenging behavior, efforts will be made to understand why the behavior is happening. Family team meetings are held to talk about ways to change behavior, if necessary. It is important that staff and parents use a **consistent** approach to the problem both in the classroom and at home. If behaviors continue to be unsafe, we may refer the child, with permission to our Mental Health Specialist and/or other qualified professionals for further evaluation.

Severe Behavior Interventions

EPIC Head Start refrains from suspension and we do not expel. Staff will work with their Manager, Child Development Specialist, Health Specialist, Mental Health Specialist, and the parent/guardian to provide reasonable modifications to reduce or eliminate serious safety threats, using research-based early childhood best practices.

In extraordinary circumstances, when a child's behavior creates a serious safety issue to him/herself and others and/or seriously disrupts the stable environment in the classroom repeatedly (after more than one occurrence), the *Severe Behavior Intervention Procedure* will be implemented upon approval of the Mental Health Specialist and Child Development Specialist.

Severe behavior is defined as more than one occurrence of the following:

- Violence toward persons or property with behavior sufficient to put him or others in danger or immediate harm.
- Threats to inflict harm to others verbally or with gestures or specifically targeting individuals.
- Possession of or use of any object for a weapon with the intent to do harm to persons or property.
- Seriously disrupts the teaching / learning process for self and others.
- Repeated refusal to respond to basic directions regarding safety.

A Family Team meeting will occur to determine a plan moving forward and may include a combination of the following:

- Classroom observations.
- Implementation of ECPBIS strategies.
- Parental classroom visits to assist in facilitating positive behavior guidance.
- External referrals for evaluation utilizing community resources such as mental health/behavior professionals, Local Education Agency, Health professionals and other appropriate specialists or resources as needed.
- Additional staff and parent guidance in positive behavior practices.
- Placement Modification
- Modified (shortened) schedule, with a plan to gradually increase the schedule pending observable positive behavior.
- Alternate placement in another classroom or temporary home-based service within our program.
- External placement, including facilitating transition assistance.

SECTION (6) CENTER & CLASSROOM OPERATIONS

Mealtimes

Family style meal service is used in the Head Start program. Children are encouraged to taste all foods, but they are never forced to eat anything they do not want. One goal of the program is to introduce the children to a wide variety of foods. Teachers will sit with the children during mealtimes, model appropriate eating behavior, and initiate conversations, like a home setting. Teachers will also use this time for learning so that nutrition education is incorporated into the routine of meals.

The meals for the program are provided by the county school or childcare center. Copies of menus are provided to parents monthly and posted at each center. We ask that if you are packing your child's lunch, you follow the guidelines "Suggestions to pack for lunch" below.

Suggestions to Pack for Lunch

Choose one protein

Ham Turkey	Chicken Hummus	Tuna Beans	Hard-boiled Eggs Pepperoni Slices
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Choose at least one vegetable (can include dip like ranch)

Carrots Olives	Celery Broccoli	Cucumbers Cauliflower	Bell Peppers
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Choose at least one fruit

Apple/Applesauce Oranges	Banana Peaches	Melon Berries	Grapes Pineapple
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Choose one dairy

Cheese cubes/String Cheese Cottage Cheese	Yogurt	Milk
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Choose one whole grain

Cereal Rice Cakes	Pasta/Pasta Salad Muffin	Crackers Tortilla	Pretzels Pita Bread	Bagel
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Unhealthy foods, some of which are listed below, may be placed in child's backpack and returned home

Potato chips/Doritos Yoo-Hoo	Cookies Hawaiian Punch	Candy Cupcakes	Snack Cakes Restaurant Food	Soda
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Special Diets

All meals served in our program meet USDA guidelines for children. If your child cannot eat certain foods due to medical reasons such as allergies or intolerance, we must have a physician complete the "Special Dietary Form" to make accommodations. No substitutions can be made without this form. Cultural or religious reasons are not recognized by West Virginia and we are not able to provide accommodations.

Celebration Policy

Birthdays and other celebrations may include **healthy** snacks or treats but due to food allergies please inform your teacher 48 hours in advance, what the snack item will be. Should a child in the class have an allergy to the treat you wanted to bring, staff will suggest an alternative item. We cannot allow any homemade healthy snack options. All food items **must be** prepackaged. The child's parent or guardian is welcome to participate in the celebration.

Children love to celebrate their birthday and other special events. We very much want to allow them to do so. Parents may celebrate the occasion by sending in special items such as a new book, bubbles, or glitter glue. Be sure all items are non-toxic and do not have small parts that could cause choking. Your teacher will have additional suggestions for you. If invitations for your child's party are being sent to school for distribution, please include every child in the class or the teachers will be unable to distribute.

What to Send to School with Your Child?

Appropriate Clothing

In our Head Start program, children are involved in active play every day – both inside and outside. It is important that children come to school dressed appropriately. This includes:

- Comfortable clothing, which is easy to put on and take off (for easier toileting).
- Comfortable closed toe shoes, preferably sneakers. Open-toed, backless, or "Croc" type shoes are not permitted.
- Please send your child to school with clothing appropriate for the weather/season:
 - Coat, mittens, hat in winter
 - Boots for rain or snow
- **Please do not let your child wear necklaces or large earrings and hoodies with a draw string around the head and neck area. All items are unsafe for physical activity.**
- Children must have **at least one complete change of clothing (labeled with child's name or initials)** in case of messy play or a bathroom accident.
 - Shirt & Pants
 - Underwear & Socks

What to Wear for EHS Wee Plays?

Please always dress your child in comfortable, casual clothing. Children learn through exploration, and that can get messy! If your daughter is wearing a dress, please put shorts or pants on underneath for safety and modesty. Be sure your child has non-Slip shoes (sneakers or rubber soles) for running and climbing on equipment. Sandals and open toed shoes or "Crocs" are not permitted.

Dress your child for the weather. As it gets cooler, remember hats and gloves since the children go outside unless it is too wet. Do not dress your child in coats or other clothing with drawstrings. These may be a safety hazard.

Parent: Due to the nature of Wee Plays, which require participation with your child (you may get up and down on the floor) please wear clothes that cover your undergarments and allow you to move freely.

Backpacks/Other

Backpacks are not required, but are useful for taking home class projects, activities, and the child's communication folder (provided by the program). Please do not send Backpacks with wheels.

Children may bring a blanket, to be used during rest time. The blanket will be folded and stored during the week and sent home each Friday. **Children should not bring toys or stuffed animals to school unless specifically requested by their teacher. If a class is participating in show and tell, the teacher will provide guidelines and expectations at that time.**

Transition Process

Transitions may be difficult for children. Transition plans are developed for each child as needed. This allows time for the child to adjust to new staff or centers.

- A written transition plan will be developed by the Early Head Start home visitor and the child's parent and will include the Head Start Family Advocate and visits to a classroom prior to the child's start.
- Transition from preschool programs to kindergarten begins within 30 days of enrollment and is ongoing throughout the year. Centers schedule a field trip to a local kindergarten class in the spring, distribute transition information to families, and share specific registration information for their school district.

Outdoor Play Policy

Outdoor play is a regularly scheduled time consisting of either one 60-minute block or two 30-minute blocks each day unless it is raining, lighting, or storming (high winds). Children will not be allowed to stay outdoors for long periods of time during extreme heat or cold conditions as indicated by the Child Care Weather Watch posting. Staff will provide vigorous physical activity during this time. If unable to be outdoors for the allotted time, staff will provide indoor activities that help develop large and small motor skills.

Field Trips

Field trips are scheduled at various times throughout the year based on funding and educational value. For field trips to remain well organized, safe, and fun for everyone participating (children, families, and teaching staff) the following guidelines are in place:

- Length of travel distance, time, cost, educational value, developmental appropriateness, and availability of transportation will be considered in the approval/disapproval of all field trips.
- **All children must be wearing the program's green vests.**
- All funding for field trips is provided by the agency and covers the cost of the enrolled child.
- Each child must have field trip permission slips signed by parent/guardian.
- In-house field trips occur throughout the year when special events occur in the classroom or at the center. Parents and community members are encouraged to share activities with the classroom based on their profession, skill, hobby, talent, and/or culture.

Transportation

- Enrolled children will ride the bus, even if the parent or other adult is planning to attend the field trip.
- If parents do not want the enrolled child to ride the bus, the parent will notify the teacher in advance, provide their own transportation, and meet the class at the field trip location.
- If parents wish to leave early or remain longer at the field trip location, the parent must notify the teacher in advance, provide their own transportation, and sign their child out with the teacher. This signature releases the teaching staff from responsibility for your child. Parents are not permitted to transport other enrolled children.

Supervision Plan

- Each child will wear field trip vest
- Staff will complete child counts constantly:
 - When leaving center
 - On bus going to field trip site
 - When leaving bus at field trip site
 - Entering field trip site
 - Lunch time
 - Restroom breaks
 - On bus leaving field trip site
 - Upon arrival back to center
- Staff will take First Aid Bag, Emergency Release forms, Medical/Physical Care Plans (including medication as noted in plan) and attendance sheet for the duration.



SECTION (7) ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE, TRANSPORTATION

Arrival & Departure for Parent Transport

To ensure your child's safety,

- Parent/guardian will pull up to the entrance of the center, where designated staff will be stationed.
- Child must be signed in on iPad when dropping off and signed out when being picked up.
- Staff will assist your child in/out of vehicle and accompany them to the classroom.
- Parent/guardian will receive a thumbs up when cleared to leave parking lot.

Pick-up and drop off times will be provided at orientation. Early drop offs are unable to be accommodated. Please adhere to the pick-up and drop off times provided for the safety of all children and the transportation process!

Parents must pick up and drop off children on time. After 3 occurrences of being picked up more than 15 minutes late, parents will be required to sign an agreement to pick child up on time. If child continues to be picked up late, Family Advocate will meet with you to determine options that may be available to you, including being placed on the waitlist. If emergencies arise, parents must notify the center. If there is no notification and parent is more than 1 hour late, and no one is available who is listed on the Emergency Release form, the local authorities may be called.

We thank you for your cooperation in this matter, and we know you understand that for the safety and wellbeing of your children, it is essential that children are picked up on time by the appropriate people and that a responsible adult is available to receive the children from the center.

Emergency Release Information

During the Enrollment Process, parents will provide Emergency Contact information on the Emergency Release form. This form is reviewed and updated at each Parent Conference for all families.

- The center/program must have at least one phone number by which we can reach the parent/guardian.
- We **require** at least one emergency contact (authorized persons that can pick up and transport the child home in the parent/guardian's absence).for your child to attend.
- If contact information changes at any time, your Family Advocate must be contacted immediately.
- **Parents/guardians must ensure that the form is always kept current**

Release of Child

Our program is deeply committed to the safety of the children we serve. The following will be strictly enforced:

- Children will only be released to parents/guardians and authorized persons designated as Emergency Contacts on the Emergency Release form.
- Emergency Contacts must be adults of 18 years of age or older.
- All persons picking up the child from the center must always have proper identification, this includes parents/guardians. **A picture ID must be presented for verification (preferably a driver's license).** Staff will refer to the child's Emergency Release form and requests persons to show photo identification if unfamiliar.
- If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access to the child by a court order, we will secure documentation to this effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the documentation.
- If a parent or another designee fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, Head Start staff will attempt to contact parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on Emergency Release form. If no authorized person is available after 1 hour past the expected time, the local authorities may be notified.
- If the parent picking up the child, or the person authorized by the parents to do so, is physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the staff on site, the child would be placed at risk of harm, staff will attempt to contact the child's other parent/guardian or an alternative persons authorized by the parents/guardian. **We are unable to withhold a child from a parent, but will contact the authorities in the event this situation occurs and we are unable to reach an authorized alternative adult.**

Transportation Services

Our program is fortunate to have State certified bus drivers as well as age-appropriate safety seating. We do our best to provide transportation to as many children as we can, within the lawful time constraints. We are not mandated to provide transportation and due to limited resources, bus service may not be available for every child.

There are no substitute Drivers for regular routes. If a driver is unable to drive, transportation will be cancelled. Unfortunately, if a Driver is out for an extended period, transportation service will be suspended until the Driver is able to return. In some cases, it might be necessary to share a Driver between centers and alternate when transportation is offered. Parents should have alternate arrangements for transportation if it is cancelled. Notice will be provided as soon as possible.

All drivers are West Virginia State Department of Transportation certified. The center will not transport children in emergency situations. If a child requires emergency transportation, the parent/guardian or an ambulance will provide transportation.

Routes

- Children will only be picked up and dropped off at assigned bus stops.
- The Driver must have all the necessary forms and routes updated before a new pick-up/drop-off bus stop will be assigned. Please allow at least 1 week for this to occur.
- Community pick-up and drop-off points will be used in many cases. It may also be necessary for a designated pick-up/drop-off point based on location of home, length of route and ability to offer transportation to as many children as possible.
- Pick-up/drop off points are established following state guidelines.
- Inform your Family Advocate of any changes in name, phone number and address of parent, child, and persons on the Emergency Release form.

There must be an authorized person at the bus stop to receive your child and they must be 18 years old and have a picture ID for verification. If no authorized person is there to receive your preschooler, EPIC Head Start staff:

- Will not release your child.
- Will notify the Family Advocate and/or Child Development Manager to attempt to contact parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the Emergency Release form.
- Will return to the main center with your child. If no authorized person is available after 1 hour past the expected drop-off time, the local authorities may be notified.

Rules/Regulations

Safety is our primary concern. Failure to follow safety rules will result in suspension or termination of transportation services. By using Head Start transportation services, parents agree to comply with all bus safety rules including the following:

- When getting on and off the bus, children must use the handrail and authorized adult must come to bus door to assist.
- Children must always keep safety restraint system buckled. The Driver will tell them when it's okay to unbuckle.

EPIC Head Start, reserves the right to withdraw transportation services if:

- The address where the child is to be picked up or delivered is outside the transportation route.
- Child repeatedly ignores instructions to remain seated and buckled or does not follow safety rules.
- Parents/guardians verbally abuse (i.e., cursing, screaming, threatening) the driver or any other staff.
- Three occurrences of no authorized person to receive child when dropping off.
- Failure to comply with safety rules/regulations.
- Transportation services are not utilized regularly.



Driver: _____ Bus Cell Phone: _____

Bus stop location: _____

Pick up time: _____ Drop off time: _____

REMINDER: EPIC HEAD START/PRE K BUS RULES

1. You and your child must be at the bus stop 10 minutes before and 10 minutes after the bus is scheduled to arrive. **THE DRIVER IS UNABLE TO WAIT PAST THE SCHEDULED PICK-UP TIME.**
2. The parent/guardian must be at the bus stop 10 minutes before scheduled drop off time. Only those listed on the child's emergency form may get the child off the bus and must show driver a picture I.D. No one under the age of 18 may get a child off the bus. If no one is at the bus stop, your child will be returned to the Center.
3. It is the parent's responsibility to take the child to school if he/she misses the bus. If your child is not going to ride the bus, please call the bus cell phone number to notify the driver every day that your child is not going to ride the bus.
4. **Parent/guardian must come to the bus door to put the child on and receive the child off the bus. If you must cross the street, please cross in front of the bus, and wait for driver's signal that it is safe to cross.**
5. Keep sick children home. The bus driver may determine if a child is ill and refuse to allow the child to board.
6. Parents must inform the manager or family advocate of changes about emergency release information including phone numbers, person(s) authorized to pick up child, health matters, etc.
7. No food, drinks (including filled water container/jugs) or toys are allowed on the bus, unless requested by the teacher. No glass items will be allowed.
8. No smoking at the bus door.
9. If a child is bringing medication on the bus, please give the medication to the bus driver so that it can be stored in a safe place.
10. If your child does not ride the bus as scheduled for a period of 2 weeks, he/she may be removed from the bus run.

Loading/Unloading Policy

The past 10 years have provided early childhood transportation with many challenges. One example is the increase in physical aggression or refusal to board or get off the bus at the time of arrival and/or dismissal of school. This poses significant safety concerns for the children and for staff. Beginning 2019-2020 school year, **no staff member (full-time, part-time) is to carry a child off or on the bus.**

- If a child is refusing to get on the bus, dropping to the ground, staff are to verbally encourage/support the child in getting up and on the bus. If the child does not respond to this one prompt, the child will be escorted into the classroom and the parent will be called to come and pick-up.
- If the child is refusing to get on the bus from home, the parent will need to transport the child to school. The bus is unable to wait due to schedule and delay of traffic flow.
- If a child refuses to get off the bus at school, staff on-site can be enlisted to encourage the child to join his/her friends. If the child continues to refuse, two staff (on either side) can assist child off the bus.
- **Parents – for your child's safety, he/she needs to be awake and alert to board bus. No parent will be permitted to carry a sleeping child onto the bus.**

SECTION (8) HEALTH

Health problems treated early may prevent long term problems later in life. Your Family Advocate can help you find a doctor or dentist in your area, access health coverage, make appointments, and provide transportation as needed.

Physical Exam and Immunization Requirements

All enrolled children must meet Federal and State requirements. A parent/guardian must:

- Obtain a physical examination by a licensed physician for your child **within 30 days of enrollment (per child care licensure) or provide a copy of a physical that has been completed within the past year.**
- If the physical is not obtained within 30 days of enrollment, staff will be available to assist you in scheduling the appointment. An extended delay may result in an interruption of your child's attendance to the classroom or socialization until the physical is obtained.
- [EHS Home Visitors provide support to ensure all children are up-to-date on immunizations and the WV Early & Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment \(EPSDT\) schedule.](#)

Dental Exam Requirements

All enrolled children must meet Federal and State requirements. You must:

- Obtain a **dental examination** by a licensed dentist within **45 days** of enrollment.
- If your child needs any follow-up treatment, you must ensure your child gets the needed treatment.

Health Plans

If your child has a health condition, allergy, or disability we will make every effort to meet your child's needs. The Health and Safety Specialist and center staff will meet with you to develop a Health Plan outlining a plan of care for your child while attending the center.

Screenings

.With your consent, EPIC Head Start will complete the following screenings: [\(For EHS *\)](#)

- | | | | |
|-------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| - Vision * | - Measurements – Height & Weight * | - Nutrition * | - TB * |
| - Speech | - Lead * | - Development * | |
| - Hearing * | - Hematocrit/Hemoglobin (Iron) * | - Self-Help & Social Emotional * | |

Age appropriate screening tools are used. An explanation of each screening is provided in the Screening Permission Pamphlet you receive during enrollment. Results will be reviewed with you at each Parent Conference. If there are any concerns noted during these screenings, you will be notified. We are available to help you locate providers for further testing as needed.

Disabilities/Special Needs

If your child has a suspected disability, we will meet with you to discuss referral and resource options. With your consent, your child will be referred to a local agency or your school district for further testing.

If your child qualifies for services, we will work together with you and the referral agency. A plan will be developed to meet your child's educational and developmental needs, set goals for your child, and monitor progress.

Medication Policy

Our centers follow state and federal regulations regarding medication. We must follow these regulations. There can be NO exceptions. Staff is not permitted to give the first dose of any medication. If medication can be given at home, it must be given at home.

We will administer **medications** to your child while in attendance at centers when needed. You must follow these procedures regarding medication:

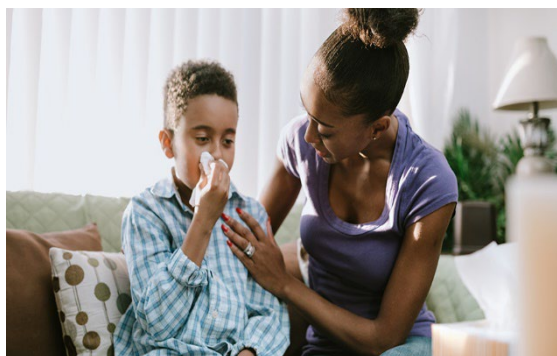
- The **Individualized Health Plan** outlining the plan of care, including instructions for medication administration, must be completed when a health condition requires medication to be given.

- You must bring the medication along with written instructions from the physician to the center or hand the medication directly to the bus Driver. **NEVER** put medication in your child's backpack.
- You must include the Individualized Health Plan form at the time you bring in the medication. No medication will be accepted in the center without this form.
- Doctors orders must be provided for staff to administer any OTC medications (Tylenol, etc)
- **EPI pens are with the teachers at all times!**

When medication is left at the center at the time the child leaves the program, staff will make every effort to contact you. Staff will keep the medication for a period of **one (1) week**. If you do not pick up the medication, and we are unable to reach you, the **medication will be discarded**.

Sick Child

We are very concerned about the health of children in our care. We follow Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines in determining if children must be sent home. Children with any of the symptoms below will be made comfortable on a cot in an area away from other children and monitored closely by staff. The parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the child. If we cannot reach the parent/guardian, the designated emergency contact will be notified to pick up the child.



Symptoms include:

- Temperature of at least 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit. Temperature shall be taken by auxiliary (arm pit), temporal (forehead) or oral (mouth) methods with a digital thermometer.
- Diarrhea (three or more abnormally loose stools within a twenty-four (24) hour period)
- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Redness of the eye/eye lid, thick and purulent (puss) discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching eye pain.
- Untreated infected skin patches, unusual spots, or rashes
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestations.
- Sore throat or difficulty in swallowing
- Vomiting more than one time or when accompanied by any other sign or symptom of illness

Your child may return to the center when:

- Cleared by the doctor to return and/or
- Free of fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea for at least 24 hours (without assistance from medication).
- Effective medical treatment of the illness has been obtained.
- The child's appetite and level of activity is normal.
- **A parent or doctors note is required to excuse an absence.**

Communicable Illness

Parents will receive written notification when a communicable illness has occurred in their child's classroom.

Lice

Head checks will be done weekly in all centers. If live lice are discovered, the parent will be notified via phone and a treatment guideline handout will be sent home. Your child may return the next day if proper treatment is done that evening. <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

Bed Bugs

Procedures available upon request.

SECTION (9) SAFETY

The safety of your child is the top priority for our agency. Children are never left alone or unattended. Staff is trained in safety policies and procedures. Emergency response phone numbers are posted in all locations. Parent/guardian emergency contact information for every child is kept on file. You must notify staff if your contact information changes. This will ensure we can reach you in the event of an emergency. In the case of serious injury that requires medical treatment, staff will call 911. Parent/guardians are notified immediately if this occurs as you will need to go to your child's classroom or hospital. Head Start staff CANNOT sign transport refusal for EMS. Again, you must provide current contact information so you can always be reached in an emergency.

Centers are designed to meet all health, safety, and developmental needs of children. Only age- appropriate non-toxic materials are used in our centers. All centers meet licensing regulations regarding safety procedures. Adequate temperatures in centers are maintained. We will not hold center session if the temperature in the center falls below 65 degrees. If the temperature goes above 85 degrees, ventilation to provide air movement is used. Center staff inspect the centers and playgrounds daily. Any safety hazards, damaged materials, or other potential hazards are removed, repaired, or replaced.

Centers are inspected by licensing and fire personnel regularly to make sure we are meeting safety guidelines. Emergency fire, tornado, and evacuation plans are posted in each center. Tornado and fire drills are conducted regularly so children are familiar with procedures for evacuation. All center areas including bathrooms, closets, under desks, etc. are checked before leaving the building to make sure all children are out of the building. A head count is checked against the attendance sheet to make sure all children are accounted for.

For the safety of all children, please do not send your child to school with small objects like beaded jewelry, chap sticks, make-up, necklaces, earrings, hoodies with strings, etc.

General Emergency and Safety Procedures

We have outlined procedures posted in every classroom, to follow should an emergency occur while children are in our care. In the event of a fire or tornado, staff would follow the written instructions describing emergency evacuation routes, and the procedures to be followed to ensure that children have arrived at the designated spot. Staff will take attendance roster, first aid kit and emergency contact information for children. All children will be accounted for with a name to face recognition.

To prepare children for the unlikely need to evacuate, the center does conduct monthly fire drills and bi-annual weather response drills. Should we need to evacuate, a sign will be posted in front of the center indicating that we have been evacuated and the location where you can pick up your child. Parents will be contacted immediately. If a parent cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts as listed on your child's Emergency Release form.

In the unlikely event there would be an environmental threat or a threat of violence, staff will; secure the children in the safest location possible, contact and follow the directions given by the proper authorities and contact the parents as soon as the situation allows. An incident report would also be provided to the parents.

In the event a "Shelter In Place" order from authorities should occur, procedures are in place to assure the safety of children and staff. Your child will be cared for by their routine caregivers whenever possible to promote continuity of care. Once the "Shelter In Place" order is lifted by authorities, you may pick up your child. No child will be released to any parent/guardian until this order is lifted.

In the event of orders to evacuate a center, we will contact local authorities for evacuation instructions. Once at the evacuation site, parents/guardians will be contacted to pick up their child/children or that child will be transported home on a Head Start bus.

Social Media Policy

Social networking has become a popular way for people to stay connected with friends and family. It allows for those closest to us to stay in touch and be a part of family events, achievements, and news.

As you become part of the Early Head Start/Head Start program, we must ask that you adhere to our social media restrictions, which align with the public-school system and follow State Law.

1. We ask that you respect and understand that you may **not** take photos or videos of any child other than your own. Posting pictures/videos of other children **could put a child or family in jeopardy**. Parents may not post pictures of activities that take place at our centers on FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, or any other social media unless it is of your own child only. * Make sure there are no other children in background.
2. Any messages that are posted to FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, or any other social media that are viewed as harassing, coercing, or threatening to our children/students, families or staff will **not** be tolerated. Individuals have the right to pursue criminal charges against those postings.



Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools

EPIC Head Start acknowledges and continuously supports the absolute need for all children, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to have a safe, positive educational environment. The increase of uncertainty/instability in the lives of all people make providing a safe, supportive environment even more critical for learning and social-emotional development.

In conjunction with West Virginia Department of Education Policy 4373 "Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools" the following expectations apply whether in a classroom or center, on a school bus, at a school-sponsored activity or event, whether held on school premises, in a building or other property being used by our educational program. Unacceptable behavior will be taken seriously and investigated to determine proper interventions for the safety of all.

Expectations:

1. Adults, whether staff or parents/guardians/caregivers will express their emotions appropriately in a wide range of situations (always being mindful that children are within hearing range).
2. If an adult has a concern or issue with the program, the adult will address with supervisory staff in person.
3. All adults will model how to respond appropriately to daily situations.

Violations of these expectations include:

- Profane language toward a staff member or another parent, including at a bus stop.
- Threats of physical harm to a child, parent, or staff member.
- Threats of property destruction.
- Bringing a weapon on to school grounds.
- Public guests (parents, other relatives, care givers, etc.) will be subject to removal from school property/events, banned from attending future activities and appropriate notification of local authorities including the county Board of Education will occur.

SECTION (10) OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Engagement in Head Start

EPIC Head Start strives to bring a relentless focus on positive child and family outcomes through working with parents to build a better future for children, families, and communities. A strong parent and staff partnership is the basis for your child's success. We strongly encourage parent involvement in their child's education by asking all parents participate with us throughout the year, including:

- Bringing child to class on time and every day because attendance is key to success.
- Reading to child every night to encourage a love of learning and build their vocabulary.
- Participating in orientation, parent meetings, home visits, parent conferences, and events.
- Volunteering in the classroom, on Policy Council or program committees and working with your child at home.
- Keeping all medical and dental appointments.

Volunteer Opportunities

Policy Council

Parents elected to Policy Council represent your child's center or home base as the elected representative by attending monthly meetings (childcare is available and a meal provided) and engage in decision making/voting on many of the important decisions affecting the program's progress and your child's educational foundation. Some functions of Policy Council include:

- Ensuring that policy and procedure are implemented effectively, including legal and fiscal responsibilities.
- Providing guidance to the individuals who carry out program activities.
- Approve/Disapprove activities and plans carried out by the program.
- Consult, plan, coordinate and organize agency-wide activities for parents with the assistance of staff.
- Recruit volunteer services from parents, community residents and organizations, and mobilize community resources to meet identified needs.

Agendas and minutes of Policy Council and parent meetings are available at each center. If you are interested in more information about Policy Council, please contact your Family Advocate.

Parent Committee

The parent committee is made up of parents of currently enrolled children. They are established at the center/county level as early in the program year as possible. This committee allows parents to participate in the leadership of your child's center by attending meetings and discussing issues. Head Start centers will hold parent committee meetings throughout the program year. Parent committees have the following responsibilities:

- Advise staff in developing and implementing local program policies, activities, and services to ensure that they meet the needs of children and families. Each parent committee will have the opportunity to discuss how to spend the parent activity fund on events following the Policy Council Fund guidelines. The amount of this fund will be determined yearly according to the budget.
- Parents and staff will use these meetings to exchange ideas and work together to develop program initiatives. Parents will receive an agenda announcing the upcoming meeting/training time, place, and topics to be covered at the meeting. A copy of the minutes from the previous meeting will be available
- The parent committee will also participate in the recruitment and screening of EHS/HS employees following guidelines established by the governing bodies.
- There will be **no** individual Parent Fund Raisers.

Advisory Committee

Advisory committee's focus on specific issues affecting the program, such as dual language learners, education, health, mental health, and social services. These committees typically meet at 2-4 times throughout the program year. Parents will receive an agenda announcing the upcoming meeting/training time, place, and topics to be covered at the meeting. A copy of the minutes from the previous meeting will be available.

Special Classroom Activities and Field Trips

Lead an age-appropriate activity, share your musical or artistic talent, or assist on a field trip.

Regular Classroom Volunteering

The success of our program requires parent volunteers. We invite you to talk to your child's Teachers or Family Advocate about becoming a regular volunteer in your child's classroom. You will be able to work with children on art activities, read to individual children or small groups, help during meals or transitions, etc.

All parent volunteers who volunteer two (2) or more times a month or who have regularly scheduled volunteer hours must complete a Volunteer Orientation and comply with West Virginia licensing requirements, including the following:

- Must be at least 18 years of age.
- Required to have a negative Tuberculosis (TB) test.
- Receive a criminal background investigation.
- Abide by policies of EPIC Head Start Advisory Council concerning tobacco products, alcohol and drugs, harassment and violence, social media and other appropriate educational policies.

Parent Meetings and Trainings

Head Start centers will hold parent committee meetings and trainings throughout the program year. Childcare will be provided if needed. These meetings will provide the opportunity to share center information, Policy Council reports and current events and to allow parent input into your child's classroom/curriculum.

All parents who have children enrolled in a particular center program are members of the parent committee. Staff will review parent committee ideas with the Family Community Partnership Specialist before final approval is given.

- Parents and staff use these meetings to exchange ideas and work together to develop program initiatives.
- Parents receive an agenda announcing the upcoming meeting/training time, place, and topics to be covered at the meeting. A copy of the minutes from the previous meeting will be available.
- There will be no individual Parent Fund Raisers.

Parent Conferences and Home Visits

All centers will offer two conferences at the school and up to two home visits during the program year to meet with your child's Teacher or Asst. Teacher. During parent conferences and home visits, teachers will share information about the center, educational screenings, child's progress, individual goals developed, and home activities discussed. Parents can request an additional meeting with the Teacher if needed.

Family Engagement Home Visits

Family Advocates will schedule an initial home visit at the beginning of the program year to complete a Family Strengths Assessment. After the Family Strengths Assessment has been completed, FA staff will schedule follow-up home visits to develop a Family Partnership Agreement in which families may choose goals they would like to accomplish to prepare their child for success in kindergarten.

Family Advocates are also available to assist families with:

- crisis intervention
- support and referral to appropriate community resources
- a linkage with state and federal benefits
- medical and dental resources
- housing resources
- parent education

Every EPIC Head Start County has Family Advocate staff available to assist in social services and community resources.

She/he will provide you with information or referrals in the areas of medical care, childcare, child support, financial assistance, housing, transportation, employment, adult education, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need information or assistance.

In-Kind Matching Funds

For each dollar (\$1) the EPIC Head Start program receives from the federal government, our program must generate twenty-five cents (\$0.25) of local matching funds. These matching funds may be in the form of cash donations, items, volunteer service, space, etc. Parents/guardians making any form of donation and/or volunteering will be asked to complete the appropriate In-Kind documentation form.



**EPIC Early Head Start/Head Start In-Kind
Caregiver/Child Activity and Volunteer Time Sheet**

EHS or HS Child			
Month/Year			
*READ TO ME EVERY DAY (** use key)	Minutes Daily	Total Hours	
*A family literacy program designed to encourage and support language and literacy skills at home. Children choose five books each week and take them home along with a journal for drawing and sharing their ideas.			

Date/Week Child (**use key)	Hours	At Home Learning Activities Provided by Classroom or HV staff and Completed by Caregiver & Child (**use key)	
	hrs	School Readiness Goal Activity Description	
	hrs	School Readiness Goal Activity Description	
	hrs	School Readiness Goal Activity Description	
	hrs	School Readiness Goal Activity Description	
**Total Hours _____			**KEY: 5 minutes a day = 2.5 hours a month 10 minutes a day = 5 hours a month 15 minutes a day = 7.5 hours a month 20 minutes a day = 10 hours a month

Date	Hours	Space (Head Start will only use for initial and final HV w/teaching staff)
		Home Visit
		Home Visit

Date	Hours	Parent volunteer – provide description of program-related tasks performed	Valued by years in program

Date	Hours	Field Trip – required safety precaution

Child's years in Early Head Start and Head Start (check one) _____ 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5
 (19.75) (20.25) (20.75) (21.25) (21.75)

Grand Total Hours _____

Parent/Guardian Signature

EHS/HS Staff Signature

Office use: Total Amount \$ _____

EHS/HS Family Advocate Staff Initials _____

**Early Head Start/Head Start/Early/Pre-K
Professional & Donated In-Kind Goods/Services**

Name: _____
(first and last)

Agency (If applicable): _____

Date (Date volunteer service was provided or date of donation)	Service/Materials (Provide a description of services provided such as helped in classroom. If donation of item(s), provide a description of the items) * for items- attach receipt	Purpose of Materials (ex.-small group/ counting-sorting) * Include Site if general supply	Time/Value (Provide the duration of time the service was provided or estimate of fair market value of items)

Hourly value of community volunteer must include fringe benefits.

Donor or Volunteer Signature: _____

EHS/HS Staff Signature: _____

Hourly Rate Service \$ _____ x (# of hours) _____ = Total _____
(to include fringe benefits, if applicable)

Total Donation (Goods) _____ (only items the program would purchase)

**EPIC Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K
VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

Name: _____

Phone: Day _____

Evening _____

Address: _____

Hours available for volunteer work:

Days: _____ Every week: _____

Time: _____ Every month: _____ Other: _____

Type of volunteer service preferred:

Classroom Aide _____ Food Service _____ Break Aide _____ Other (please specify) _____

What special skills, interest, experience, or education do you have that might contribute to your volunteer service to Head Start/Pre-K?

TB _____

CIB _____

In case of emergency, contact: _____
(Name, phone, address) _____

Are there any health conditions, allergies, etc., that EPIC Head Start/Pre-K should be aware?

Thoughts/Suggestions Form and Procedure

EPIC Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K values the input of our parents and guardians! We welcome your thoughts and suggestions that may help us improve our program in any way. If you would like to provide us with feedback at any time during the school year, please complete this form with detailed information regarding your suggestion and/or thoughts. We sincerely appreciate all your comments and ideas!

- Please complete this form and return it to the drop box provided at your child's center. Feel free to contact your Policy Council representative regarding your suggestions. If you are not familiar with your representative, please ask a staff member for more information.
- All suggestions and needs will be addressed confidentially and as quickly as possible. Suggestions and needs will be reviewed by a Policy Council representative who will then present the thoughts and suggestions at the next Policy Council meeting. Policy Council meetings are typically held the third or fourth Wednesday of each month, beginning at 10:15 am. All parents are welcome to attend Policy Council meetings. If you would like a list of the Policy Council meeting dates, please ask your Policy Council representative or a staff member.
- Suggestions and needs will be addressed by the Director, the Policy Council, and the appropriate staff members. Concerns may or may not receive written responses, based on the appropriateness and confidentiality.

Date: _____

Child's Placement: _____

Home Based: Home Visitor's Name _____

Center Based: Teacher's Name _____

Please share your suggestions or requests regarding your Head Start experience:

Please provide the following information if you wish to be contacted:

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

For Policy Council use only:

Addressed at Policy Council on: _____

Signature of Policy Council Chairperson: _____

Signature/Date of EPIC Head Start/Pre-K Director: _____

Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality in relation to the EPIC Early Head Start/ Head Start/Pre-K Program is interpreted as the following: preserving information received in confidence and disclosing to agencies/professionals only such information as is needed to plan and deliver effective services to parents/guardians and children and preserving information contained in personnel records. The EPIC Early Head Start/ Head Start/ Pre-K Director is held responsible for overseeing procedures which will assure adequate protection of confidential information.

EPIC will adhere to the following principles:

1. Parents/guardians shall be the primary source of information about themselves or their families (Example: other relatives such as grandparents are not entitled to information on the child or family unless the parent or guardian has provided written consent. Emergency contacts are listed for emergency purposes only and do not allow access to confidential information).
2. Only facts and objective information relative to services to a family shall be recorded or discussed among staff members on a need-to-know basis.
3. The family has a right to know what specific use will be made of the information collected. The family can have access to information contained in the file with a written request to their child's Family Advocate. The family advocate has up to **72** hours to provide the family with the opportunity to view the file/read contents or prepare requested information.
4. Parents/guardians are prohibited from reviewing records other than those of their own children.
5. Children's health and education records and family social service records are open only to Early Head Start/ Head Start/ Pre-K staff and special consultants on a need-to-know basis. These individuals must sign in on the inside cover of the permanent file.
6. Information to be treated as confidential and kept in a locked file:
Children's permanent records including the following:
 - a. Application and verification of income screening criteria.
 - b. Information contained in correspondence forms or notations from or about individual families.
 - c. Information contained in reports and records relating to specific individuals and/or families.
7. No information shall be released to other agencies or professionals without the specific written authorization of the parent/guardian unless required by law (Example: Information cannot be released to a physician or other medical facility/agency without a release of information signed by the parent/guardian). Information needed for court must be requested by subpoena.
8. All program information shall be made available to auditors and other federally appointed review/evaluative personnel.
9. Because federal/state laws require employees to report suspected child abuse/neglect, specific information must be reported through proper channels as outlined in the Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Procedure.
10. Any breach of confidentiality or program information by a program employee shall be grounds for disciplinary action. (Example: Sharing information about children and families outside of the workplace. Communicating about children and families where confidentiality is compromised such as when children are present in the classroom, on the playground, in common areas, in public places or around other staff not related to the caseload.)
11. Confidential and sensitive information (such as referrals to child protective services and some court orders) will be kept in a sealed folder marked Confidential and placed in the back pocket of the child's permanent file.

I _____ (**print name**) have read the EPIC Early Head Start/ Head Start/ Pre-K Confidentiality Policy and will adhere to its requirements.

Signature

Date

