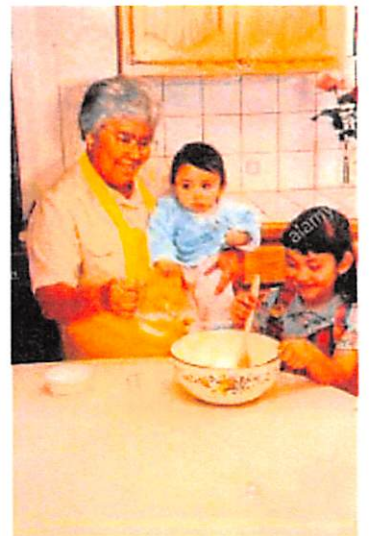


EPIC Early Head Start Parent Handbook



**Parent Handbook
Table of Contents**

Welcome Letter	1
Your Support Team	2
Expectant Parent – Staff Contract	3
Parent/Guardian – Staff Contract	6
Section 1 Introduction	9
Statement of Purpose; Mission Statement	9
Section 2 – Program Locations by County	10
Directions to EPIC Early Head Start Sites	11
Section 3 – Transportation for Early Head Start Families	12
Bus Stops; EPIC Bus Rules	12
Bus Procedures; To and From Socializations	13
Section 4 – Things to Know About Early Head Start	14
Days and Hours Open; What Your Child Should Wear for Socializations	14
Discipline and Behavior Management	15
Assessment and Screening of Children	16
Section 5 – Attendance Policy	17
Program Attendance Requirements	17
Withdrawal from Program; Inclement Weather Policy, Where to Get Information on School Closings	18
Section 6 – Some Things to Know About Home Visits in the Home-Based Program	19
Section 7 – Nutrition and Health	20
Meals/Restrictive Diets; Parties/Special Celebrations; Illness Policy	20
Immunization Requirements; Physical/Dentals	21
Section 8 – Education and Disabilities Services	22
Screenings and Assessments; Disabilities/Special Needs	22
Section 9 – Family Partnerships and Community Resources	23
Family Partnership Agreement; Child Abuse and Neglect	23
Section 10 – Parent Involvement	24
Concern - Suggestions; Confidentiality Policy	24
Parent Activities; Parent Meetings and Special Events	25
Policy Council; Policy Council Parent Fund	26
Committees; Volunteering	27
In-Kind Matching Funds	28
Getting Information	28
Social Media Policy	29

July 1, 2021

Dear Early Head Start Family,

Welcome to the EPIC Early Head Start Program, beginning its 12th year in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. With each new year, we have been able to establish more partnerships with our community to provide resources and opportunities to our many families. We are sure this year will be no exception.

Our families, whether you are an expectant mom or parent(s) of a young child, are the focus of this program. We are here to take the time necessary to understand what your needs and hopes are, support your efforts, link you to resources in your community and celebrate the many achievements, regardless of size, that you and your family experience.

Our Early Head Start team prepared the Handbook. Reading it and having it available to refer to will help you become more familiar with our program, its policies, and procedures. We hope that it will help you and your family participate fully in our early childhood program.

We are committed to excellence in all aspects of the program. We value your opinions and suggestions regarding the program and how we can continue to improve what we do. Feel free to contact me at hbach@k12.wv.us if you have any concerns or wish to share ideas.

Many thanks for your participation and commitment to your children.

Heidi Bach-Arvin
Director

YOUR SUPPORT TEAM

Child's Name: _____

Your Home Visitor: _____

Your Nurse: _____

Your Family Advocate: _____

Your Manager: _____

Early Head Start Office Telephone Number:

Bus Driver Name and Telephone Number:

**EPIC EARLY HEAD START
EXPECTANT MOTHER – STAFF CONTRACT**

I/We, _____, agree to the following conditions of enrollment in the EPIC Early Head Start Program:

INITIAL AS REVIEWED AND AGREED UPON. WRITE NO IF YOU CANNOT COMPLY.

- ___ 1. I will notify my home visitor immediately if I have a change of address, phone number(s), emergency contacts, child care, legal situation, or other relevant changes. I will complete a new emergency form if needed.
- ___ 2. I understand that I am expected to attend an orientation session at enrollment to learn about my role in the EPIC Early Head Start program. I have received and read the parent handbook and will keep it to refer to during the year.
- ___ 3. I agree to be available for _____ home visits this program year and to receive periodic visits from other Early Head Start staff (Home Visitors, Nurse, FA, etc.). My Early Head Start Family Advocate will also be contacting me to discuss my Family Partnership Agreement.
- ___ 4. I agree to contact my home visitor as soon as possible when I give birth and to be available for a home visit with my home visitor and the Early Head Start Nurse within two (2) weeks. I agree to participate in transition planning into home-based services for my infant.
- ___ 5. I agree to participate fully in the entire home visit as requested by the staff member.
- ___ 6. I agree to contact my staff member 24 hours ahead of time if I cannot be at home or at center for our scheduled appointment. If this is not possible, I will leave a message on my door. I will contact the bus driver as soon as possible.
- ___ 7. I understand that I am encouraged to attend and participate in socializations twice a month, which are held 22 times per year.
- ___ 8. I understand that, if I have two absences from scheduled visits, I may be contacted regarding my interest in the program or placement on the waiting list. If I do not respond, my place will be filled with another family. I have reviewed the attendance policy in the parent handbook. I also understand that it is important to be on time for socializations.
- ___ 9. If I am provided with bus transportation, I agree to be at the designated bus stop ten (10) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time, and I am aware that the bus will not wait. I understand that the bus may be delayed due to road conditions or other reasons. I have received a copy of the bus rules and I agree to follow them.
- ___ 10. If I drive to Early Head Start activities, I will not leave other children in my vehicle unless there is an adult present. I will bring them with me. I agree to hold onto my children when coming to or leaving the center, and to teach them about pedestrian safety. I will be careful around buses and cars at centers and other activity sites. I will always turn off my vehicle to prevent pollution and potential accidents.
- ___ 11. I understand that expectant mothers must provide copies of up-to-date physical and dental examinations as well as a prenatal history.
- ___ 12. I agree to complete all follow-up health services recommended by the doctor or dentist.
- ___ 13. I understand that I will be unable to attend socializations when I have a communicable illness or condition such as impetigo, chicken pox, head lice, COVID 19 etc. If I am uncertain, I will contact my home visitor or the Early Head Start Nurse (304 671-1148) before the scheduled activity. I will contact my home visitor before planned visits if there are communicable illnesses in the home.

- ___ 14. I have reviewed the EPIC Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K Confidentiality Policy in the parent handbook and understand the exceptions to this, particularly with respect to court-ordered testimony and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. I understand that when I attend socializations, I am required to maintain confidentiality and not discuss other parents or children outside of the center. I will not share staff or other program participants' phone numbers or email addresses.
- ___ 15. I understand that staff members are involved with the parents/children during every Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K activity, but the responsibility for the care and supervision of children at any Early Head Start function lies with the child's parent or guardian (therefore we discourage cell phone use unless absolutely necessary). If I have other children, I will consider my child's age, abilities and health concerns before participating in any program activity. I acknowledge that EPIC Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K carries accident insurance on all children enrolled in the program, but the agency is unable to provide insurance coverage for siblings, parents, guardians, relatives or friends.
- ___ 16. I give my permission for myself and other members of my family to be photographed, audio-taped, filmed or quoted for publicity purposes to promote EPIC Early Head Start.
- ___ 17. I give permission for myself and other members of my family to be photographed by staff for social media purposes and displayed on the Early Head Start pages.
- ___ 18. I agree that photos and videos of only myself and my child will be taken during Early Head Start activities and events with my personal equipment in order to respect the confidentiality of all families enrolled in the program.
- ___ 19. I understand that use of alcohol or illegal drugs, and inappropriate behavior or language, is not permitted at any Early Head Start activity. Tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and drugs are not allowed on school or EPIC property, including walkways, parking lots, or in public places while attending an Early Head Start event such as a socialization, parent meeting, field trip, etc. We ask that family members not smoke or vape during the home visit due to potential allergic reactions of your home visitor.
- ___ 20. I agree to use my cell phone strictly for emergencies during home visits, socializations and other program events.
- ___ 21. I give my permission to allow Head Start and Early Head Start to share and exchange information for the purpose of providing assistance to me and my family. I understand that my consent is valid as long as I am enrolled in the program and during any related follow up. I also understand that I can revoke this consent at any time.

EPIC EARLY HEAD START/HEAD START/PRE-K AGREES TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

PLEASE INITIAL

- ___ 1. I, _____, the Home Visitor, agree to respect the privacy of this family and follow all confidentiality guidelines.
- ___ 2. I agree to notify the family at least 24 hours ahead of time, whenever possible, if I cannot keep a scheduled appointment or home visit.
- ___ 3. EPIC agrees that all families enrolled in the program shall have an equal opportunity to receive appropriate services without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, disability or sexual preference.
- ___ 4. We agree to implement a research-based curriculum and provide parents with information regarding their infant's health care and development.
- ___ 5. We agree to provide referrals for services for families as indicated. Early Head Start families will have opportunities to participate in a Family Partnership Agreement and receive assistance to obtain family goals.
- ___ 6. We agree that all staff members will adhere to the Code of Ethics of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ___ 7. We agree to provide parents and guardians with opportunities for networking, training and leadership.
- ___ 8. We will ensure that all participants have a role in program planning and operation.

____ 9. If funding permits, the program agrees to provide mileage reimbursement for eligible parents traveling to Policy Council and tri-county committee meetings.

My signature means that I have read the entire contract or have had it explained to me in language that I can understand. This contract expires upon my infant's transition into home based and/or center-based services unless revoked in writing prior to that date.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Parent/Guardian

Date

Staff Member

Date

**EPIC EARLY HEAD START
PARENT/GUARDIAN - STAFF CONTRACT**

I, _____, (parent/guardian) of _____, agree to the following conditions of enrollment in the EPIC Early Head Start Program:

INITIAL AS REVIEWED AND AGREED UPON. WRITE NO IF YOU CANNOT COMPLY.

- ___ 1. I will notify my home visitor immediately if I have a change of address, phone number(s), emergency contacts, childcare, legal situation, or other relevant changes. I will complete a new emergency form if needed.
- ___ 2. I understand that I am expected to participate in an orientation at enrollment to learn about my role in the EPIC Early Head Start program. I have received and read the parent handbook and will keep it to refer to during the year.
- ___ 3. I have provided the program documentation of my child's age and date of birth. Staff members will assist families to obtain the state or country certificate, if requested.
- ___ 4. I agree to allow the Home Visitor to come into my home for approximately one and one half (1-1/2) hours per visit to work with me and my child. I understand that I must be available for _____ home visits this year. My Early Head Start Family Advocate/Early Head Start Nurse will also be contacting me for regular home visits to discuss my Family Partnership Agreement and health needs/screenings.
- ___ 5. I agree to participate fully in the entire home visit as requested by the staff member. I agree to always be present with the Early Head Start Staff during home visits and activities.
- ___ 6. I agree to contact my staff member 24 hours ahead of time if I cannot be at home or at center for our scheduled appointment. If this is not possible, I will leave a message on my door. I will contact the Home Visitor as soon as possible if I cannot attend a socialization. I understand that I will be contacted if I have not notified the home visitor.
- ___ 7. I understand that I am expected to attend Wee Plays, parent meetings, and field trips. Due to limited classroom space only immediate family members will be permitted to attend classroom activities.
- ___ 8. I understand that, if my child has two unexcused absences from home visits, I may be contacted regarding placement on the waiting list or termination from the program. If I do not respond, my place will be filled with another family. I have reviewed the attendance policy in the parent handbook.
- ___ 9. If my child is provided with bus transportation, I agree to be at the designated bus stop with my child ten (10) minutes before the scheduled pick-up time, and I am aware that the bus will not wait. I understand that the bus may be delayed due to road conditions or other reasons.
- ___ 10. If my child is provided with bus transportation, failure to comply with transportation requirements may result in termination of bus service.
- ___ 11. I give permission for my child to ride the Early Head Start bus to Wee Plays and field trips and to wear a safety vest. If my child is provided with bus transportation for the EPIC Early Head Start program, I understand that I must accompany my child on the bus. I have received the rules for the Early Head Start bus/van and I agree to follow them.
- ___ 12. When attending activities at the center, I will not leave other children in my vehicle unless there is an adult present. I will bring them with me. I agree to hold onto my children when coming to or leaving the center, and to teach them about pedestrian safety. I will be very careful around buses and cars at centers and other activity sites. I will always turn off my vehicle to prevent pollution and potential accidents.
- ___ 13. I understand that my child must have physical examinations as required by the WV EPSDT. Early Head Start children are required to have a record of a hematocrit or hemoglobin test, lead blood level, and dental examination as determined by WV EPSDT guidelines.

14. I understand that if my child does not receive age appropriate immunizations as required by the WV EPSDT, he/she may not be allowed to attend Wee Plays or other program events for his or her own safety.
15. I agree to complete all follow-up health services recommended by the doctor or dentist.
16. I give my permission to have my child participate in Early Head Start routine developmental screenings (e.g., Brigance Developmental Screening Test) and health screenings (e.g., height, weight, vision, hearing, speech, and social emotional). I will follow up on staff recommendations regarding these screenings and I will follow up with designated professionals or agencies if further evaluations are recommended.
17. I understand that my child or any other family member will be unable to attend centers and field trips and that regular home visits will not be conducted when he/she has a communicable illness or condition such as impetigo, chicken pox, head lice, COVID 19, etc. If I am uncertain, I will contact my home visitor or the EHS Nurse (304 671-1148) before the scheduled activity. Parents are asked to contact home visitors before scheduled visits if there are communicable illnesses in the home.
18. I give permission for EPIC Early Head Start to track my child's progress in the school system to obtain data to improve the program.
19. I have reviewed the EPIC Early Head Start Confidentiality Policy in the parent handbook and understand the exceptions to this, particularly with respect to court-ordered testimony and reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect. I understand that when I attend Wee Plays and/or other program events, I am required to maintain confidentiality and not discuss other children outside of the classroom. I will not share staff or other program participants' phone numbers or email addresses.
20. I understand that staff members are involved with the children during every Early Head Start activity, but the responsibility for the care and supervision of the children at any program function lies with the child's parent or guardian. I will consider my child's age, abilities, and health concerns before participating in any program activity. I acknowledge that EPIC Early Head Start carries accident insurance on all children enrolled in the program, but the agency is unable to provide insurance coverage for siblings, parents, guardians, relatives, or friends.
21. I give my permission to allow my child(ren) and other members of my family to be photographed, audio-taped, filmed or quoted for publicity purposes to promote EPIC Early Head Start.
22. I give permission to allow my child(ren) and other members of my family to be photographed by staff for social media purposes and displayed on the EPIC Early Head Start pages.
23. I agree that photos and videos of only my child will be taken during Early Head Start activities and events with my personal equipment in order to respect the confidentiality of all children enrolled in the program.
24. I understand that I have the right to submit a complaint regarding the EPIC Early Head Start program by using the EPIC Early Head Start Concern Form in the Parent Handbook. I also understand that I have the right to file a complaint with the WV Department of Health and Human Resources. (304-558-1885) www.wvdhhr.org
25. I understand that use of alcohol or illegal drugs, and inappropriate behavior or language, is not permitted at any Early Head Start activity. Tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and drugs are not allowed on school or EPIC property, including walkways, parking lots, or in public places while attending an Early Head Start event such as a Wee Play, parent meeting, field trip, etc. We ask that family members not smoke or vape during the home visit.
26. If there is a change in guardianship status, I will provide legal documentation of that change.
27. I agree to use my cell phone strictly for emergencies during home visits, Wee Plays, and other program events.
28. I give permission to allow Head Start and Early Head Start staff to share and exchange information for the purpose of helping me and my family. I understand that my consent is valid as long as I am enrolled in the program and during any related follow up. I also understand that I can revoke this consent at any time.

**EPIC EARLY HEAD START AGREES TO DO THE FOLLOWING:
PLEASE INITIAL**

- ___ 1. I, _____, the Home Visitor, agree to respect the privacy of this family and follow all confidentiality guidelines.
- ___ 2. I agree to notify the family at least 24 hours ahead of time, whenever possible, if I cannot keep a scheduled appointment or home visit.
- ___ 3. EPIC agrees that all families and children enrolled in the program shall have an equal opportunity to receive appropriate services without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, disability, or sexual preference.
- ___ 4. We agree to implement a research-based curriculum and provide parents with information regarding their child's ongoing assessment.
- ___ 5. We agree to provide referrals for services for children and families as indicated. Early Head Start families will have opportunities to participate in a Family Partnership Agreement and receive assistance to obtain family goals.
- ___ 6. We agree that all staff members will adhere to the Code of Ethics of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ___ 7. We agree to provide parents and guardians with opportunities for networking, training, and leadership.
- ___ 8. We will ensure that all participants have a role in program planning and operation.
- ___ 9. If funding permits, the program may assume some financial responsibility for Early Head Start children's follow-up health services on an individual basis when the child is not eligible for a medical card, CHIPS, or insurance coverage.
- ___ 10. If funding permits, the program agrees to provide mileage reimbursement for eligible parents traveling to Policy Council and tri-county committee meetings.
- ___ 11. If funding permits, Early Head Start will make every effort to arrange for appropriate services recommended for children enrolled in the program.
- ___ 12. EPIC maintains liability and accident insurance on all enrolled children.

My signature means that I have read the entire contract or have had it explained to me in language that I can understand. This contract expires the last day of the program year unless revoked in writing prior to that date.

Parent/Guardian

Date

Staff Member

Date

Section 1. Introduction

Statement of Purpose

EPIC Early Head Start is a comprehensive child and family development program. It provides educational, health, nutrition, and family services for expectant parents through children age three and their families.

As a child development program, EPIC Early Head Start promotes social and emotional development, cognitive development, and language development. For children with disabilities, the child development cornerstone and all support services are tailored to meet specific needs of each individual child.

For children to be successful learners, their health, dental, nutritional, and mental health needs must be met. For parents to assume their full role as the most important educators of their children, their needs must be met as well. EPIC Early Head Start takes active steps to assist families in successfully meeting those needs.

EPIC Early Head Start is funded primarily by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supplemented by local in-kind resources. Eligibility for the program is based on place of residence, age of child, family income, and other criteria.

There is no fee for participating families, but Early Head Start should not be viewed as a free program. Participating families contribute to the operation of the program when they pay taxes on income and property and when they volunteer within the program.

Mission Statement

Our mission is:

- To deliver high quality services to Eastern Panhandle children and families in child development, health, social services, and parent involvement.
- To encourage and support the development of staff professionalism and teamwork.
- To 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.
- To serve as a model of excellence beginning with prenatal education continuing through early childhood development.

**Section 2.
Program Locations by County**

Main Office:

EPIC
109 South College Street
Martinsburg, WV 25401
(304) 267-3595
Fax: (304) 267-3599

Berkeley County:

EPIC Hedgesville Site
Early Head Start Office
143 School House Drive
Hedgesville, WV 25427
(304) 754-3031
Fax: (304) 754-6111

Jefferson County:

Early Head Start Office
221 Warm Springs Road (on T.A. Lowry Elementary School Campus)
Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442
(304) 724-9188
Fax: (304) 728-4732

Morgan County:

Great Cacapon Elementary School Center
Early Head Start Office
217 Spring Street
Great Cacapon, WV 25422
(681) 343-0108
Fax: (681) 343-1106

DIRECTIONS TO EPIC EARLY HEAD START SITES

BERKELEY COUNTY

EPIC Office (304) 267-3595

109 S. College Street, Martinsburg WV 25401

EPIC is the administrative office. Committee meetings and other activities also happen here. EPIC is a half block from 'The Square' (the intersection of King and Queen Streets) in Martinsburg. From I-81: Take Exit 13 King Street toward Martinsburg; go down King Street toward town until you reach the fifth traffic light; make a left onto Maple Avenue; then make a right onto Burke Street. EPIC is at the end of the block on your right on the corner of Burke and College Streets. From South Queen Street: make a right onto Burke Street and the EPIC Office is on your left. Enter the building on the College Street side. NOTE: College Street is one way.

Early Head Start Office / Hedgesville Site (304) 754-3031

The office is located in the former Teacher's Pet Child Care Center on the East side of Hedgesville. On Route 9, turn right onto Schoolhouse Drive at the 7-11 store. The center is on the left across from the grounds of Hedgesville Elementary School. The playground is in front of the building for Head Start. Early Head Start playground is behind the building.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Early Head Start Office / Jefferson County Center (304) 724-9188

The Jefferson County Center is on the grounds of T.A. Lowery Elementary School off of Route 9, near Shenandoah Junction. Turn onto Shenandoah Junction Road and turn left into the school campus. Bear right into the parking lot. The Early Head Start Office is in the Head Start / Pre-K building, which is in front of the parking lot, on the right.

MORGAN COUNTY

Early Head Start Office / Great Cacapon Center (681) 343-0108

The center is on the West side of the town of Great Cacapon. From Route 9, turn left onto Spring Street. (former store and gas station is on the corner). The classroom is in the Great Cacapon School on your left.

Section 3. Transportation for Early Head Start Families

Bus Stops

EPIC Early Head Start is fortunate enough to have buses and State certified drivers. We may be able to provide transportation to Wee Plays for many home-based families. We strive to provide transportation to families who need it, but we need your cooperation in making our transportation system work.

Because buses are limited, we may ask parents to meet us on main roads whenever possible. We need to find safe places to pull off the road to load and unload families. We do use child safety seats to ensure your child's safety. This takes extra time while we are at stops. Because of this, we look for stops off the road so that we do not hold up traffic and create a traffic hazard, putting your family in danger as well as other drivers.

EPIC Bus Rules

** Transportation of your family on the bus is a privilege not a right.

1. There must always be an adult on the bus. No passengers will be picked up if there is not.
2. All children must be secured in child safety restraints / seats.
3. Families need to be dressed and ready at the bus stop 10 minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. **THE DRIVER CANNOT LEAVE THE BUS TO GO TO THE DOOR.**
4. **Parents/guardians must accompany their child on the bus.**
5. Only those riding as passengers are permitted to board the bus at any time.
6. The parent **must assist** in putting the child on and taking the child off the bus. The parent and child must cross in front of the bus if they cross the street.
7. The bus driver, if a child or family member is ill at the time he or she boards the bus, can refuse to allow the child or family member to board.
8. Only Early Head Start family members, staff, and volunteers are permitted to ride the bus to and from the Wee Plays if space is available. Others must get special written permission as required by Early Head Start.
9. All passengers must remain seated, keeping hands, feet, bodies, and belongings out of the aisle.
10. All adults will use child-appropriate language and positive behavior management techniques (e.g. redirect, rephrase, sit in proximity) while on the bus.
11. Children are not to bring anything (toys, etc.) on the bus unless items are requested by the classroom teacher for that day.
12. There is to be no food or drink on the bus for either children or adults. This includes snacks, bottles, and coffee.
13. Parents should notify the center, home visitor and/or bus driver an hour in advance when their family will not be attending the Wee Plays.

14. Parents should notify the driver and classroom staff, in writing, a week in advance of moving (Head Start/Pre-K will attempt to make arrangements to transport the family from a new location; however, sometimes this is impossible).
15. Parents must inform the bus driver of changes, in writing, about emergency release information including phone numbers, person(s) authorized to pick up child, health matters, etc. (Head Start Only)
16. The family will be returned to their designated stop unless other arrangements have been made in writing in advance (each time).
17. Smoking is prohibited on the bus and on school or Head Start/Pre-K property.
18. If there is any concern about bus issues, (e.g. schedules, drivers, etc.) please contact the bus driver's supervisor in your county.

Bus Procedures

On the bus, there are three rules we teach the children:

- * Use quiet voices
- * Stay buckled
- * Keep hands and feet in front of you

To and From Wee Plays

The bus driver will give you a time and designated stop to meet the bus. Be ready for the bus about 10 minutes before your scheduled time (because often the driver will find a family is not riding and may be ahead of schedule). Also, if the bus is late, please wait about 15 minutes. Sometimes traffic or weather can delay the bus. We strive to stay on schedule, but we can't always do that!

When the bus approaches your stop, wait until it comes to a full stop before moving toward the bus. An adult is required to be with the child at the stop and on the bus. Try to keep discussions with the driver to a minimum because the driver needs to stay focused on traffic.

On the bus, your child will be buckled into a safety seat/restraint. There are quick releases on the back of the safety restraints in case of an emergency. Children will learn to be quiet when the bus crosses railroad tracks, but parents should also help encourage this behavior. They will also learn to identify local landmarks and when other families and friends get on or off the bus.

Section 4. Things to Know About Early Head Start

Days and Hours Open

EPIC Early Head Start offices are generally open from 8:00am to 3:30pm, Monday through Friday, except on Holidays and seasonal closings designated by EPIC. You will be notified of scheduled closings in monthly newsletters/calendars.

What to Wear for 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 have her wear shorts or pants 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 every day unless it is too wet.

Do not dress your child in coats or other clothing with drawstrings. These may be a safety hazard.

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

Discipline and Behavior Management

Our behavior management system is based on "Conscious Discipline", a program designed to help children self-regulate and solve problems with minimal adult intervention. Encouragement and positive reinforcement are effective methods for the behavior management of children. When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, our centers practice the following discipline and behavior management policy:

We Do

1. Encourage the children and provide positive reinforcement.
2. Reason with and set limits for the children.
3. Model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. Modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
5. Listen to the children.
6. Provide the children with natural and logical consequences of their behavior.
7. Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior.
8. Treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
9. Ignore minor misbehavior.
10. Explain things to the children on their level.
11. Stay consistent in our behavior management program.

We Do Not

1. Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap, or otherwise physically punish the children.
2. Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
3. Shame or punish the children when bathroom or any other accidents occur.
4. Use food or rest as punishment or reward.
5. Restrain or place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.
6. Allow discipline of children by children.
7. Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive positive behavior management program and a social-emotional curriculum. It is based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices. Conscious Discipline focuses on connections and relationships, problem solving and a strong emphasis on safety. A systematic approach to realizing desired behaviors and building a safe, positive learning environment begins with adults properly demonstrating and teaching positive social skills. Simple yet positively worded socialization rules show the children the expectations and help to construct a socialization where everyone is respected. Use of polite words is taught as the method of problem solving with peers and adults, with an emphasis on kindness and tolerance. Skills are taught, with a "this is how it looks, this is how it sounds" method so that children can be successful learners.

In the event a child exhibits behavior which are of an ongoing concern, the staff will contact the child's parent or guardian and a plan will be developed and implemented to address the behaviors.

ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING OF CHILDREN

Child Development

Early Head Start staff members will administer the Brigance assessment tool within 45 days of enrollment. If the Brigance identifies area of need, referrals will be made for further assessment.

Creative Curriculum is a 'developmentally appropriate program that supports active learning and promotes children's progress in all developmental areas.' The philosophy is that children learn best when active and engaged with materials, as well as with adults and children around them. Creative Curriculum uses learning areas, such as Dramatic Play, Blocks, Sand and Water, etc. to create an environment that not only engages, but challenges in the social/emotional, cognitive, gross motor and fine motor areas. The emotional environment is positive, supportive and is built on meaningful relationships. Developmentally appropriate materials allow positive experiences for all children as individuals. An online assessment system will be used so that material and experiences are meaningful as well as appropriate.

Health

Each child enrolled in the Early Head Start program will have the following:

1. up to date immunizations
2. physical examination
3. dental examination
4. a completed health history
5. nutritional screening
6. hearing screening
7. vision screening
8. hematocrit/hemoglobin screening
9. lead screening
10. social emotional screening
11. height/weight screening

To support children with atypical behavior or development, staff will develop specific techniques for use in each home and community environment.

After the screening process is completed, your home visitor will review the results with you. If there is an area of development that could benefit from services provided by a community agency, your home visitor will discuss the referral process with you. No referral or contact with professionals outside our program will take place without your permission.

Section 5. Attendance Policy

Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying the child's home visitor whenever the child will be absent from a home visit or Wee Play. Telephone numbers for the centers and offices are listed in Section 2 of this handbook. Please call your home visitor as soon as possible when you are going to be absent.

Persistent unexcused absences / cancellations may result in termination from the program.

Excused absences include the following:

1. A child is hospitalized.
2. A child is incapacitated due to a serious illness or injury.
3. A child or a member of the immediate family has a communicable disease.
4. A child has other health ailments which temporarily prevent attendance.
5. There is a death in the child's family.
6. A temporary family situation (moving, domestic difficulties).
7. Transportation problems
8. Weather conditions.
9. Cultural or religious family activities.

Even when absences are excused, home visits will be made up to meet Early Head Start requirements. Please let us know if there are family or medical problems that make it difficult for your child to attend regularly. Our family advocates and nurse may be able to help you find services that can assist you.

Program Attendance Requirements

Home-Based Program: A child/family enrolled in the home-based program is expected to attend and participate in all home visits and Wee Plays. If there are consistent unexplained home visit cancellations in one month, the family will be contacted by the Family Advocate staff. If the family does not respond, and another unexcused cancellation occurs, services may be terminated. The family will be given the option of being placed on the waiting list if they feel that they will be able to participate in the program at a later date.

Services may be terminated for lack of cooperation in returning required documents such as physical or dental screenings. Extensive efforts will be made by staff to help the family first. Please let us know if you need help getting medical information or services.

Services may also be terminated in cases where contact with the family may be dangerous to the staff or program participants. Each situation will be discussed with the Early Head Start Manager, who will contact the family in person or in writing. The Early Head Start Manager will discuss with the Early Head Start Director if a decision needs to be made regarding termination of services.

Withdrawal from Program

If you wish to withdraw your child from the program, please be sure to let us know. This allows us to immediately fill the vacancy with a child from our waiting list. Please let us know if there is any assistance we can provide that would enable you to remain in the program. If you are moving, we might be able to locate another Early Head Start program for you.

If you withdraw from the program, please return the Read to Me bag and any other materials that may have been left in your home.

Inclement Weather Policy

When the public schools in any county are closed because of bad weather, the program in that county will cancel and reschedule Wee Plays.

When the county schools open two hours late because of bad weather: your home visits and/or Wee Play may be delayed or rescheduled.

If early dismissal is announced by the public schools, your home visits or Wee Play may also be rescheduled.

Where to Get Information on School Closings

School closings, delays, and early dismissals in Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan Counties are announced on area television and radio stations.

TV WDVM Hagerstown
 WUSA Washington, DC
 You can also check your county school system cable channels and website.

Radio WXVA 98.3FM or 1550 AM, Charles Town
 WEPM 1340 AM, Martinsburg
 WKMZ 97.5 AM, Martinsburg
 WRNR 740 AM, Martinsburg
 WCST 93.5 FM, Berkeley Springs
 WARX 106.9 FM, Winchester
 WUSQ 102.5 FM, Winchester
 WINC 92.5 FM, Winchester
 WCRH 90.5 FM, Williamsport
 WYII 95.9 FM, Williamsport

Section 6.

Some Things to Know About Home Visits in the Home-Based Program

Parents are a very important part of each home visit. You and your home visitor will schedule your visits at a time convenient for you. It is important that you prepare your learning area before your home visitor arrives. The work area should be clean and quiet. Turn off the TV and radio and limit phone calls as much as possible.

The home visits last 90 minutes, and are divided into three parts:

- For the first half hour, you will work with the home visitor. You will review the lesson plan, go over special skills that you will work on, and do necessary paperwork. Your home visitor will explain the materials and how to use them, the developmental goal of the activities, and how this applies to your child's level. You will be given information on health topics available, social services, and parent involvement opportunities. You will read the monthly newsletter together and find out about special activities. You and your home visitor will also record your volunteer activities on your in-kind sheets.
- For the second half hour, you and your child will work together with your home visitor's help. Here, you and your child will work together on a developmentally appropriate activity with your home visitor's help. These activities will be based on his/her fine motor skills, gross motor skills, sensory skills, etc.
- The last half hour of your home visit will be spent with your home visitor reviewing and commenting on the lesson and planning for the next week. This is a very important part of your visit. It is a good time to ask questions about your child's development, performance, and progress, and discuss activities for you to do with your child during the week. Together, you need to decide what you want to see your child learn and how to present it.

You will spend a lot of time with your home visitor. He or she will bring some independent activities for your child to do while you are talking or your child may choose to play with some of his / her own toys. We will also be asking you to continue working with your child at home between home visits. Your home visitor will design activities that support your child's individual goals and the goals of Early Head Start.

If you are not able to keep your home visit appointment, please call your home visitor, giving as much advance notice as possible. If you cannot call, or do not have a phone, leave a note on your door. Your home visitor will contact you to reschedule the visit.

Remember you are your child's first and best teacher!

Section 7. Nutrition and Health

Meals / Restrictive Diets

During Wee Plays, snacks are provided according to your child's needs. If your child has specific food allergies or feeding restrictions, you should discuss that with your child's home visitor. We encourage children to eat 'family style' snacks (no trays; children serve and pass food to one another) but exceptions can be made for special circumstances (medical, religious reasons).

Parties / Special Celebrations

The local health department discourages bringing home baked goods into centers for holiday or birthday celebrations. Only packaged (store purchased) items are permitted. If you have further questions, please speak with your home visitor, Early Head Start Nurse, Early Head Start Manager, Early Head Start Specialist.

Early Head Start Healthy Habits

A new, innovative, nutrition program, Healthy Habits has been developed with Dr. Sarah Moerschel from WVU. Your Home Visitor will share this program with you and your family each weekly.

Illness Policy: When to Keep Your Child at Home or Cancel Home Visit

Communicable Disease Policy

EPIC Early Head Start requires that all children receive age appropriate immunizations. Children who do not have age appropriate immunizations may not attend group activities. If you have any concerns regarding our policy, or the importance of immunizing your child, please feel free to contact the Early Head Start Nurse at 304-754-3031 or the Early Head Start Specialist at 304-724-9188.

When an outbreak of any communicable illness occurs, EPIC Early Head Start shall exclude a child from our Wee Plays if a licensed health care provider determines that the child is contributing to the transmission of the illness.

Any child that has been excluded from our Wee Plays due to a communicable disease shall be readmitted only after the parent or guardian provides a signed note from a licensed health care provider that the risk of transmission has passed and that the child is now well enough to return to the center.

Our policy on communicable diseases is taken directly from the Child Care Center Licensing Regulations from DHHR. (15.4.f)

Children with the following symptoms should be kept at home and the home visit should be cancelled:

- Yellowish eyes or skin
- Severe coughing
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Diarrhea
- Pinkeye

If the child has a fever above 100 degrees and any of the following symptoms, the child should be kept at home and the home visit should be cancelled:

- Spots or Rash
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Infected skin patches
- Headache or stiff neck
- Vomiting
- Unusual behaviors such as crankiness, continuous crying, or low activity
- Loss of appetite
- Severe itching of body or scalp

Immunization Requirements

Call your county health department for vaccination clinic dates and times.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Berkeley County Health Department | 304-263-5131 |
| • Jefferson County Health Department | 304-728-8415 |
| • Morgan County Health Department | 304-258-1513 |

Early Head Start children are required to be up to date on all childhood immunizations. Up to date immunizations are required within 30 days of your child's enrollment in the Early Head Start program.

If you need further assistance, please speak with your home visitor, Early Head Start Nurse, or the Early Head Start Manager in your county.

Physicals / Dentals

Each Early Head Start child is required to have a dental screening and physical examinations as per the WV EPDST schedule. Health forms need to be signed by the doctor and returned to your home visitor when completed. WV State licensing requires Early Head Start children to obtain physicals within 30 days of your child's enrollment into the program.

Section 8. Education and Disabilities Services

Screenings and Assessments

Each child in Early Head Start must be screened within 45 days of enrollment for development, social emotional, dental, nutritional, lead, TB, HCT/HGB, hearing and vision. EPIC Early Head Start uses the Brigance Screening Test. If this screening indicates delays in developing certain skills, the child will be referred (with the parent's permission) to the West Virginia Birth to Three program for further assessment. Home Visitors and county managers will support the family in the referral process. The Birth to Three program may then provide additional services for the child if needed. The curriculum that is used by Early Head Start is Creative Curriculum. The child assessment used is The Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

Disabilities/Special Needs

Children with diagnosed disabilities are included in regular program options so that they may develop socially, cognitively, physically, and emotionally. An Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) will be written by the local Birth to Three program in cooperation with the parent to ensure that the child's special needs are met. Parents are encouraged to participate in the IFSP process.

Transitions

When a child transitions out of Early Head Start, the Early Head Start staff will provide support to help parents and children transition to the environment that best suits their needs.

Section 9.

Family Partnerships and Community Resources

Every Early Head Start county office has family advocates who, can connect families with community resources, know about social services, and every staff member can help through referrals. If you need information about available resources in your community, please contact an Early Head Start staff member. Our program staff can provide information and assistance to you 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.

Family Partnership Agreement

Early in the program year, each Early Head Start family and an Early Head Start staff member complete a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA). This form helps identify specific needs and goals. A major focus in Early Head Start is to work with the entire family, so please let us know how we can partner with you to help you reach your goals. The Family Partnership Agreement will be reviewed with you periodically to address any changes in your situation and to assist your family. We will also be scheduling parent meetings and educational opportunities that will help with your goals and interests. Please complete the parent interest survey so that we can schedule activities that are helpful and important to you.

Child Abuse and Neglect

EPIC is mandated by West Virginia and federal law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. Please refer to the Confidentiality Policy in the Parent Involvement Section of this Handbook.

Section 10. Parent Involvement

Concerns

We hope that families will always be successful at resolving concerns, issues, or problems with the program by discussing them directly with the staff person involved and/or with supervisory personnel. If that cannot be done, a parent or guardian can fill out a Concern Form (see copy at end of this section) and send it to the Early Head Start Director or to the Policy Council at EPIC Early Head Start, 109 S. College St., Martinsburg WV 25401. All concerns will be addressed as quickly and as confidentially as possible. If the Policy Council or Director determines the concern needs to be addressed by the Policy Council, the issue will be placed on the next Policy Council meeting agenda. Names will be withheld whenever possible. Concerns will be addressed by the Director, Policy Council, and the appropriate supervisory staff members. Written responses will be provided if requested.

If you have a suggestion or wish to share an idea with us to improve our program, a thoughts/suggestion form is also located at the end of this section.

All program participants have the right to file a complaint with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (304) 558-1885) or www.wvdhhr.org.

Confidentiality Policy

Early Head Start staff members will not discuss you or your family members with other people. Each family has a right to privacy. We will not talk to you about other families in the program. If we need to talk to people at other agencies, or send them written information, we will get your permission and a release of information form first. 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.

We want to ask your help with keeping confidentiality. When you are at Early Head Start meetings or activities, other parents may tell you about their needs, problems or joys. It helps everyone to be able to talk like this, but each person must be able to trust everyone else. Please be very careful not to talk about other family's personal situations when you are away from the group.

When you are helping at Wee Plays, on the bus, or at other Early Head Start activities, please do not discuss any child with other parents or other adults. As a volunteer, you may see behaviors that concern you. Please share these concerns with a staff member in a private setting. Please do not discuss other Early Head Start children and their families with anyone but the appropriate staff member.

IMPORTANT: THE LAW SAYS THAT EPIC STAFF MUST CALL CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES IF IT IS SUSPECTED THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED OR NEGLECTED. WE DO NOT HAVE A CHOICE. WE MUST CALL.

Our first job is to protect children and families from getting hurt. Please call the Early Head Start Manager if you want to talk about a report that has been made. Please note that, on occasion, court officials may subpoena staff members and records for court testimony in matters concerning a family or child.

If you are divorced or separated and contact with the non-custodial parent or former partner has been restricted by a Family Protection Order or any other court order, please give us a copy of the order so that our staff can assist your family. We cannot restrict access to your child by another legal parent or guardian without a court order.

Parent Activities

The more you are involved in program activities, the more you will know about the overall program and the more you will be able to help staff make the program stronger and more effective for your children.

There are many ways you can participate in Early Head Start. First and foremost, of course, is your involvement in your child's development at home and at center if applicable. But you can also do the following:

- * Help plan, and attend, Wee Plays, parent meetings and special events.
- * Serve on the Policy Council, your center parent committee, and on committees.
- * Volunteer for special events.
- * Ride the bus as a volunteer bus aide.

Parent Meetings and Special Events

At the beginning of the program year parents meet and discuss what kinds of training, activities, and special events they would like to have during the year. These planning meetings are held throughout the year. We may also ask you to complete a survey about parent activities.

Wee Plays are held twice a month. They may be held at a variety of times due to individual family needs. Parents are encouraged to help plan and present at all Early Head Start group activities. Parents will help to make decisions about the program and their child's center. Policy Council activities will be discussed at parent meetings. We usually have something good to eat and have a lot of fun at the meetings! Door prizes are sometimes offered, so don't miss these events!

Parent meetings present information about parenting skills, budgeting, financial literacy, home buying, available social services, nutrition, self improvement, jobs, education, etc. There may be cooking classes, sewing classes, dance lessons, cultural activities, crafts, exercise groups, and support groups, or whatever parents indicate are their top priorities for the year.

Early Head Start encourages further education and will support parents in achieving their goals such as pursuing their GED, college courses, trainings, certifications, technical training and/or ESL.

Special events occur throughout the year and parents are encouraged to participate in as many of these as possible.

Money for these events comes from three sources:

- * Training funds included in the Early Head Start budget.
- * Parent activity funds given to the Policy Council and spent only with the approval of the Council.
- * Funds donated by community organizations or individuals.

Policy Council

The Policy Council is the Advisory board of the Early Head Start program. It reviews and approves program activities and expenses. Members are elected by the parents. All parents and guardians are eligible and encouraged to participate in Policy Council.

Parent members are elected in September for a one-year term. A special one-day training is held in the fall to inform new members about their roles and responsibilities on the Council. Policy Council usually meets from 10:15 a.m. through lunch on the third or fourth Wednesday of each month.

Policy Council bylaws specify five parent members for every 100 enrolled families. There should also be community agency representatives on the Council, but 51 percent or more of the membership must be parents of currently enrolled Early Head Start or Head Start children. A member of the EPIC Regional Council and staff members attend meetings in a non-voting capacity.

Sometimes we can arrange for childcare at a Policy Council meeting. Otherwise, Early Head Start parent members can be reimbursed for mileage and some childcare expenses necessary to attend meetings. Transportation can be arranged for anyone who requests it; however, staff are not permitted to transport children in their vehicles. Lunch is paid for by Early Head Start funds.

If you can attend the monthly meetings and want to help to develop the Early Head Start program, please consider running for Policy Council membership. Nomination forms are given out during orientations and home visits. Then ballots are prepared and distributed, and program elections are held during orientations. All parents vote, and the new members are notified prior to the September meeting. All meetings are open and non-member parents can attend at any time.

The Policy Council Parent Fund

This fund is used for parent meetings, activities, and training. The fund usually pays for 80% of fees for parent education/training opportunities, while the parent pays for 20%. Each fee payment goes directly to the agency/school and must be pre-approved by the Policy Council funds are limited, so please apply early.

Currently approved uses are:

- Fees for high school equivalency programs unless covered by other agencies such as DHHR.
- Registration for testing and practice testing for the LPN program at James Rumsey.
- Payment of a portion of fees to obtain teaching certificates or other certification. This might also include translation of transcripts from foreign colleges.
- Gift certificates for Office Max or Staples for parents enrolled in post-secondary training (college, business, or vocational schools). This includes on-line programs.
- Payment for the Telemon Home Buyer Preparation and Credit Worthiness class.
- Payment for the First Aid/CPR basic certification class.
- Payment for certain county adult education classes that could enhance employment skills (such as computer classes, real estate, or tax preparation classes).

Committees

EPIC Early Head Start is supported by the following committees:

- * Policy and Procedures/Safety
- * Transportation
- * 5 Year Strategic Planning
- * Career Development
- * Budget
- * Self-Assessment
- * Education Advisory Committee
- * Health Advisory Committee
- * Practice Based Coaching
- * Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports
- * Dual Language Learners

Most of these committees meet approximately four times a year on "Meeting Mondays" at the EPIC office in Martinsburg. Ask your Early Head Start staff member for this year's specific dates. Participants include staff, Policy Council members, parents, and community members.

As with Policy Council meetings, Early Head Start parents can be reimbursed for travel and some childcare expenses when they attend these meetings

Volunteering

In the Socialization

When parents volunteer at Wee Plays, they provide additional help, making it possible to increase the individual attention each child and family receives. In addition, parents gain knowledge about child development and improve their skills as teachers of their own children at home. Please remember that any observations about other children in the class are to be kept confidential.

There are many ways you can help staff and children in the classroom. Some examples are:

- * Assist with art and group activities.
- * Assist with storytelling and reading.
- * Talk with and engage children in play
- * Help supervise outdoor play.
- * Assist with field trips and special events.
- * Help set tables and prepare snacks.
- * Help with new food experiences in accordance to dietary guidelines.
- * Help clean tables, chairs, and floors after meals and snacks.

In-Kind Matching Funds

For each dollar given by the federal government to our Head Start program, we must generate 25 cents of local matching funds. The reason for this is to show that the community and parents value the program. These matching funds can be in the form of cash, donated items, or volunteer services.

Every hour a Head Start parent spends working with his/her child on program activities, volunteering on the bus or at center, or working at meetings and special events, can be counted as a local in-kind match. The time volunteered at the Wee Plays, which benefits Early Head Start children, is eligible as in-kind matching. This time must be documented.

Volunteer hours are calculated at different rates, including first, second, and third year parents, committee representatives, and professionals, so it is important to record this kind of information on your in-kind forms. Your home visitor or other staff can help you with this. Please complete your in-kind form on home visits to help the program to maintain funding.

Getting Information

There are several ways you will receive information about activities and opportunities at Early Head Start/Head Start/Pre-K.

The program will have a website that you can check for up-to-date information. Go to www.epicehs-hs.com for information on the Early Head Start program or check us out on Facebook.

We will be posting updates and reminders throughout the program year. This will include reminders about parent meetings, special events, and community event information. We welcome any suggestions that you have about our page.

*Most months, you will receive a newsletter. The newsletter includes articles about children, parents, and staff, as well as information about upcoming events, Policy Council, committee activities, and community events.

*Flyers with all details of a particular event are also sent home before the event.

*Parent bulletin boards at the centers display information regarding services, events, ideas etc. Parents are encouraged to check the board whenever they are in the center.

*Information is communicated orally and in writing during home visits, and face-to-face at the Wee Plays and at parent meetings.

Please let us know any ideas you have on improving the program.

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, TWITTER, INSTAGRAM, or any other social media unless it is of your own child.
2. Any messages that are posted to FACEBOOK, TWITTER, 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.

WE ARE EXCITED TO WORK WITH YOUR FAMILY!