



ST. CLAIR COUNTY

**HEAD
START**

**PARENT
HANDBOOK**

2026-2027

21685 US HWY 231
PELL CITY, AL 35125

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Introduction

You are the most important person in your child's life. Children look to their parents for guidance as they begin their journey through life. The purpose of Head Start is to assist the family in giving the child a good foundation to build on for that journey. By working together, sharing ideas, and striving for common goals, the SCCHS staff and parents can assure that children get a great **HEAD START**. This cannot be done without cooperation and assistance from you, the parent.

The purpose of this manual is to give you a better understanding of the St. Clair County Head Start Program and to suggest ways that you can be a part of making Head Start the best program it can possibly be for your child and your family.

MISSION STATEMENT

We provide comprehensive child and family development services to those most in need in St. Clair County, Alabama. Our goal is optimal outcomes for school readiness for both children and families. We seek to provide the highest quality services by supporting and promoting the professional development of our staff and implementing effective service delivery systems. We also stay ahead of research to learn and implement best practices, use technology effectively, and collaborate with a wide variety of community partners.

“We are dedicated to providing services for children and their families in order to empower them to succeed”

Being at school on a regular basis is very important to your child's learning. Please make sure that your child attends school everyday unless they are ill. If your child is sick or unable to attend class, please call the center before school starts. Remember to talk with your **Family and Community Partnership Specialist** if you are having difficulties. They are there to help.

- *Ms. Kala Williams – Family & Community Partnership/Enrollment Manager **Ext. 111***
- *Ms. Shirley Savage – Family & Community Partnership Specialist **Ext. 110***

Dress Code for Parents

Parents, please be mindful that **SCCHS is a place of business.** We ask that while attending any St. Clair County Head Start event or activity, or if you are just dropping off or picking up your child, you dress conservatively and appropriately. We all want to set a good example for our children. **Parents should be fully dressed, including undergarments, while on campus and at the bus stops.** Clothing should be appropriate and conservative, meaning that all private areas of the body are completely covered.

Do NOT Wear:

- Halter tops, crop tops (shirts that show stomach), lingerie tops
- Short shorts
- Sheer blouses, dresses or other garments
- Pajamas, robes, bedroom slippers, gowns, hair rollers
- Shirts portraying alcohol, profanity, hate, illicit drugs, or vulgar language

Do Wear:

- Undergarments/underwear
- Shoes and shirts that are appropriate
- Men - please wear pants at waist level

**** Please note, the dress code will be enforced. This also applies to persons on your child's pick up list****

Preparing your child for Head Start

For most children, attending Head Start is a new experience. Like most of us, they are afraid of the unknown. Talk to your child about what to expect when they come to Head Start, about how much fun they will have making new friends, playing games, and learning many new things. **BE POSITIVE AND REASSURING.** Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep (preferably 8-10 hours) and wears comfortable clothes and gym shoes. **No sandals/crocs for safety reasons.**

Law Regarding Leaving a Child Unattended in Car

Leaving Child or Incapacitated Person Unattended in Motor Vehicle Prohibited.

- (a) This section shall be known and cited as the Amiyah White Act.
- (b) For the purposes of this section, the term motor vehicle shall mean any motor vehicle as defined in Section 32-1-1.1, and the term incapacitated person shall mean any incapacitated person as defined in Section 26-2A-20.
- (c)(1) A licensed day care center, a licensed child care facility, a program providing day care service to incapacitated persons, or any other child care service that is exempt from licensing pursuant to Section 38-7-3, or an employee thereof, or a person for hire responsible for a child under the age of 7 or an incapacitated person, shall not leave a child or an incapacitated person in a motor vehicle unattended in a manner that creates an unreasonable risk of injury or harm.
- (2) A person violating this section shall be punished by a fine of not less than two thousand dollars (\$2,000). If a person has a prior conviction or adjudication under this section, the offense is a Class C misdemeanor.
- (3) For purposes of determining prior conviction or adjudication pursuant to subdivision (2), conviction in municipal court shall be included.
- (4) If the child or incapacitated person receives physical injury as a result of a violation of this section, the person violating this section is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.
- (5) If the child or incapacitated person receives serious physical injury as a result of a violation of this section, the person violating this section is guilty of a Class C felony.
- (6) If the child or incapacitated person is fatally injured as a result of a violation of this section, the person violating this section is guilty of a Class B felony.
- (d) Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing in this section shall limit any existing cause of action or right to bring a cause of action. A violation of this section shall not be considered evidence of contributory negligence and the liability of an insurer shall not be limited or mitigated.

(Act 2013-287, p. 993, §§1-3.)

Operating Hours

Operating Hours for SCCHS: **Monday-Friday 7:30 AM – 2:00 PM**

SCCHS Business Hours: **Monday-Friday 7:00 AM – 3:00 PM**



Parents are expected to bring their children to the center, bus stop, or make carpool arrangements with other parents to get them to the center between 7:25 and 8:00 AM. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their child as they transition in and out of the building during pick-up and drop off. Once the child has been signed in with the teacher, the child is under the supervision of the teacher and/or teacher assistant. At pick-up, once the child has been signed out, the parent resumes responsibility of the supervision of the child.

Responsibilities of the Parents

- Take your child into the building - **NEVER** let your child walk into the center alone. Please use the crosswalk and hold your child's hand in the parking lot and in the buildings.
- Please end all calls before entering building
- Take your child directly to his/her classroom and sign him/her in, you must **legibly** sign your full name. **Be sure that the teacher or assistant is in the room and knows that your child is there.**
- Drop off and pick up your children on time. Children are tardy at 8:30 AM.
- Only adults can sign a child in or out of the classroom. **Siblings cannot sign a child in unless they are 16 years of age, and cannot sign a child out unless they are 18 years of age**
- The person bringing or picking up your child must sign their full name and leave a working phone number.
- No smoking, vaping, or any other type of nicotine/tobacco use is allowed on campus.
- Please refrain from using your cell phone while walking your child across the parking lot and be sure to hold their hand at all times. We also ask that parents do not use phones while inside the school building.
- The speed limit in the parking lot is **5 MPH**. For the safety of all students, please follow this speed limit and watch for buses when visiting campus for any reason.
- Please do not leave vehicles running while on campus and do not leave any children (of any age) inside the car, unattended by an adult.



What should your child bring to Head Start?

- A change of clothes needs to be left at the center. All items should be labeled with your child's name. If your child soils his/her clothes and must wear the extra set, be sure to send an extra set back the next day. **THIS IS A DHR REGULATION.**
- Soiled undergarments will be washed out (if possible) and returned in a plastic zip-lock bag to the parent at the end of the day.
- Children are **NOT** to bring the following items: school supplies, blankets, toys, purses, jewelry, lunch boxes, food, backpacks, and money. These are choking hazards.

Emergency Procedures

- In case of a fire or tornado, the center has an evacuation plan that is posted in each classroom and building.
- If there is an unresolved power failure, parents will be notified that their child will need to be picked up early or that the center will be closed until power is restored.
- If a child has an injury/illness that could be serious, a staff person will call 911 and then notify the parent.

Meals

St. Clair County Head Start provides your child with breakfast, lunch, and a snack. Our goal is to meet at least two-thirds of your child's nutritional needs each day that he/she is with us.

- Meals are served "Family Style". Teachers model table manners and the children are included in setup and clean up.
- All meals and snacks must be consumed on campus.

NOTE: If your child has a food allergy or other medical problem that requires a special diet, please provide a written statement from the doctor indicating what foods or liquids should be avoided or added to the diet. **This information should be turned in during the enrollment process**

Field Trips

All children participating in field trips must have a signed Authorization Form. A Field Trip Notification Form will be sent home at least 10 days before the scheduled trip. **CHILDREN WITHOUT A SIGNED AUTHORIZATION FORM WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN FIELD TRIPS.** Parents can participate on field trips. When chaperoning, parents must follow the rules of SCCHS, which means no smoking, drinking, or use of any other drug-related substance. Parents must provide their own transportation and follow SCCHS dress code.



Bus Riders

Rules of Bus Riders



- Be ready at least **5 minutes** before the bus arrives to pick up or drop off. Children should use the restroom before getting on the bus. ***THE DRIVER CAN NOT WAIT.***
- Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and could result in temporary loss of transportation privileges.
- Provide the center with a list of authorized people to receive your child.
- We cannot accept phone calls to change the way in which your child normally leaves the center. If you want to pick your child up instead of him/her riding the bus, you should pick them up by 1:45 or they will be put in their bus line.
- If an authorized person is not available to receive your child, the child will be taken back to the center. If parents cannot be reached, the police or DHR Child Protective Services will be notified.
- Notify the center immediately of any change of address, phone number, or any other pertinent information about your family.
- If you are consistently late to receive your child on time, you will lose transportation privileges.

St. Clair County Head Start Bus Schedule

Bus#	Pick-up/Drop off Location	Pick-up	Drop-off
Bus #3	Ashville (First Baptist Church)	6:35	2:40
Bus #3	Ragland (Food Barn)	7:05	2:20
Bus #3	Noah's Ark Day Care	7:25	2:05
Bus #2	Pell City Walking Track	7:10	2:15
Bus #4	Moody Park (Moody Ball Park)	6:55	2:40
Bus #4	Odenville (Piggly Wiggly)	7:15	2:15

ATTENTION PARENTS:

Buses will depart when the last child is buckled in, so make sure you are on time so that your child does not miss the bus. Once the bus pulls off, the driver cannot come back. Please be at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before time. Children who are picked up late risk losing bus privileges. Children not picked up at the bus stop will be brought back to school. If this continues to be a problem, bus privileges will be revoked.

Anyone picking up a child should be prepared to show their identification for pick-up until the staff get to know you. The parent/guardian can allow anyone to put their child on the bus, however, only persons listed on the child's pickup list can pick up a child.

Campus Rules and Regulations

- **No Alcohol, Tobacco, or Firearms** are allowed on campus. This includes chewing tobacco and vaping
- The use of profanity is strictly prohibited.
- The speed limit through the parking lot is **5 miles per hour.**
- Parents must hold their child's hand at ALL times while on campus.
- Children cannot be left in a vehicle unattended by an adult.
- Disrespect in any form, including but not limiting to, shouting, threats of violence, violation of personal space, etc. will not be tolerated.

Program Components of Head Start

Education Component

The Education Component is designed to meet each child's individual needs. Every child receives a variety of learning experiences to enhance his/her intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth.

Health Component

The Health Component offers many services to help your child stay healthy. It is very important to your child that the health staff knows about any health problems your child has had. A certified staff member can administer a prescribed medication to a child during school hours when it's authorized by the child's doctor. Be sure to complete the **Authorization for Administering Medication/Medical Procedures DHR-CDC-1949 form** before your child starts class. This form must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. **All children must have an up-to-date physical, dental form, and immunization record at all times.**

Nutrition Component

At Head Start, your child will receive approximately 2/3 of his/her daily nutritional needs. Each child is served breakfast, lunch, and a healthy snack. Menus are posted monthly in each classroom and sent home. The Nutrition Component is also responsible for providing nutrition and consumer education workshops for parents during the year. These take place during parent meetings. If your child is on a special diet, you must have your doctor write a special order stating what your child can and cannot eat. This information should be given to the teacher, nutrition manager, and health manager at the beginning of the school year, or when applicable.

Parent Engagement and Family & Community Partnerships Components

The Parent Engagement component works with parents to ensure they are involved in the education of their child and learn to be advocates for their child/children. The Parent Engagement Component works with parents on the Parent Committee and conducts monthly parent meetings. The Family and Community Partnership Component coordinates recruitment of eligible children for the program. The component's philosophy is to support parents as prime educators of their children and to assist families in becoming self-sufficient. The FCP Specialists act as advocates for families and partner with other agencies to obtain the services they need. If you or your family need assistance, contact someone at the center and they will direct you to the right person. The FCP Specialists will conduct home visit when deemed necessary. Home visits will be conducted in emergency situations or when a parent cannot be reached by phone or email. Please contact your child's teacher or your FCP Specialist if your address or phone number changes. It is very important that we have your current information in case of an emergency involving your child. At enrollment, each family submits emergency contacts. This information authorizes certain people in the family to be called in case of an emergency or to pick up your child from school. If the emergency contacts change, please notify the FCP Component or your child's teacher immediately. **We will not allow your child to go home with someone that is not on the list.**

Disabilities Component

The Disabilities Component serves children with disabilities or special needs. A child with a disability can often learn more readily in a group of peers. Head Start classrooms are inclusive for all children. Children with disabilities and their families receive the full range of Head Start services along with special services related to the disability.

"When you ask me what I did in school today and I say, 'I just played.' Please don't misunderstand me. For you see, I am learning as I play. I am learning to enjoy and be successful in my work. Today I am a child and my work is play."

-Anita Wadley, 1974



Rules & Regulations of Head Start

- For the health & safety of your child and the other children, the teacher will check all children when they arrive. Please be sure your child is in good health before you bring him/her to the center or bus stop.
- When your child experiences an illness that requires a doctor's visit, please bring a doctor's excuse to your child's teacher, letting us know that your child has been seen by a doctor and is cleared to return to the classroom.
- Make sure the FCP Component always has your correct phone number and address. If your information changes, please correct the changes as soon as possible.
- No medications will be given without a signed permission form from the parent and written instructions from the physician. **We can only administer prescription medication that has to be taken during school hours and it must be in the original container.**
- SCCHS has a **ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY**, which states that the use of profanity, and/or violent behavior, either physical or verbal, will not be tolerated.
- **Are there any custodial disputes or issues?**
 - In order for the program to deny a legal parent/guardian access to a child, we must have court documentation in the child's official file. Such documentation could include restraining orders, custody papers, or divorce papers.

Children Learn Through Play

Importance of Play

St. Clair County Head Start is serious about your child's continued growth and developments, as you are your child's first and most important teacher. Play is how children naturally learn about their world and how they fit in it. You will see your child playing in our classrooms because play is needed for healthy development. Play is natural to children and it creates a less stressful environment for learning.



We provide interesting materials, equipment, and activities to promote exploration. It is this engagement with materials and interactions with others that stimulate your child's still developing brain. Play helps your child build close bonds with you and with others, learn social skills, develop physically, and practice thinking and language skills. In addition, math and science concepts are learned and associated skills are developed. As you can see, through play, children gain school readiness skills important for their future success in school and their lives.

More Benefits of Play

- Playing with table toys, drawing, and painting are but a few ways children are helped to develop their small motor skills that will aid them in developing their writing skills.
- Playing with table toys, games, music activities, and blocks provide opportunities to learn and use math skills.
- Hopping, jumping running, dancing, and other movement experiences assist with the development of children's large muscle development skills.
- Playing in small groups is a wonderful way to develop language skills, learn how to work with others, learn how to express feelings appropriately, and problem solve.
- Pretending to read, write a story, make lists, and other related activities provides opportunities to develop literacy skills.

Play is Important

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, a professional advocacy agency for young children and those that teach young children, has research that supports using play as the foundation on which to best promote and support children's learning. You can be assured that your child's play is purposeful and well planned to help your child make continued progress in his/her growth and development.



Suggestions to Help Your Child at Head Start

- Your child should wear simple, washable clothing. Painting, pasting, water play, and other messy activities are fun if children do not have to worry about their clothing. Aprons are provided, but they do not always keep children clean and dry.
- During cold and wet weather, appropriate clothing should be worn (hat, scarves, gloves, boots, etc.) so that your child can play outdoors. Be sure to put your child's name on all of his/her removable clothing (a permanent marker is good to use).
- Be sure to send an extra set of clothes that can be left at the center in case of accidents. If your child does have an accident, be sure to send an extra set of clothes back to the center the next day. Be sure to change out these clothes when seasons change.
- Give your child positive reinforcement about going to Head Start. Encourage your child to talk to you about his/her experiences in the program.
- Make a special effort to have your child at the center every day, unless he/she is ill.

SCCHS Temporary Illness Exclusion Policy

Parents should always have a backup plan for child care in the event their child becomes ill at school and needs to be picked up. Please note the following criteria and conditions a child may need to be picked up.

Children may be excluded regardless of the type of illness; however, the most common illnesses are diarrhea, vomiting, fever, rash, bodily pain or injury. The child will be moved to a designated sick area away from direct contact with other children and will be monitored by a staff member until dismissed to the care of a parent or authorized person. Any child believed to have head lice will be sent home to contain the spread of live to other students. Once the child has been treated, the health manager must clear the child to return to the classroom.

Conditions that commonly require instructions detailing when a child may return per doctor's release include chickenpox, strep throat, scabies, ringworms, tuberculosis, rubella, pertussis, mumps, measles, hepatitis A and impetigo among others.



Parent Involvement

Parent Committee/Policy Council

St. Clair County Head Start has a Parent Committee which includes all parents of enrolled children. The Parent Committee Officers are made up of the following positions: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Historian. Once elected, these officers will serve on the Policy Council as Parent Committee Officers.

The Policy Council plays an important role in the program and they must have the time to commit to the position. The officers are required to attend and conduct parent meetings, attend events, participate in conference calls, and most importantly, attend Policy Council trainings and meetings.

Volunteers

Parents are welcome to volunteer in their child's classroom **at any time**. We encourage you to become involved in the activities and assist the staff to the extent you feel comfortable. There are rules and regulations we have to follow for volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact your child's teacher, or Mr. Allen, and you will receive the information required for volunteering. **PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS HIGHLY ENCOURAGED (and very much needed).**

Substitutes

Parents interested in substituting are more than welcome to apply. You will be required to go through the same process all employees. **This is a State Licensing requirement. You must go through all phases of the hiring process before you are approved as a substitute.**

In-Kind

Head Start is required to provide a 20% match of grant funds. This match is achieved through volunteer hours, donations, working on projects for the classroom/center and completing take-home activities with your child. **We also hold monthly food drives; Parents are encouraged to volunteer**

USDA Non-Discrimination Statement "This institution is an equal opportunity provider"

USDA Non-Discrimination Statement In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agricultural
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington D.C. 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442; or email: program.intake@usa.gov

EXIT

E

EXIT

HR

D

EXIT

Playgrounds



EXIT

Stage

Lunchroom

EXIT

EXIT

Kitchen

Wellness Lounge



B

A

C

EXIT

F

G

EXIT

Resource Room

S.T.E.A.M Classroom

H

EXIT

PARKING LOT

EXIT

J

I

EXIT

KEY

Fire Drill

Tornado Drill

EXIT

 Exit Doors

St. Clair County Head Start
21685 US HWY 231
Pell City, AL 35125

Attention Parents:

After reading this handbook, in its entirety, please fill out this form and return it to your child's teacher within their first week of school.

Statement of Understanding:

I have read and understand the information supplied to me in the St. Clair County Head Start Parent Handbook.

Parent Name (print) _____

Parent Signature _____

Child's Name _____

Teacher's Name _____ Classroom Letter _____

