



2019-2020
Early Head Start
Family Handbook

Family Child Care
& The Playing Field



Early Head Start Parent Handbook

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Dear Parents,

WELCOME to Reach Dane Early Head Start Program!

Our entire staff is really looking forward to your child's enrollment and to getting to know you and involving you in our programs. This Parent Handbook is designed to help you become more familiar with Early Head Start and the policies and procedures of Reach Dane. We hope that your child and family will take advantage of all of the many opportunities for involvement that our programs provide.

Our agency's first priority is the same as yours, your child. You are your child's first and most important teacher and your involvement with staff will greatly enhance your success in the program. While participating in Early Head Start, you and your child will learn many things. **The Early Head Start Program is designed to be a partnership with parents, supporting you to enjoy your child's development and to become the best parent you can be!**

Once enrolled in the program, you'll hear more about becoming involved in the partnership with staff. There will be special parent activities each month for your whole family. We strongly encourage you to come to these events to learn, grow, and meet other families. This Parent Handbook will provide you with more information about the ways you can become involved in Early Head Start and other Reach Dane programs.

We look forward to getting to know you, your child, and family!

What is Early Head Start?

Early Head Start is a parent driven program that is designed to create the strongest relationship possible between you and your child. Relationships with parents and other important caregivers directly affect the way a child's brain develops. Our goal is to help support you in your role as a parent and to support your child's optimal development. Here are the primary services EHS has to offer:

Home Visits

Home visits are an opportunity for you and your Family Specialist to partner on child or family goals, spending time in activities that support your child's development and your relationship with your child, or working to support your own parenting and personal development. At the end of the visit, or shortly after, you and the Family Specialist will complete a Home Visit Summary that describes accomplishments, tasks to be done, ideas to support and acknowledge your role as a parent and questions to be followed up on.

Family Support

EHS will provide you with support and encouragement to accomplish your dreams for yourself, your child and family through working on goals you will establish in a Family Partnership Agreement.

Child Health and Development

EHS is dedicated to helping you understand and support your child's development. In your child's classroom environment, Teachers will create safe and interesting opportunities for your child to explore and develop based on your child's developmental level and their individual interests and needs. On Home Visits, your Family Specialist will provide opportunities to observe and discuss your child's development. During home visits and other classroom activities, your Family Specialist and Teacher will help create specific experiences to enhance your child's development and health. Pediatric Nurse Practitioners are also available to answer your health questions and advocate for health services and support.

Other EHS services include:

- Support to finish school
- Resources to find employment
- Housing help
- Connection to mental health resources
- Addressing the special needs/ concerns you have about your child's development
- Opportunities to participate in program leadership

Early Head Start Includes...

Services to Children with Special Needs

EHS works in collaboration with the Bridges for Families or Birth to Three Connections early intervention programs, and local school districts, to provide comprehensive child development and support services for you and your child. Our child care centers and staff are equipped and trained to support your child's needs and collaborate with other community partners. EHS will help to coordinate transition plans and goals when your child turns three and enters Head Start and/or the school district. We will work with you to find resources in the community to support you and your child.

Does EHS share information about my child and my family with anyone?

Information about your family is confidential. **We will not share information, including whether a child is enrolled or not, without a written release from you.** You have a right to read/review and request revision of your child's records. Early Head Start must respond to your request within forty-five days. If you want to see your child's records, please talk to your Family Specialist to make an appointment.

Family Services at Early Head Start

One of the major differences between Early Head Start and other early childhood programs is Early Head Start's commitment to the family. We believe that you have the primary responsibility for your child's wellbeing and that you have the biggest influence on your child. Early Head Start will work with you as you make your own choices for strengthening your family and work towards your goals.

How does Early Head Start support my family?

Some ways we can work together...

- Your Family Specialist will help you develop a Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) to explore interests or family concerns. The FPA is a process to help you set goals for your family and your child.

- Some examples of the types of interests or concerns that may be discussed are:

Employment	Parental Stress	Nutrition	Child Care
Health	Child Guidance	Adult Education	Domestic Abuse
Clothing	Financial Assistance	Housing	Family Relationships
Transportation	Single Parenting	Child Development	Stress Management
Prenatal Care			

- We will work together with you through problem solving, information, referrals to community agencies, advocating for you to get needed services, and trainings, workshops and support groups you desire.

Parent Involvement: Getting Involved in EHS

Parent involvement is a very important part of the Early Head Start Program. Parent involvement benefits your child, you, and the Early Head Start program. We encourage you to get involved as much as you are able.

How can I be a part of planning and making decisions?

The Early Head Start program has a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) that participates in planning and decision making for the program. As a parent enrolled in EHS, you are automatically a member of the PAC (Parent Advisory Committee). Please feel free to talk to your Family Advocate about your ideas! Get involved in your PAC and be a part of the program planning.

What does the PAC do?

PAC meets monthly at socializations to help plan and carry out activities for you and your child and to share information about what's happening at Early Head Start and Reach Dane. The Early Head Start PAC also holds an Executive PAC meeting monthly to plan PAC activities. Ask your Family Advocate about attending PAC Executive Meetings. The PAC also elects three EHS parents to serve on the Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council (HSPC).

PAC Executive/PAC meeting minutes are included in Early Head Start newsletters and posted at Reach Dane centers.

What does HSPC do?

The Head Start/EHS Policy Council "HSPC" meets monthly throughout the year at Head Start's main office. Through HSPC, parents have input into agency wide policies and decisions. Ask your Family Specialist how you can get involved!

Why is being an HSPC representative so important?

If you are a member of the Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council, you have two special jobs. When you attend the HSPC meetings, you learn a lot, and you represent the other parents in your PAC. You will also work with others on the Policy Council to make decisions that will be best for the whole agency. This is a big job and also a very important one. Your other job will be to take information back to the Early Head Start PAC/Executive PAC to inform them of decisions and other important information.

Can I volunteer at Early Head Start?

Of course, please do. The EHS staff can tell you more about volunteering. You will receive training for whatever volunteer job you choose. Please remember that your time is important to us and record it on an in-kind form.

Volunteer Time is a Donation to Early Head Start!

In order to receive federal funds for Early Head Start and Head Start, we are required to get volunteer time and goods from our communities through volunteers in our program. Activities

such as participating in home visits, transporting your children, volunteering in kitchens and classrooms, and donating to community centers are combined to meet this requirement. Your Family Specialist and Classroom Teacher will provide you with forms for counting the time you contribute to your EHS Program. Your contribution of volunteer time helps maintain Reach Dane's Early Head Start Program!

What are Family Service Events like?

EHS offers Family Service Events to provide fun activities for you and your child. These groups offer a chance for you and your child to come together with other families to share experiences, enjoy a meal, participate in parent/child activities and just have fun!

Our Family Service Events are generally offered every other month with some variation in frequency due to content or time of year.

- **We welcome parents' ideas about things to do at Family Fun Nights!**
- **We do request that if your child is sick that you keep your child at home.**
- **You must sign up for transportation to all groups, through your Family Specialist, no later than Thursday at 4 p.m. the week before the event.**

What about getting Fathers involved?

Fathers, and other father figures, are also an important part of Early Head Start. Fathers are encouraged to participate in home visits, Family Fun Nights, classroom visits, and all other Early Head Start activities, as well as male involvement activities that are offered throughout the year!

Parenting support classes are available for Reach Dane families!

Do you want to learn more about how your child is developing? Do you want support in dealing with your child's behavior and emotions? Do you want to learn positive discipline methods that fit your child's age? Would you like to learn ways to teach your child how to resolve conflict without violence? Would you like to have calmer responses with your child?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, then please join us for our ACT/Raising Safe Kids Curriculum! This is an interactive 8-week program that focuses on creating an environment where children and parents can thrive. More details will be shared closer to the time the classes are offered (generally in the Spring) by your Center Based Family Specialist or Family Outreach Worker. Please let them know you are interested at any point in the program year. We hope to see you there!

EHS Enrollment

Waiting List

We maintain a waiting list for all families interested in enrolling at the center. A waiting list form can be obtained from the enrollment department. Priority for waiting list is based on selection criteria that are established by the board and policy council. Applications are scored based on selection criteria with the goal of serving neediest family first. Wait lists are scored by child/family need, not by first come first serve basis.

EHS Attendance Policy

EHS attendance policy requires child to attend at least 85% (only miss 2-3 days per month). Except for occasional illness or doctor appointments, it's expected your child attends every day the program is in session.

Enrollment Procedure

Part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Application & Income Verification (If this has not been completed already). • Complete Consent to Transfer of Family Information (To verify subsidy is in place prior to enrollment). • Verify Child Care Subsidy is in the computer.
Part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a time at the center where the parent and child visit the classroom and staff. The parents will then complete the ASQSE, ASQ3 and Child Care Intake with the primary caregiver and CBFS. • The Primary Care Giver will take pics of child for social story transition book.
Part 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment packet is completed at the HOME promoting and modeling a "home visit" like setting. • Get copy of physical and immunizations (or at least date of most recent physical) • The CBFS will bring along the social story transition book (made by the teacher).

Welcome to our school family!