



Children's Services Division

Early Head Start, Head Start, NC Pre-K

Family Handbook



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I. THE CORE OF OUR ORGANIZATION

WNCSource MISSION

Working with communities and partners, WNCSource improves people's lives by creating pathways to self-reliance and healthier living.

WNCSource VISION

Giving people the power to transform their futures and live more fully in their community.

WNCSource VALUES

Through its work and partnerships, WNCSource upholds the following values: Respect; Integrity; Collaboration; Excellence in Service; Progressive / Innovative; Inclusion and Acceptance; Safe and Caring environment for clients, employees, and partners; Responsible Stewardship of Resources

WNCSource CHILDREN'S SERVICES PHILOSOPHY

- 1) Through a comprehensive approach to the education of young children, it is possible to strengthen the abilities of children to cope with school and their total environment, and thus helping them look forward to a brighter future.
- 2) Children must be both physically and mentally healthy in order to free their minds to learn; therefore, provisions must be made for the children's health and nutritional needs, along with their intellectual, emotional, and social needs.
- 3) Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children; the development and program engagement of parents positively influences their children's learning and development.
- 4) Providing staff with training and support in obtaining higher levels of education will improve staff's job performance and, therefore, result in a stronger program for children and families.

GOALS: WNCSource's school readiness goals are developed in order to meet the Office of Head Start mandated school readiness goals, which are defined as "the expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical health and well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve readiness for kindergarten goals" and that "appropriately reflect the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program."

For parents and families, school readiness means they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teachers and advocates.. As Head Start programs and schools work together to promote school readiness and to engage families as their children make the transition to kindergarten, schools will be ready for children.

Our School Readiness Goals for 2021-2022 Year are:

- 1) Approaches to Learning
 - a) Children will show interest, curiosity, focus, and creativity.
- 2) Social & Emotional Development
 - a) Children will regulate their own emotions and behaviors
 - b) Children will establish and sustain positive relationships
 - c) Children will participate cooperatively and constructively in group situations
- 3) Language & Literacy Development
 - a) Children will listen to and understand increasingly complex language
 - b) Children will use language to express thoughts and needs

- c) Preschool children will demonstrate phonological awareness
- d) Preschool children will demonstrate knowledge of the alphabet
- 4) Cognitive Development
 - a) Children will remember and connect experiences
 - b) Preschool children will use number concepts and operations
- 5) Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
 - a) Children will demonstrate traveling skills and gross motor manipulative skills
 - b) Children will demonstrate fine motor strength and coordination

Other goals include the following:

- 1) To provide a rich learning environment for children that focuses on physical development and health, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, language development, literacy knowledge and skills, mathematics knowledge and skills, science knowledge and skills, creative arts expression, logic and reasoning, and social studies knowledge. For children who do not speak English at home, English language development is also a focus.
- 2) To improve children's health through medical and dental care and treatment, good nutrition, and physical exercise.
- 3) To develop in children and their families a responsible attitude toward society and to foster feelings of belonging to a community, which leads to their having greater confidence, self respect, and dignity.
- 4) To plan activities that allow groups from every social, ethnic, and economic level to cooperatively solve problems; to provide children with positive experiences involving individuals in the community who serve as role models (staff and volunteers) and who represent figures of authority (police officers, health providers, etc.).

II. PROGRAM OPTIONS/ENROLLMENT/GENERAL INFO

The program options offered to children by the WNCSource Head Start Program include the following:

- 1) A Home-Based program where children and families have a Parent Educator come to the home and guide educational experiences. This also includes opportunities for socialization with other Home-Based children;
- 2) Center based program with classrooms for children infant through 4 year olds. Some centers have the option of wrap around services.
 - a. Head Start/NC Pre-K (3 & 4 year-olds)
 - b. Early Head Start (infants through 3 years of age)
- 3) Child Care Partnership sites are Centers in the community that we partner with to provide high quality Head Start Services for children infant through 3 years of age.
- 4) Pregnant Women program where mother's expecting a child will receive support in accessing services while reserving a space for her unborn child in our program.

ELIGIBILITY

WNCSource offers Early Head Start, Head Start and NC Pre-K services to eligible children in Henderson, Polk, Rutherford and Transylvania Counties.

Families of enrollees must meet with an enrollment specialist for a survey to determine eligibility into the programs. Our program represents best practice and as such we are an inclusive program welcoming all

eligible children. All of our classrooms have at a minimum 10% enrolled with diagnosed disability.

APPLICATION FOR SERVICES

The process for enrolling children in our programs begins with the submission of an Initial Interest Application. This application may be found on our website at www.wncsource.org. If you need assistance or internet access to complete the application, you can come by our Main office or any WNCSource site or Partnership site for assistance. Once the application has been completed and submitted, WNCSource enrollment personnel will contact the family to schedule the in-person enrollment appointment. All required documentation must be turned in at this appointment for your child to be added to the waitlist.

OPENING/CLOSING DATES

Services provided to infants through 3 year olds follow a year round schedule (center and home based).

WNCSource Children's Centers serving children older than 3 years old begin operations in August and continue for approximately 160 days per year.

WNCSource observes major holidays, one week for Spring Break, approximately 2 weeks for Winter Break, one week for Summer Break. Additionally half days and full days of professional development for our staff are scheduled throughout the year.

A calendar will be provided to families at the beginning of the program year, any deviation from this plan will be announced with as much advance notice as possible.

For inclement weather, please watch WLOS, WNCSource website or check WNCSource's Facebook page.

FEES

There are no fees for families for our services, but families are given opportunities to provide volunteer services to meet the program's required in-kind match.

WNCSource may only accept a fee from families of enrolled children for services that are in addition to services provided by Head Start, such as child care before or after Head Start hours (Wrap Around hours). Fees for additional services are determined by the North Carolina Child Care Market Rate, set by DCDEE.

Wrap-Around Services:

Available Locations: King Creek, Hillview, Etowah, Sugar Hill, Sunny View, Main Street, and Flat Rock. Payment is expected on the Friday before care is provided. See site supervisor for applicable rates.

WNCSource Payment Policy:

1. All parents/guardians receiving a child care voucher will be required to pay parent fees in advance of care in a timely manner.
2. Payments can be made through the WNCSource online payment system. See site supervisor for more information.
3. Payments are due the first day of the week prior to the provision of care. Payments will be considered late if they are made any time after that date.
4. Any parent/guardian who is 30 days late paying a parent fee must be reported to DSS or if applicable Smart Start Partnership for Children. Non-payment of fees puts you at risk for losing your child care voucher.
5. Service hours that are supported by the DSS voucher or Smart Start scholarship will be suspended until all past due fees are collected. Please note that you will still be able to bring your child for the portion of the day that is covered by Head Start (8:00 to 2:30) – these services are free to enrolled families.

Should you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your site Administrator or

Family Service Worker.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Activities, instruction, or communications which promote religious beliefs shall not be directed toward children participating in our programs.

PREVENTION OF SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME AND ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA- POLICY

Belief Statement

We, **WNCSource/Head Start/Early Head Start/NCPK**, believe that preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT) is an important function of keeping children safe, protecting their healthy development, providing quality child care, and educating families.

Procedure/Practice

Recognizing:

- Children are observed for signs of abusive head trauma including irritability and/or high pitched crying, difficulty staying awake/lethargy or loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, inability to lift the head, seizures, lack of appetite, vomiting, bruises, poor feeding/sucking, no smiling or vocalization, inability of the eyes to track, and/or decreased muscle tone. Bruises may be found on the upper arms, rib cage, or head resulting from gripping or from hitting the head. Responding to:

- If SBS/ABT is suspected, staff will:³
 - Call 911 immediately upon suspecting SBS/AHT and inform the site supervisor.
 - Call the parents/guardians.
 - If the child has stopped breathing, trained staff will begin pediatric CPR.⁴

Reporting:

- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in child care are reported to Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) by calling 1-800-859-0829 or by emailing webmasterdcd@dhhs.nc.gov.
- Instances of suspected child maltreatment in the home are reported to the county Department of Social Services.
Phone numbers: **Henderson County: 828-697-5500; Transylvania County: 828-884-3174; Polk County: 828-894-2100; Rutherford County: 828-287-6165**

Family web resources

- The American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Abusive-Head-Trauma-Shaken-Baby-Syndrome.aspx
- The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome: <http://dontshake.org/family-resources>
- The Period of Purple Crying: <http://purplecrying.info/>

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy applies to children up to five years of age and their families, operators, early educators, substitute providers, and uncompensated providers.

- Within 30 days of adopting this policy, the child care facility shall review the policy with parents/guardians of currently enrolled children up to five years of age.
- A copy of the policy will be given and explained to the parents/guardians of newly enrolled children up to five years of age on or before the first day the child receives care at the facility.
- Parents/guardians will sign an acknowledgement form that includes the child's name, date the child first

attended the facility, date the operator's policy was given and explained to the parent, parent's name, parent's signature, and the date the parent signed the acknowledgement

- The child care facility shall keep the **SBS/AHT parent acknowledgement form** in the child's file.

SMOKING

WNCSource's programs and services will be conducted in a tobacco-free environment in order to promote wellness and maintain a safe, healthy, and efficient work environment. All of WNCSource's property, facilities, and vehicles are tobacco-free/vape free. Signs are posted at all WNCSource owned facilities asking employees, clients, and the general public to respect WNCSource's tobacco-free policy.

WNCSource is striving for a future where our employees, clients, and the communities we serve are healthier. Many of our funding sources also require smoke free environments. WNCSource's wellness program offers solutions and support for those employees wishing to quit smoking.

No one may use tobacco (traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes, chew, pipes, cigars, snuff, etc.) anywhere on WNCSource premises at any time. There are no designated smoking or tobacco areas on the premises.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION RIGHTS FOR PARENTS

Information about personally identifiable information (PII) can be found in the Head Start Program Performance Standards 1320.

1. You have the right to provide written consent before WNCSource discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from your child's records, except to the extent that the Head Start Program Performance Standards authorize disclosure without consent.
2. WNCSource is permitted to disclose PII information from child records, without consent of the parent if the disclosure meets one of the following expectation:
 - a. The disclosure is to staff who need access to PII to provide Head Start services. Staff includes, a coordinator, supervisor, teacher, support staff member (including health or medical staff), or a person serving on the governing body.
 - b. The disclosure is in connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with the federal legal requirements of this program.
 - c. The disclosure is pursuant to a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs for, or on behalf of, the program.
 - d. The disclosure is to the appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health, or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk and the program determined that disclosing the PII from the child's records is necessary to protect the health and safety of the child or other persons.
 - e. The disclosure is necessary to comply with a sealed judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena.
 - f. The disclosure is to the Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the results will be reported in the aggregate form that does not identify any individual.
 - g. The disclosure is to a caseworker or other representative from the state or local welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement.
 - h. The disclosure is to the appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with the applicable federal, state, or local laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.

3. You have the right to inspect a log of all individuals, agencies, or organizations to whom PII from your child's record was disclosed.
4. You have the right to a free copy of any records provided to a third party, unless the disclosure was made pursuant to a court order ordering their nondisclosure.
5. You have the right to inspect and request amendments to your child's record on file with WNCSource.
 - a. Upon receipt of your request, a WNCSource employee will arrange a time for you to view your records. You are welcome to bring a third party to view the records with you. The third party must sign an acknowledgement form recognizing that he or she has an obligation to maintain the confidentiality of the child's record.
6. You have a right to request an amendment of your child's record if you believe that portions of the record are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the child's privacy rights.
7. If your request for amendment of your child's records is denied, you may request a hearing to present evidence in support of your position.

III. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMING

CURRICULUM

Our classrooms utilize the **NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development** standards to ensure planning and instructional goals and strategies for all developmental domains. We use **The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, 3rd Edition** for Early Head Start and **The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 6th Edition** for Head Start/NC Pre-K as our curriculum. As part of our curriculum, we conduct ongoing *formative* assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development to inform instruction and we utilize **Teaching Strategies Gold** to store data, evaluate progress, and to summarize and track growth. Teaching staff and families partner together to support children's learning and families are invited to participate in a parenting curriculum **ReadyRosie** that provides 2-minute videos of activities that can be done at home to also support children's growth and development. Two home visits and two family conferences are held each year as a way to enhance collaboration and sharing of children's development.

Our Home-visiting program uses **Parents as Teachers** as the curriculum and conducts regular screening and assessment of children's growth and development in partnership with families. Parent Educators conduct personal visits to homes to facilitate parent-child interactions, development-centered parenting, and family well-being. Parent Educators share handouts and activity suggestions based on the interests and needs expressed by the family and follow-up with families to reflect on experiences and goals.

ENVIRONMENT

Teaching staff will create an environment that has specific and identified learning centers per NC licensing requirements and Head Start Performance Standards. Routines and schedules will be created so that children spend most of their time in active learning of their own choosing while providing unique and individualized opportunities to learn through playing games using building toys, exploring objects from nature, acting out roles, and using art materials. Without being intrusive, staff will involve themselves actively while children play, observe their play and extend their play by adding materials and asking questions about it, and be available when needed to facilitate learning and growth through open-ended questioning, guidance and modeling. Staff will instill children with specific skills for getting along with others, solving conflicts, and acting cooperatively while giving children many opportunities to interact and to talk to each other in positive ways. Staff will also teach children correct behavior and give meaningful consequences, if needed, for continued misbehaviors while utilizing positive reinforcement techniques. Staff will provide children many opportunities to make decisions, be leaders, make real choices, and be responsible and tell children often and enthusiastically what they are doing well and how they are competent. Staff will treat all children equitably, but not identically, recognizing and meeting individual needs and strengths within the framework of our center's curriculum. Staff will utilize and integrate concepts from reading, workshops, and training sessions in the classroom while continually seeking professional development opportunities and/or higher education. Our staff is encouraged to take pride in the ownership of their individual classrooms and accept responsibility for the quality of care provided.

INDIVIDUALIZATION & INCLUSION

WNCSource is a full inclusion program which means that we serve children with disabilities in all of our classrooms and home-based opportunities for their full participation in all program activities. We partner with private and public agencies to determine eligibility for additional services and then we coordinate these

services to the maximum extent possible to meet the child's needs through individualization of our curriculum.

WNCSource also supports families through the process of identifying, referral, evaluation, and service provision for their child when there is a suspected disability. Part of the identifying process is screening all of our children using a developmental screener in conjunction with the family. This allows us to get a snapshot of how the child is developing and how we can support their growth while in our program.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips to nearby places of interest are included in the children's curriculum. Examples of field trips include visits to the public library, local farms, supermarkets, etc. Teachers notify families in advance of all field trips and urge caregivers to accompany the children on the field trips.

The following procedures apply to all field trips:

- 1) Center staff plan field trips well in advance of the event. Supervisory staff will have knowledge of the field trip and will have approved the plans.
- 2) Teaching staff arrange for enough families and volunteers to accompany the children and staff to provide good supervision of the children.
- 3) Center staff arrange for safe transportation. WNCSource vehicles used to transport Head Start children meet and maintain safety inspection standards and all other applicable North Carolina and federal regulations concerning transportation of passengers. WNCSource insures these vehicles for liability as required by State law.
- 4) A first-aid kit is located in each WNCSource vehicle used to transport children. In addition, teachers bring emergency and identification information about each child on the field trip.
- 5) Each person in the vehicle sits in the manufacturer's designated areas and each passenger is restrained with an individual seat belt or child restraint device. All children use an appropriate child restraint "five-point harness" according to the Head Start Performance Standards.
- 6) Teachers obtain written parental permission for each child to attend the field trip prior to the event.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

When families transport their children to and from the centers, the arrival and departure times offer opportunities for communication about the children and the program. Families are urged to take a few extra minutes to speak with center staff at these times.

In order to assure that the child's center arrival and departure are pleasant and safe experiences, the following procedures have been established. Safety aspects of these procedures are mandated by the NC licensing regulations.

Children participating in classroom activities are expected to depart from the center no later than the center's Head Start closing time. In the event that a parent has an emergency which will delay picking up the child, the parent needs to notify the center staff by telephone.

Parents or guardians must come inside centers with their children at delivery and pick-up times. Each guardian must 1) assure that staff knows the child is arriving and departing and 2) use a sign-in/sign-out sheet to indicate the child's arrival and departure and allow staff to do a daily health check upon arrival.

(Refer to Safety Concerns: Release of children, GENERAL HEAD START POLICIES.)

RELEASE OF CHILDREN:

Children are released from the care of the program only to the authorized individuals noted in the child's file. Staff asks the caregiver to list the names and contact information for these "authorized" persons. A guardian can amend their child's list at any time by requesting the information from the teacher. It is very important that these lists, maintained by Head Start staff, are current. New lists are to be completed and given to Head

Start when the child is initially enrolled, when the child returns to Head Start for the second year, and any time when there has been a change in who is authorized to be responsible for the child.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Families should keep the phone number for their child's teacher. In addition, families are asked to keep teachers informed of a current phone number where they can be reached in the event of an emergency.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

To respect the safety and privacy of all children, photography and the sharing of images via mobile phone or social media is prohibited unless the photograph is taken by the family of the child pictured. This policy includes WNCSource staff, which prohibits staff from taking, posting or sharing any photos of children via electronic devices without written parental consent and immediate supervisor approval.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

All families are encouraged to maintain consistent attendance in our program. Consistent attendance is defined as present or participating in *at least* 85% of expected hours. Families are to be informed about the attendance policy during the enrollment process by the enrollment specialist.

Families are asked to notify the center staff when their child must be absent and give the reason for the absence. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the program within one hour of the program's start time, staff will attempt to contact the family to ensure the child's well-being. Teachers will keep documentation of attempts to contact the family regarding absences. If a child continues to be absent without explanation (such as two consecutive days), staff will conduct an educational home visit or make other direct contact with the family. If a child is at risk of missing 10% of available program days, staff must develop strategies to improve identified barriers. If the absence is valid and documented, attendance should resume when the temporary condition passes. The family service worker is available to offer support and assistance to help the child resume regular attendance.

Temporary Condition absences include:

- A child who is injured or has an illness.
- A death in the child's family.
- A child cannot attend class because s/he had to receive medical or dental treatment or therapy at the time of the class.
- The child's attendance is affected by temporary family situations (notify Family Services Coordinator or appropriate Family Services staff when needed).
- A family wishes to visit their native country.

In the case of a child whose absence is documented or temporary, the child's slot will be held for up to three consecutive weeks if contact has been made with the center staff. If the situation is determined to be still temporary, yet is not worked out, the slot may still be held and the reason documented. If needs of the family have changed making center services a difficulty, the families will be given the option of being served by the Home-Based program. If contact with the family, including a home visit, cannot be made, the child may be dropped from enrollment.

DISCIPLINE

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of the behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, 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, this facility will practice the following discipline and behavior management policy:

WE DO

- ✓ Praise, reward and encourage all of the children.
- ✓ Reason with and set limits for the children.
- ✓ Model appropriate behavior for the children.
- ✓ Modify the program environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
- ✓ Listen to the children.
- ✓ Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior.
- ✓ Explain to the children the natural and logical consequences of their behavior.
- ✓ Treat the children as individuals and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
- ✓ Ignore minor misbehaviors.
- ✓ Explain things to the children on their levels.
- ✓ Stay consistent in our behavior management program.

WE DO NOT

- ✓ Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children.
- ✓ Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
- ✓ Shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
- ✓ Deny food or rest as punishment.
- ✓ Relate discipline to eating, resting or sleeping.
- ✓ Leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
- ✓ Place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.
- ✓ Allow discipline of children by children.
- ✓ Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES OVERVIEW

In an effort to provide a safer environment for our WNCSource classrooms, we have developed a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) Plan for each site in connection with local fire, police, emergency medical services and other responding agencies and in accordance with NC child care licensing rules and regulations.

Following is the information you, as a WNCSource parent/guardian, will need to know and follow in the event of an emergency at your child's school. Please keep us up-to-date on any changes to your contact

information and your child's medical information. To help prepare your child for any emergency, we will have monthly fire drills and periodic (quarterly) safety drills.

LOCK-DOWN EMERGENCY

During a lockdown all exterior and interior doors are locked and children are confined to their classrooms. No entry or exit of the facility is allowed. A lockdown takes place if a threat or possible threat is identified inside

the school. Main entrance doors will be locked during a lockdown and a sign will be posted at the main entrance if possible. If you are notified of a lockdown at the school, do not come to the school, stay in a location where you can get further information. Children will not be released until the incident has ended- per our Emergency Preparedness Response plan and school policy.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE EMERGENCY

During a shelter-in-place, children are taken to an inner hallway or a room with few to no windows and take refuge there until it is safe to release them. Shelter-in-place takes place if there is threat of a tornado or high winds or if there is hazardous material released into the atmosphere and it has been determined, with the assistance of outside agencies, that evacuation or early dismissal could possibly place children in danger. During a shelter-in-place, children will not be released until the incident is over and we are cleared to do so by local law enforcement officials.

FIRE EMERGENCY (BUILDING EVACUATION)

In the event of a fire we will evacuate the children from the classrooms using the outside door exits where they will wait until the clear signal has been communicated from the conductor of the drill and/or the local fire department. In the circumstance where we are not allowed back in the building, we will proceed to take the children to an alternate location as described in our EPR plan.

IV. FAMILY & SCHOOL (FAMILY ENGAGEMENT)

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement is a collaborative and strengths-based process through which early childhood professionals, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and staff at all levels that requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Family engagement focuses on culturally and linguistically responsive relationship building with key family members in a child's life. It requires making a commitment to creating and sustaining an ongoing partnership that supports family well-being. It also honors and supports the parent child relationships that are central to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being.

Family Engagement Participants are defined as: Those who consider themselves family with the enrolled child/children. .

At WNCSource, we believe that children are at the heart of meaningful family engagement. They are the inspiration for positive, goal-oriented, parent-provider relationships.

- 1) Enrollment for a child in the Head Start center requires a considerable amount of information about the child and his/her family. Staff keeps this information confidential within the Head Start Program, and the information is used only for the purposes of assisting the child and his family to receive the benefits offered by the Head Start Program. A pre-enrollment conference is required before a child is enrolled in the Head Start center. If possible, both of the child's parents should be involved in the Head Start Enrollment Interview.
- 2) The Head Start parent or guardian, along with the child, have the opportunity to visit the Head Start center either before or on the child's first day of enrollment. Teachers schedule an Open House, typically prior to the first day of school, so caregiving adults of new and returning families have the

opportunity to meet and speak with the teachers, as well as view the learning environment in the classroom.

- 3) Families are encouraged to observe and volunteer in the center throughout the program year. Families are free to visit their child's center unannounced at any time when it is in operation. Families are also welcome to have lunch with their child, but a day's advance notice is necessary to order the additional lunch.
- 4) Each center and the Home-Based program have a parent/caregiver committee composed of all the parents of the children who attend that center. A combination of parent/guardian meetings, training, and family gatherings—which parent/caregiver committees plan—are typically held a minimum of four times per year at each designated location. Among the topics frequently discussed during parent meetings and training are: child-rearing practices, family nutrition, personal development, program procedures, etc.
- 5) Each program has a committee composed of all the parents -a combination of parent/guardian meetings, training, and family gatherings—which center committees plan—are typically held a minimum of four times per year at each center. Among the topics frequently discussed during parent meetings and training are: child-rearing practices, family nutrition, personal development, program procedures, etc.
- 6) Representatives of the parent/guardian center committee serve on the Head Start Policy Council, a decision-making group within the Head Start Program. This body evaluates the Head Start program annually, approves the hiring and termination of staff, and approves annual budgets and work plans. Transportation and child care are provided when needed or funds are made available to pay costs enabling parents to attend Policy Council meetings.
- 7) Program staff and caregivers have frequent informal communication. Some of this communication is verbal and occurs through brief chats during pick-up/delivery time, telephone calls, etc.; other communication occurs through written notes and flyers. Caregivers are asked to read the messages that children bring home. Information shared regularly between staff and parents includes details of special events as well as day-to-day happenings, such as changes in the child's physical or emotional state, his/her eating habits, and any injuries the child has received. Staff also gives caregivers ideas about ways to work at home with their children to promote their healthy development.
- 8) Families are also informed about: a) the Head Start program and any policies/regulations that affect it, and b) the center curriculum through newsletters, parent/guardian meeting minutes, Policy Council minutes, verbal announcements, etc. Each site has a space in the center (bulletin board, bookcase, etc.), which is devoted to information for parents.
- 9) Staff communicates with families to ensure that children who leave their centers have smooth transitions to other programs, such as the public kindergarten. Visitation activities are frequently planned to acquaint the children with the new program they will attend.
- 10) Guardians of children with special needs work with Head Start staff and community professionals to develop and implement individual education plans designed to meet their child's needs. Head Start staff also addresses the needs of families of children with special needs.

FAMILY SERVICES POLICIES

The Head Start program has several components, each of which makes a major contribution to the child's development and offers benefits to the family. These components include: education, family

engagement/social services, health/nutrition, mental health, and disabilities.

Families enrolled in Early Head Start or Head Start programming are assigned a Family Advocate who will

develop a professional relationship with families to assist them in accessing resources to meet needs, and identifying and accomplishing goals. Family Advocates maintain regular contact with families, conduct three home visits per year and provide transportation to medical and other related appointments as needed. Parent Educators serve as the Family Advocate for Home-Based children.

CURRICULUM

Family Advocates use **Ready Rosie** as a parenting curriculum that helps families create meaningful home learning environments and promote school readiness. Modeled Moment videos are sent to families through

text, email, or an app on a weekly basis. Family Workshops are also provided to address topics of interest throughout the school year. Family Advocates customize the materials provided based on the needs of the family.

VOLUNTEERS

As a Head Start program we have an “open door” policy in our classrooms and encourage family participation/volunteering on a frequent and/or regular basis. There are many ways to contribute to the classroom learning environment.

“Regular” volunteers may be required to sign a statement agreeing to respect and protect the privacy of all children and their families. Whatever information is contained in files, discussed with staff or families, or otherwise gained, will not be shared in any manner with anyone outside the organization without the written permission of the parent or as required by law or a court order. “Regular” volunteers may also be asked to conduct a federal background check as well as a tuberculosis screening. All Volunteers will review the WNCSource Code of Conduct document and sign prior to scheduling a consistent/regular volunteer schedule.

CELEBRATIONS

HOLIDAYS

As a Head Start program we avoid endorsing commercialism surrounding holidays. Our focus is about learning and celebrating in an inclusive manner.

- Holidays are not a major part of the curriculum. They are integrated within the total curriculum. No more than a few days and few activities are dedicated to any holiday.
- Holidays are not a theme and the whole room is not to be decorated reflecting a holiday.
- Learning about holidays broadens children’s awareness of their own, and other, cultural experiences. Activities must be thoughtfully planned and implemented for inclusion of all children and families.
- Every group represented in the classroom and Home Based socialization (children and staff) is to be honored.
- Do not assume that everyone from the same ethnic group celebrates holidays in the same way. Teachers and Family Service Workers check with the families to ensure that activities are indeed reflective of the cultures represented in the classroom.
- Staff must plan strategies for working with children whose family beliefs do not permit participation in holiday celebrations. Their families are to be included in planning a satisfactory alternative for these children in the classroom.

BIRTHDAYS:

The focus on birthday celebration needs to be on the uniqueness of the child.

The daily routine of the classroom or planned activities during Home Base Socialization should not change to accommodate birthday celebrations.

Because children learn by example, and to reinforce the nutrition education in the classroom and home

base socializations, the following ideas are suggested but not limited to:

- Giving and/or reading a book to the child and classmates
- Bringing educational toys to share

- Bringing a baby book or other symbolic item, or a special family story to share
- Lead a game
- Birthday Child receives a book made by classmates, each student colors a page of the book highlighting a quality of the birthday child. Staff puts the pages together into a book and the child gets to take that keepsake home to share with his or her family.
- Invite parents or guardians to share with the group about the birth of the child or something unique about him/her. Share traditions on how birthdays are celebrated in the family.

In our efforts to make any celebratory event more meaningful, we would like to step away from food being the focus.

As stated in Head Start Performance Standards families are always welcome to come in the classroom and we encourage their participation in the planning of any specific celebration they would like to attend.

Due to the uniqueness of the home-based program, and specifically for socializations, families may consult the safe foods list in the home-based policies/procedures manual.

SOCIAL MEDIA

WNCSource recognizes that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and the like. We also understand that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to share one's life and opinions with family and friends around the world. However, employees' use of social media can also pose risks to WNCSource's confidential information, goodwill and reputation, and can jeopardize compliance with certain laws and regulations applicable to our organization.

To minimize these business and legal risks, to avoid loss of productivity and distraction from employees' job duties, WNCSource expects all staff, including employees, volunteers, interns and contract employees, to adhere to the following guidelines and rules regarding use of social media. Social media should never be used in a way that violates any other WNCSource policies. For example, employees are prohibited from using social media to:

- Violate confidentiality and proprietary rights.
- Engage in any discriminatory or harassing conduct.
- Circumvent ethics and standards of conduct.
- Violate any other laws or ethical standards (for example, using social media in a false, deceptive or misleading way).

FAMILY-SCHOOL AGREEMENT

ORIENTATION/OPEN HOUSE

Before the beginning of the program year, there will be an open house to highlight key components and services of the program, introduce staff, and review policies and procedures as applicable. It is an opportunity for families to ask questions and provide valuable input.

HOME VISITS

The opportunity for your child's teacher to visit with you in your home is a key step in building a strong family/school partnership. Home Visits provide an opportunity for teachers to speak informally with all family members. They help build community and allow our staff to meet the families where they are. Teachers will visit you two times a year. The first will happen before the child starts or soon after. The second visit will happen later in the school year, typically around February or March.

FAMILY CONFERENCES

Teacher-Family conferences are held twice a year (fall and spring) or more often if needed. This is a time to continue to build your relationship and focus on the child's growth and development. You are able to exchange information with teachers, touch base, set goals, and report on the child's activities in the classroom. Teachers should schedule times individually with families. It is important to know that teachers are available to meet with all families, but that they prefer not to discuss problems or the child in the classroom or during the day since the conversation may be interrupted or overheard.

ASSESSMENTS

WNCSource uses a variety of assessment methods that are sensitive to and informed by a family's culture, experiences, children's abilities and disabilities, and home language. The program uses an ongoing systematic, formal and informal approach to assessment that provides information on children's learning and development that takes into account the cultural context in which children develop.

CLOTHING, JEWELRY & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Teachers for each age group are responsible for daily safety inspections of their assigned area, equipment and children's attire. Your child's attire should be age appropriate and fit correctly. Children's personal items such as barrettes, hair ties, earrings, necklaces, and beaded jewelry are also strongly discouraged. Footwear safety is also a priority. Shoes should be comfortable and provide adequate protection for the feet during outdoor play. It is requested that all children wear a pair of closed toed shoes. Flip-flops, slip on shoes, open-toed sandals, jelly shoes and any shoes with heels are highly discouraged as they present a safety hazard. We will take all precautionary methods to be certain that your child's belongings are well cared for; please keep in mind, clothes that look a little less clean at the end of the day are a sign that your child was actively engaged in learning.

OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND POSITION STATEMENT

WNCSource believes that outdoor learning environments are so much more than just a playground. These spaces are designed and created with intentionally selected natural elements that spark curiosity and discovery while offering age-appropriate and safe play. These spaces include diverse features designed to promote structured and unstructured physical activity, play, and learning. Playing and learning outside also helps children to understand and respect nature, the environment and the interdependence of humans, animals, plants, and life cycles. The core values of our curriculum resonate with long-standing key concepts of outdoor learning such as providing challenges, enjoyment, relevance, depth, development of the whole person and an adventurous approach to learning. These are at the center of our outdoor learning "school of thought". A well thought-out and intentional OLE should enhance children's development through learning and play, influencing how children feel, act, and behave.

WNCSource believes that the most powerful nature-connection experiences need to meet certain criteria:

1. In a natural and inclusive setting
2. Focused on nature rather than some non-nature activity
3. Recurring, so that they become a regular part of the child's life
4. Providing opportunities for a child to learn skills, feel successful, and have other highly affirming experiences
5. Supported by a caring and helpful adult

V. SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, & BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT SERVICES

In collaboration with each child's family, WNCSource ensures that all children are screened on their emotional skills and behavioral needs. This helps to inform the teachers on appropriate learning activities to include in the curriculum as well as partner with families to locate strategies that the family could benefit from.

SENSORY SUPPORTS:

Every classroom has a space where children can utilize to calm their bodies and regulate their emotions and/or sensory needs. These designated options may include soft pillows, emotions pictures, and other

sensory items/materials that are appropriate for calming and regulating emotions in young children. The sensory areas will be designed and equipped to be utilized both inside and outside of the classroom. Children will be able to use these areas to learn how to de-escalate their behaviors and regulate their emotions. Teachers will be educated on the procedures by the Early Intervention Behavior Specialists in how to appropriately utilize these spaces so it is used to its fullest and intended potential.

CHALLENGING & EXTREME BEHAVIOR

WNCSource recognizes that there will be children in our programs that display challenging and extreme behaviors and we are committed to working in partnership with the family to understand and decrease challenging and unsafe behaviors while fully supporting the family in finding and coordinating appropriate resources and maintaining clear communication.

Challenging behaviors refer to a pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults. These behaviors interfere with children's learning, development, and success at play. Sometimes these behaviors are extreme in nature meaning that they endanger or potentially endanger the safety of peers, staff or themselves.

WNCSource will provide safe and positive classroom environments and utilize the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports model as a promotion, prevention, and intervention approach to dealing with behavioral issues. Our teachers and site administrators are trained in using Creative Curriculum to fidelity and implementing social-emotional supports through the Pyramid Model so that they can effectively provide preventative and instructional strategies. Each classroom also receives support through the Early Intervention Team, Coaches, and Mental Health Consultants. Every staff member will receive Non-violent Crisis Prevention Intervention training so they can effectively support children with dangerous and extreme behaviors.

WNCSource has the expectation that primary caregivers accept responsibility for actively partnering with the program in their child's educational experience and any behavioral issues that may arise. WNCSource cannot accept responsibility for the safety of children exhibiting extreme behavioral issues (or those around them) without the active support of the primary caregiver(s). Parents are strongly encouraged to deliver (and pick up) their children on time so their child is able to have smoother transitions within the program and at home. Structure and routine in combination with peers is important for all children, especially those with challenging behaviors.

We work as a team (staff and family members) to put strategies into place when a child demonstrates a behavior of concern. Communication systems are established on a daily or weekly basis. Should a child need more intensive support, a behavior intervention plan will be established which includes a description of the behavior, why we believe the behavior is occurring, and strategies to implement at home and in the classroom.

In the event there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications, the child is a threat to themselves or others, or cannot be safely supported in the school environment, families will be asked to take their child home for the day. This is a temporary interruption to services and is only used in extraordinary circumstances.

VI. CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

HEALTH ASSESSMENT & SCREENINGS

WNCSource provides high quality health, oral health, and nutrition services that are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate that supports each child's growth and school readiness. In partnership with families, we ensure that the child has ongoing and accessible health care and health insurance. We then support families in ensuring that their child stays up-to-date on well-child visits and dental exams throughout their time in our program.

In collaboration with each child's family, WNCSource performs evidence-based hearing and vision screenings to ensure there are no sensory concerns that could impact the child's growth and school readiness. If any concerns are found during the screening process, WNCSource refers the child to their health care provider for a complete evaluation.

HEALTH EDUCATION

Children brush their teeth once daily with fluoridated toothpaste in the program. Caregiving adults sign a permission form for their child to use fluoridated toothpaste at each enrollment meeting. Families that wish to decline the use of fluoridated toothpaste may do so, and the child will brush with water only.

NUTRITION SERVICES

WNCSource offers nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snacks daily. We participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) which plays a critical role in supporting the wellness, health, and development of children through the provision of nutritious foods. We feel we have a powerful opportunity to instill healthy habits in young children that serve as a foundation for healthy choices in life. Considerations for family preferences and accommodations are made for children with food allergies, but we require a note from the child's pediatrician or a written preference note from parent or guardian to document this for our records. All accommodations will be made with a written doctor's note, and accommodations for family preferences will be made as feasible. As a participant in the CACFP we require demographic and income information from families each year. We update that paperwork every fall.

VII. HEALTH DOCUMENTATION

Head Start benefits include medical, dental, and mental health services. Children receive screenings, examinations, and treatment as needed. Parents are encouraged to go with their children to medical and dental appointments.

Based on North Carolina Child Care regulations, a current (within the last full year of the first day of school) physical examination record and an up-to-date immunization record must be on file no later than 30 days following enrollment. Children should follow the North Carolina Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment schedule to ensure they are up to date with physical exams. Following this schedule ensures the child receives consistent care throughout critical points in their development. Each child must receive immunizations as required by Head Start and North Carolina regulations. Parents that wish to waive this immunization regulation due to religious objections must request a waiver *before* enrollment. If a child is not receiving a waiver and has no immunizations, they must receive their first immunization and start on an immunization schedule no later than 30 days following enrollment or they will be excluded from the program.

As part of the Head Start standards, family cooperation is expected when additional medical, dental, psychological, and mental health services are recommended. It is further expected that parents will apply for their child to receive Medicaid or Health Choice services.

When Head Start vehicles are used to transport children to health appointments and services, the parent must accompany the child in the vehicle. The same safety precautions used for transporting children on field trips are also used for transporting children to health appointments.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

It is our highest priority to create a safe and healthy environment for all children and families. WNCSource's COVID-19 policies follow the guidance and recommendations of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services through the NC Strong Child Care Public Health Toolkit. Please review your classroom's COVID-19 Procedure, and contact your child's teacher if you have any questions or concerns. Updates to this procedure will be made as North Carolina Child Care guidance changes, and you will be notified of these changes as they occur.

The most effective way to end the COVID-19 pandemic is to get vaccinated. All staff and families are

encouraged to get vaccinated to protect themselves, their community, and the children who are not yet eligible for the vaccine. If you have any questions about the vaccine or if you would like to make an appointment for your first or second dose, please contact your local health department or health care provider. The WNCSource Health Team would also be happy to help you find your nearest vaccination clinic.

MEDICATION

Head Start staff may administer medication to enrollees ONLY when the following criteria are met:

1. The medicine must be prescribed by a health care provider and in a pharmacist's bottle labeled for the child only.
2. Complete directions must be on the bottle.
3. In the case of a non-maintenance medication, the medicine cannot be given after the expiration date.
4. The parent must completely fill out the Head Start medication permission form before the medicine can be accepted by Head Start staff.

We regret that for the safety of your child, there can be NO exceptions to the above rules.

Additionally, Head Start staff cannot:

1. Give the initial dose of any maintenance medication; however, if the medication is considered a rescue medication (such as: Albuterol inhaler, Diastat, EpiPen) we can administer it when needed.
2. Share medication between siblings.
3. Give medication in the center that is ordered less than 3 times daily unless the time to be given is specified by the physician.
4. Give over-the-counter non-prescription medications.

For children diagnosed with asthma, allergies, or a medical condition, an allergy/asthma/medical action plan is required before the child can start attending in the classroom.

Please feel free to call the WNCSource Health and Nutrition Coordinator at 828-693-1711 if you have any questions.

Per Head Start requirements, parents who would like for us to use diaper cream, sunscreen, and/or insect repellent on their child, we require signed permission from the parent/guardian and the child's doctor or health professional. We have a letter and form that would need to be completed by the parent and health professional before we are able to apply these items to your child.

SICK CHILD EXCLUSION

When a child becomes ill but does not require immediate medical help, a determination should be made regarding whether the child should be sent home (i.e., should be temporarily excluded from child care). Most illnesses do not require exclusion. The caregiver/teacher in collaboration with supervisor should determine if the illness:

1. Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities
2. Results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
3. Poses a risk of spreading of harmful diseases to others

If any of these criteria are met, the child should be excluded, regardless of the type of illness. Follow direction from the "Signs and Symptoms Chart" (from Caring for Our Children) when determining if a child needs to be excluded due to illness.

A staff member should use "Symptoms or Suspected Illness" form (from Managing Infectious Diseases) to facilitate communication with parent/guardian at pick up. This form can be used when excluding due to illness or if the child exhibits symptoms that do not require exclusion but are significant enough that they need to be

noted. This form will aid in communicating information at the end of the day to parent/guardian. All confirmed cases of vaccine preventable diseases/illnesses need to be posted in the classroom in order to inform parents. These include: Chicken Pox, German Measles, Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Influenza, Measles, Meningitis, Mumps, Tuberculosis, and Whooping Cough. Forms to provide this information are provided by the Health Team. No other illnesses need to be posted in the classroom.

Fever

This information is to be used in conjunction with the “Signs and Symptoms Chart” (from Caring for Our Children). All current resources state that if a child (older than two months) is found to have a temperature of 101^o F or higher by any method, the child should be excluded from the child care setting. For infants two months and younger, fever is considered 100.4^o F or higher by any method. Follow the Temperature Taking Procedure sheet provided by WNCSource when taking a child’s temperature. Children should be fever free without medication, including: Tylenol, Motrin, or any other over-the counter or prescription medications for a minimum of 10-12 hours and should be fully capable of participating in the program before returning to school.

Diarrhea

This information is to be used in conjunction with the “Signs and Symptoms Chart” (from Caring for Our Children). If a child is found to have sudden onset of diarrhea characterized by more than two instances of abnormal bowel movements, they must be excluded and may return when no longer exhibits diarrhea and has had a normal stool.

Pink Eye

Exclusion for Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis) is not required. However, if two or more children in a group develop conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) in the same period, the center should contact the Health Team.

Lice

Children should not be excluded immediately or sent home early from care and education due to the presence of head lice.

- If head lice are present, children should avoid any head-to-head contact with other children and should avoid the sharing of any headgear while finishing out the day.
- Parents/guardians should be called and informed when lice have been detected, before the end of the day, so that parents/guardians can have the time to make arrangements for treatment in a timely manner.
- Once a parent/guardian picks up a child, a staff member should hand in the parent/guardian “Lice Education” form provided by WNCSource.
- The child may return when he/she has had the first completed treatment which means that the child is lice (bug) free.
- Do not exclude a child on the presence of nits alone. If a child has the presence of nits, please inform the parent/guardian and provide “Lice Education” form as needed.

The following steps should be taken in the classroom to avoid the spread of lice:

- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linen and other items that the child wore or used during the two days before the treatment. Use hot water (130 degrees F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle.
- Clothing and items that are not washable can be sealed in plastic bags for two weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, especially where the child has sat or laid.

These procedures were created to align with the following nationally recognized resources and North Carolina State Regulations:

- Caring for Our Children 4th Edition

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools 3rd Edition
- The North Carolina Health and Safety Resource Center
- North Carolina Administrative Code: Chapter 9, Child Care Rules

DENTAL

All children twelve months and older should have an up-to-date exam on file or receive an exam by a dentist within 90 days of enrollment. The Head Start Standards define up-to-date as within the past 12 months when referring to dental health.

VIII. CONCERNS & QUESTIONS

COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The Head Start Program of WNCSource encourages open communication among all local citizens in an effort to resolve Head Start issues, and therefore provide the best possible services to children and families. It is the policy of WNCSource that complaints and grievances between individuals can usually be resolved by discussion about the conflicts between or among the persons involved. When issues cannot be resolved in this manner however, these procedures are to be followed:

- a) A complaint or grievance involving a staff member should be directed to the staff member's supervisor. If it is not clear who the supervisor is or if the supervisor does not provide satisfactory resolution of the problem, the complaint or grievance should be addressed verbally or in writing to the Children's Services director.
- b) Grievances or complaints not involving Head Start employees should be directed verbally or in writing to the Children's Services director.
- c) Should the Children's Services director not provide satisfactory resolution or explanation of the problem, the complaint or grievance should be directed in writing to the Chief Executive Officer of WNCSource.
- d) Should the WNCSource Chief Executive Officer (or his/her designee) not provide satisfactory resolution to a grievance (see definition below); the grievance should be addressed in writing to the WNCSource Executive Board (via Chairperson) with a copy to the Policy Council. The WNCSource Board Chairperson and the Policy Council Chairperson then appoint three representatives from each of their groups who form a committee to study the grievance. The final results of this joint committee are taken to each body for final action. If either of the bodies does not agree with the joint committee's decision, procedures outlined in the WNCSource Board of directors and Head Start Policy Council – Dispute Resolution Policy will be followed.

Definition of Complaint: An expressed feeling of dissatisfaction about some aspect of the WNCSource Head Start Program and its delivery of services.

Definition of Grievance: Any actual or perceived action that does not comply with WNCSource or Head Start policy.

Time Periods: Head Start staff will respond to a complaint or grievance from families or community members within two weeks. The WNCSource Chief Executive Officer will respond to a complaint or grievance within two weeks after receiving the complaint or grievance.

ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST WNCSource CHILDREN'S SERVICES STAFF

- If a parent/guardian has reason to suspect or knowledge that a child(ren) is being abused and/or neglected by a staff member, he or she must report this to the local Department of Social Services.
- The Children's Services director will be notified of any allegations and charges of child abuse and/or neglect against an Early Head Start/Head Start staff member with as little involvement from other staff as

possible in order to maintain the confidentiality of the parties involved. The Children's Services director will follow applicable state laws and the agency's Personnel Policies in addressing the allegations, charges, and any substantiated cases (see "Personnel Standards of Conduct" in WNCSource's Personnel Policies, excerpt below).

- i. "Child Services personnel and volunteers charged with any form of child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, or any violent felonies must contact Human Resources and their supervisor immediately or the next working day. Appropriate action will be taken.

IIX. Summary of the NC Child Care Law and Rule for Child Care Centers

WHAT IS CHILD CARE?

The law defines child care as:

- three or more unrelated children under 13 years of age receiving care from a non-relative on a regular basis, at least once a week for more than four hours per day but less than 24 hours.

It is only when all of these conditions exist that regulation is required. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for regulating child care. This is carried out through the Division of Child Development and Early Education. The purpose of regulation is to protect the health and well-being of children while they are away from their families. The law defining child care is in the North Carolina General Statutes, Article 7, Chapter 110. The North Carolina Child Care Commission is responsible for adopting rules to carry out the law. Some counties and cities in North Carolina also have local zoning requirements for child care programs.

Child Care Centers

Licensing as a center is required when six or more children are cared for in a residence or when three or more children are in care in a building other than a residence. Religious-sponsored programs are exempt from some of the regulations described below if they choose not to be licensed. Child care centers may voluntarily meet higher standards and receive a license with a higher rating. Centers will be visited at least annually to make sure they are following the law and to receive technical assistance from child care consultants.

Two through Five Star Rated License

Centers that meet the minimum licensing requirements will receive a one-star license. Programs that choose to voluntarily meet higher standards can apply for a two through five-star rated license. The number of stars a program earns is based upon the education levels their staff meet, the program standards met by the program, and one quality point option.

Child Abuse, Neglect, or Maltreatment

Every citizen has a responsibility to report suspected child abuse, neglect or maltreatment. This occurs when a parent or caregiver injures or allows another to injure a child physically or emotionally. It may also occur when a parent or caregiver puts a child at risk of serious injury or allows another to put a child at risk of serious injury. It also occurs when a child does not receive proper care, supervision, appropriate discipline, or when a child is not in a safe environment. **North Carolina law requires any person who suspects child maltreatment at a child care facility to report the situation to the Intake Unit at Division of Child Development and Early Education at 919-814-6300 or 1-800-859-0829.** Reports can be made anonymously. A person cannot be held liable for a report made in good faith. **North Carolina law requires any person who suspects child abuse or neglect in a family to report that to the county department of social services.**

Parental Rights

- Parents have the right to enter a center at any time while their child is present.
- Parents have the right to see the license displayed in a prominent place.
- Parents have the right to know how their child will be disciplined.

How to Report a Problem?

North Carolina law requires staff from the Division of Child Development and Early Education to investigate a child care center when there has been a complaint. Child care providers who violate the law or rules may be fined, issued an administrative action, and may have their licenses suspended or revoked. Administrative actions must be posted in the facility. If you believe that a child care provider fails to meet the child care requirements, or if you have questions, please call the Division of Child Development and Early Education at 919 814-6300 or 1800-859-0829.

Licensed centers must, at a minimum, meet requirements in the following areas:

Education and Training

The administrator of a child care center must be at least 21 and have at least a North Carolina Early Childhood Administration Credential or its equivalent. Lead teachers in a child care center must be at least 18 and have at least a North Carolina Early Childhood Credential or its equivalent. If administrators and lead teachers do not meet this requirement, they must begin credential coursework within six months of being hired. Staff younger than 18 years of age must work under the direct supervision of staff 21 years of age or older. All staff must have current certification in CPR and First Aid. All staff must complete health and safety training and a minimum number of ongoing training hours annually, ITS-SIDS training is required of the administrator and any caregiver that works with infants 12 months of age or younger. One staff member must complete the Emergency Preparedness and Response in Child Care training and plan.

Criminal Background Checks

Criminal background qualification is a pre-service requirement. All staff must undergo a criminal background check initially, and every three years thereafter.



Staff/Child Ratios

Ratios are the number of staff required to supervise a certain number of children. Group size is the maximum number of children in one group. Ratios and group sizes for licensure are shown below and must be posted in each classroom. A sample staff/child ratio chart can be found on the DCDEE website under "Provider Documents and Forms".

Age	Teacher: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
0-12 months	1:5	10
12-24 months	1:6	12
2 to 3 years old	1:10	20
3 to 4 years old	1:15	25
4 to 5 years old	1:20	25
5 years old and Older	1:25	25

(These are child care licensing minimum ratio requirements, WNCSource meets the Head Start Standards of smaller group sizes)

Centers located in a residence that are licensed for six to twelve children may care for up to three additional school-age children, depending on the other children in care. When the group has children of different ages, staff-child ratios and group size must be met for the youngest child in the group. **Space and Equipment**

There are space requirements for indoor and outdoor environments that must be measured prior to

licensure. Outdoor play space must be fenced. Indoor equipment must be clean, safe, well-maintained, and age appropriate. Outdoor equipment and indoor furnishings must be child size, sturdy, and free of hazards that could injure children.

Record Requirement

Centers must keep accurate records such as children's, staff, and programs. A record of monthly fire drills and quarterly shelter-in-place or lockdown drills practiced must also be maintained. A safe sleep policy must be developed and shared with parents if children younger than 12 months are in care. Prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma policy must be developed and shared with parents of children up to five year of age.

Curriculum and Activities

Four and five-star programs must use an approved curriculum in classrooms serving four-year-old children. Other programs may choose to use an approved curriculum to earn a quality point for the star-rated license. The Division website maintains a list of approved curriculums for four-year-old children. Activity plans must be available to parents and must show a balance of active and quiet activities. A written activity plan that includes activities intended to stimulate the developmental domains, in accordance with North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development. Rooms must be arranged to encourage children to explore and use materials on their own and have choices. Health and Safety Children must be immunized on schedule. Each licensed center must ensure the health and safety of children by sanitizing areas and equipment used by children. Meals and snacks must be nutritious and meet the Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care. Food must be offered at least once every four hours. Local health, building, and fire inspectors visit licensed programs to make sure standards are met. All children must be allowed to play outdoors each day (weather conditions permitting) and must have space and time provided for rest. They must provide age-appropriate toys and activities. Centers must complete the Emergency Preparedness and Response in Child Care training and plan.

Transportation

Child care centers providing transportation for children must meet all motor vehicle laws, including inspection, insurance, license, and restraint requirements. Children may never be left alone in a vehicle and child-staff ratio must be maintained.

Discipline and Behavior Management

Each program must have a written policy on discipline, must discuss it with parents, and must give parents a copy when the child is enrolled. Changes in discipline policy must be shared with parents in writing before going into effect. Corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, or other physical discipline) is prohibited in all centers. Religious-sponsored programs which notify the Division of Child Development and Early Education that corporal punishment is part of their religious training are exempt from that part of the law. The law and rules are developed to establish minimum requirements. Most parents would like more than minimum care. Child Care Resource and referral agencies can provide help in choosing quality care. For more information about choosing quality child care, parent resources and/or the in North Carolina law and rules, contact the Division of Child Development and Early Education at 919 814-6300 or 1-800-859- 0829; or visit our homepage at www.ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov

This summary shall be posted for the public to view in accordance with G.S. 110-102

Division of Child Development and Early Education

NC Department of Health and Human Services

333 Six Forks Road Raleigh, NC 27609

Child Care Commission

<https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Home/Child-CareCommission>

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