

Children's Services Program Operation Plan

2022-2023 Program Year

WNCSource Children's Services Program Plan for meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards, North Carolina Pre-K Program, North Carolina Child Care Rules, and other federal, state, and local regulations.

1 ELIGIBILITY RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT, AND ATTENDANCE

1.1 PURPOSE

The WNCSource Early Head Start/Head Start program serves Henderson, Transylvania, and Polk Counties in our traditional programs. WNCSource serves children in Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, and Rutherford counties through the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant. This plan outlines the system in place for monitoring eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment, and attendance of eligible enrollees. The Eligibility Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Coordinator is responsible for assuring that the procedures and regulations are being implemented program wide.

1.2 DETERMINING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, NEEDS, AND RESOURCES

The WNCSource service area includes Henderson, Transylvania, Rutherford, and Polk counties. Children and families are served at WNCSource operated centers located in **Hendersonville, Brevard, Rosman, Flat Rock, Fletcher and Mill Spring**. Families also have access to Early Head Start Childcare Partnership centers in **Hendersonville, Brevard, Rosman, and Ellenboro**.

WNCSource conducts a Community Assessment every five years and updates the assessment annually to reflect any changes in the communities served. The community assessment is used to determine community needs and strengths, and to ensure the program is designed to best meet those needs.

1.3 DETERMINING, VERIFYING, AND DOCUMENTING ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for Early Head Start or Head Start services, a child must be age eligible **and** the child's family must be categorically eligible or income eligible. To be eligible for Head Start services, a child must be at least three years old or turn three by August 31 (the date used to determine eligibility for public school in Henderson and Transylvania Counties beginning 2009). A child must be no older than the age required to attend school. To be eligible for Early Head Start services, a child is eligible from the age of birth until Head Start age. The ERSEA team may also enroll pregnant women who plan to continue services for the baby by enrolling her or him in a center or home-based slot in our traditional program.

A family can be eligible if the child is in foster care or the family is determined to be experiencing homelessness. We use the McKinney-Vento Act to determine homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act

defines homeless children and youth as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” To verify homelessness, WNCSource accepts a written statement from the homeless service provider, school personnel, or another service agency attesting the family is homeless, OR any other documentation that indicates homelessness, including a declaration or information gathered at enrollment or on the application. If a family is determined to be homeless, they are not required to provide other types of documentation at the time of the application. Families receiving Public Assistance (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and Supplemental Security Income only) are also eligible for services.

The other way to determine eligibility is if a family is income eligible. A family is income eligible if their gross yearly income falls below the federal poverty guidelines. Monthly child support will be counted as part of a family’s income if it is court ordered or received regularly, and documentation of child support payments must be provided with proof of income. Eligibility verification records will be collected in accordance with instructions in Head Start Performance Standards section 1302.12. If the family can demonstrate a significant change in income for the relevant time period, program staff may consider current income circumstances by utilizing the Drastic Change in Income Form. Actions will be taken against staff, families, and participants who attempt to provide or intentionally provide false information. This action may include termination of employment or termination of services.

When child custody is split between families, half of each parent’s income will be added together, using the sum as the total income. If a parent(s) is remarried, all income for biological families and stepfamilies will be counted and divided in half. The family size will be all family members in both households divided in half. If it is an odd number, the family size will be rounded up. If one parent is receiving child support from the other parent, the income of the parent receiving the child support will be used, with the child support included in the gross income amount. ***Refer to definition of family in Head Start Performance Standards 1305.2*

When a separation between families occurs after an application has been submitted, official documentation of the change must be submitted in order to update the application. If no documentation is available, the applicant must wait at least six months from the original application date to reapply.

At least ten percent of the total number of enrollment opportunities during an enrollment year must be made available to children with disabilities (IFSP or IEP). In the EHS-CCP, if the subsidy rate is 40% or below, priority will be given to children receiving subsidy per grant requirements.

Program staff conduct an in-person interview with each family that applies for services. If an in-person interview cannot be conducted, staff may conduct a telephone interview, documenting reasons why an in-person interview could not be completed.- One of the ERSEA staff verifies the family’s information and checks the eligibility and selection criteria for every applicant. Once the ERSEA staff member has approved the application, the applicant is placed on the waiting list. The waiting list ranks the applicant according to the program’s selection criteria. The Board of Directors is responsible for establishing procedures and criteria for recruitment, selection, and enrollment of children. Training on eligibility is conducted in accordance with Head Start Performance Standards section 1302.12 (m). Waiting lists are organized by county, noting the program option and/or center desired by the family. Applications need to be updated yearly for a child to remain on the waiting list. Routine, monthly audits of ChildPlus enrollment including: income verification, thoroughness and completion of data collection and entry are

performed based on 20% of enrollment records each month by the **Compliance & Family Services Manager and ERSEA Coordinator**.

When in receipt of a Temporary Parental Safety Agreement/Temporary Care Agreement, for eligibility purposes, income will be required for the person(s) who has been appointed the authorized caregiver or the legal responsible party. An “authorized caregiver” is a person who has the legal power to make health decisions and education decisions for the child.

1.4 RECRUITMENT OF CHILDREN

Prior to the beginning of the enrollment year, the goal of the WNCSource Early Head Start/Head Start program is to solicit applications from as many eligible families within the recruitment area as possible. The number of applications obtained prior to the beginning of the enrollment year must be greater than the enrollment slots available. Recruitment area determination is based on the findings of the program’s community assessment.

Methods of recruitment include canvassing the communities of low-income populations and the businesses they may frequent, distributing flyers throughout these communities, making personal contacts with community agencies and organizations, utilizing news releases and advertising, social media posts, collaborating with the local school systems, and using family referrals. Staff persons assist families in filling out the application forms in order to assure that all information needed for selection is complete.

1.5 SELECTION PROCESS & ENROLLMENT

The program options available in the Early Head Start program include: (1) a full-day full-year program of 1380 hours with Wrap Around services available to extend the hours in the day, (2) twelve-month home-based services with 46 visits and 22 group socializations per year, and (3) home-based and center options for pregnant women. Option (1) is available in both the traditional program and EHS-CCP, while options (2) and (3) are available only for the traditional program. Selection of children and pregnant women for all Early Head Start slots is ongoing since EHS is a twelve-month program.

Program options available for Head Start (ages 3-5) include home-based services (with 32 visits per year and 16 group socializations) and a variety of center options including Head Start, Wrap Around, and NC Pre-K. Children are awarded points based on selection criteria. Waiting lists are maintained and vacancies are filled from children with the highest points. If a child with the highest points cannot attend the center with the opening, the child will remain on the waiting list for another opening.

Selection for the Head Start/NC Pre-K center-based program slots for the next program year take place by using tiered enrollment. Phase 1 of tiered enrollment begins as early as February of the current program year. A team consisting of the Family Services Coordinator, Developmental Specialist, Behavior Interventionists, Coaches, Area Managers, Health Coordinator, Children’s Services Director, **ERSEA Coordinator, Compliance & Family Services Manager**, Enrollment Specialists, and **Family Advocates** meet to discuss best placement for children who will be returning next program year. Phase 2 of tiered enrollment takes place in April and May and continues throughout the summer. Families with the highest points will be selected for the available slots. The Tiered Enrollment team will meet to discuss best placement for new children and the slots will be offered to the families. The families will be asked

to attend an enrollment fair to complete all necessary paperwork. The enrollment process will continue throughout the summer as all slots are filled.

Selection of enrollees then continues for the current school year from August until 30 days prior to the end of the school year whenever slot vacancies occur. Selection of enrollees for the twelve-month Early Head Start program occurs as vacancies become available. Selection for NC Pre-K slots follows NC Pre-K timelines. Families selected for enrollment are contacted by phone, email, by a letter, or in person.

If a child is selected and enrolled in Early Head Start, that child is eligible to remain in EHS until he or she is Head Start age. Children will be enrolled up to age two and a half to allow sufficient time to complete a six-month transition plan. ~~In Polk County, children will be enrolled as long as they are two by August 31 of the current program year.~~

For center-based programs, Family Advocates will meet with families as slots become vacant or when enrolling for next program year. For the home-based program, Parent Educators will meet with families ~~to complete the enrollment paperwork~~ when slots become open or for the next program year.

If a child is selected and enrolled in Head Start, he or she will remain eligible through the end of the succeeding program year. If a child requires a third year in Head Start due to age or special needs, eligibility for Head Start, including income, must be re-verified.

Transition planning for children nearing the end of participation with Early Head Start will begin at least six months prior to the child's third birthday. At this time, a Head Start application and eligibility documentation must be submitted to determine eligibility for Head Start for all children. Eligible children will be transitioned into a Head Start slot as soon as one becomes available after their third birthday. ~~Children will remain in the Early Head Start program until the week of their third birthday. At that time, if there is no opening in the Head Start program, he/she will be moved to the Head Start Waiting List until an opening becomes available. Since WNCSource operates traditional Early Head Start and Head Start under the same grant number, Early Head Start children may remain in an Early Head Start setting until there is an opening in Head Start as state licensing requirements allow. If there is no opening in the Head Start Program during the program year the when the child turns 3, he or she will be moved to the Head Start Waiting List until an opening becomes available. he/she may remain in Early Head Start until starting Head Start until placement is resolved.~~

In 04HP0011 (EHS-CCP), transition planning for children located in child care sites will begin six months prior to the child's third birthday. A Head Start application and eligibility documentation must be submitted to determine eligibility for Head Start. ~~EHS-CCP children may remain in the program for up to four months after his/her third birthday, only if there are identified disabilities. Children in Child Care Homes may remain in the program until their fourth birthday. If there is no opening in the Head Start Program when the child turns 3, he/she will be moved to the Head Start Waiting List until an opening becomes available. CCP children will be transitioned out of Early Head Start within four months of his/her third birthday, based on the needs of children on the waiting list and state licensing requirements. Children may be able to remain in their EHS-CCP classroom for several months after their third birthday if there are no eligible children on the waitlist and state licensing requirements allows.~~

For 04HP0011 (EHS-CCP) children located within WNCSource sites, transition planning will begin six months prior to the child's third birthday. A Head Start application and eligibility documentation must be submitted to determine eligibility for Head Start. ~~CCP children will be transitioned out of Early Head~~

~~Start within four months of his/her third birthday, based on the needs of children on the waiting list and state licensing requirements. Children may be able to remain in their EHS-CCP classroom for several months after their third birthday if there are no eligible children on the waitlist and state licensing requirements allows.~~

At least ten percent of the available slots in each program for children must be filled by children with disabilities.

Slot vacancies must be filled within thirty days. A waiting list is maintained, ranking applicants according to the program's selection criteria. The selection criteria prioritization points worksheet is developed by staff and Policy Council, reviewed annually by Policy Council, and presented to the Board of Directors for approval.

All applications for enrolled children and pregnant women, including income documentation and selection criteria points, are maintained in ChildPlus.

Children or relatives of staff members will be treated the same as other families applying for Early Head Start/Head Start services. Staff children will not be placed at the same site location as their parent, grandparent, or other close relative unless exceptional situations exist where avoidance of preferential treatment can be guaranteed.

If a child is enrolled in one county and relocates to another county within WNCSource's service area, that child will be given priority when a vacant slot opens.

Teen Parent is defined as either parent being age 19 or younger.

When in receipt of a Temporary Parental Safety Agreement/Temporary Care Agreement after a child has been enrolled, the agreement must include an expiration date and be issued by an official source, such as DSS.

1.6 ATTENDANCE

Procedures are in place to monitor the monthly average daily attendance in the Early Head Start/Head Start programs. If the monthly average daily attendance falls below 85 percent, the program must analyze the causes of absenteeism. A policy is established and administered for both addressing absences in the center and home-based options that are not a result of illness or other well-documented reasons, and for addressing chronic absenteeism. If the absences result from other factors, including temporary family problems that affect a child's regular attendance, staff will initiate appropriate family support procedures.

Families are asked to notify the center staff when their child will 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 attempted contacts with the family regarding absences. If a child continues to be absent without explanation (such as two consecutive days), staff will conduct an emergency home visit or make other direct contact with the family.

If a child misses 50% or more of the operating days for two consecutive months, without a medical or pre-approved reason for absence, the child may be dropped from the program. An individual decision will be made by the **Center staff, Family Services Coordinator, Family Advocate/Parent Educator and the**

Compliance & Family Services Manager based on the family's circumstances and attempts to improve attendance. ****Refer to WNCSource's Attendance Policy**

In the case that a family is visiting their native country, the spot may be held for up to 30 days. A written statement must be received before the family leaves stating their expected return date. If the family does not return within 30 days, the child may be dropped from enrollment.

In the case a child is out due to a medical reason, the child's teacher will be required to do a weekly home visit, providing educational materials to the family, until the child is released from the physician to return.

When child custody is split between families, attendance expectations will be shared with the parent enrolling the child. However, WNCSource will educate both families on the benefits of regular attendance. In dual custody families, income will be averaged between the two families, and family size will be determined by the largest family.

Should the family terminate services and want to re-enroll a child, the family will be required to go through the enrollment process again to determine eligibility.

For children enrolled in EHS-CCP, limited childcare is available for children with no vouchers. Childcare for children with no vouchers will include a six-hour day. For children enrolled in EHS-CCP that have a full-time voucher, ten-hour days will be available. Hours for EHS-CCP will be available to children during the primary educational part of the day, including two meals.

Ongoing Monitoring Duties Assigned:

- Family Advocates and Parent Educators will monitor weekly/monthly attendance using ChildPlus report 2305.
- Any attendance issues must be reported to the Family Services Coordinator and Compliance & Family Services Manager as they occur.
- Ongoing review and updates of center and home base waiting lists for all counties.
- Maintain an ongoing drop sheet. The drop sheet is reviewed daily to ensure slots are filled within 30 days.
- Complete the attendance and enrollment summary for the month.

1.7 SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

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 Coordinator, Coaches, Behavior Interventionists, 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. *See WNCSource Challenging and Extreme Behaviors policy for specific steps taken to avoid suspension and expulsion in children with challenging behaviors.

1.8 FEES

There are no fees for Early Head Start/Head Start services.

For WNCSource sites, WNCSource may only accept a fee from families of enrolled children for services that are in addition to services provided by Early Head Start/Head Start, such as childcare before or after Early Head Start/Head Start hours (Wrap Around hours). This fee will be determined by the North Carolina Child Care Market Rate, determined by DCDEE.

2 PROGRAM STRUCTURE

2.1 DETERMINING PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Our community assessment and self-assessments year after year remind us of the importance of continuing with both center-based and home-based services for both Early Head Start and Head Start eligible children and families in our community. Some of our center-based classrooms do function independently and are considered to be a “stand-alone” site.

Center-based programming is important for our families who need to work while Home-based programming is important for families who choose to keep their child at home for various reasons including but not limited to culture and not having access to transportation.

The program calendar is created following each year’s self-assessment process to ensure that we are meeting the needs determined in the self-assessment process and designating slots appropriately for the needs of our community. Our program calendar is aligned with the local education agency’s school calendar as much as possible and includes intentional thought as to how we will meet our goals surrounding school readiness. We will continue to provide 6 ½ hour days for our center-based students. Offer at our centers (not Stand-alones) the option of “wrap-around” care which is paid for by the family or through child care vouchers from the county to increase the hours of care for families who need extended hours for their work.

No matter which program a child is enrolled in, they will receive the same quality services of education, screenings, health services, family engagement, support for disability concerns, and transition support.

2.2 CENTER-BASED OPTION

Our Early Head Start classrooms, serving children birth to three-years-old, maintain a ratio of 2 adults with 8 children where each teacher is assigned primary caregiving responsibilities to 4 of the children. Program calendars include a minimum of 1,380 hours of planned class operations for all enrolled Early Head Start children.

Our Head Start classrooms, serving children primarily three and four-year olds, maintain a ratio of 2 adults with no more than 17 children. Classrooms that serve children primarily four and five years old, maintain a ratio of 2 adults with no more than 18 children. Program calendars a minimum of 1,020 hours of planned class operations for all enrolled Head Start children from August through June.

Each classroom is licensed by North Carolina Child Care which includes requirements that align with Head Start including square footage requirements.

2.3 HOME-BASED OPTION

Children enrolled in the home-based option receive weekly home visits for 1 ½ hours with the availability to attend bi-monthly socializations. Home visits primarily are conducted in the family's home. On occasion, the family requests that the visit occur in other community locations such as the park or library. Each Parent Educator will maintain a case-load of 10 to 12 families and will visit Early Head Start families 46 times throughout the year and Head Start 32 times. To every extent possible home visits and socializations are rescheduled so the family receives the greatest benefit of the program.

The program calendar is created before the start of the program year and includes information for the families about scheduled socializations as well as weeks when they can expect to not receive a visit from the Parent Educator.

3 EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SERVICES

3.1 PURPOSE

WNCSource Head Start/Early Head Start program will provide high-quality early education and child development services, including for children with disabilities that promote children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth for later success in school. The following plan outlines how we will provide responsive environments, implement research-based curricula, utilize child screenings and assessments, and encourage parent and family engagement in education and child development services. This plan also covers education in our home-based program.

3.2 TEACHING AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

WNCSource centers will provide responsive care, effective teaching, and an organized learning environment that promotes healthy development and growth aligned with *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*. Both curriculum and professional development will emphasize effective teaching practices that focus on nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments that foster trust and emotional security; are communication and language rich; promote critical thinking and problem-solving; social, emotional, behavioral, and language development; provide supportive feedback for learning; motivate continued effort; and support all children's engagement in learning experiences and activities. Teachers will follow the guidance from the curriculum resources to organize the daily schedule, plan lessons, and implement high-quality learning experiences that are responsive to individual needs and patterns of development. Child assessment data will be used to determine individual needs and to inform both individual and group planning. Developmentally appropriate learning experiences will include language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts, and physical development.

WNCSource recognizes that bilingualism and biliteracy are strengths. Teachers will follow guidance from the curriculum and from Head Start resources such as the Planned Language Approach to support dual language learners. *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos* is available in both English and Spanish and the foundation volumes include guidance for supporting home language development and introducing English. Culturally-appropriate songs, stories, and activities written especially for Spanish-speaking children are included as part of the curriculum. *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*

is also available in both English and Spanish and includes guidance for supporting English language acquisition while maintaining the home language. It also includes culturally-appropriate songs, stories, and activities for Spanish-speaking children and guidance on supporting the home language development.

WNCSource teachers implement well-organized learning environments following the guidance of the curriculum for appropriate schedules, lesson plans, and indoor and outdoor learning experiences. Infant and toddler classrooms promote responsive care that is centered on routines and includes both individualized and small group experiences. Preschool classrooms include both teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, active and quiet activities, and opportunities for individual, small group, and large group learning. The curriculum offers guidance and resources such as *Teaching Guides* and *Daily Resources* to support this.

WNCSource centers promote learning through approaches to rest, meals, and physical activity. Teachers accommodate children's needs for nap or rest and will provide a regular time for daily rest for preschool children. Alternate activities are provided for children who do not need a nap or rest. Snack and mealtimes support development and learning through staff-child interaction and children's socialization. Infants are held when being bottle-fed and this time will be utilized for relationship building and communication. The curriculum for both Early Head Start and Head Start includes recipes and ideas to promote children's exploration and tasting of new foods. Staff are encouraged to sit and eat with children, allow sufficient time for eating, and to encourage but not force children to eat or finish their food. Other routines, such as hand-washing, diapering, and transitions between activities are also considered learning and development times. Transition times are planned and organized and teachers use cues or familiar signals to let children know that it is time to transition from one experience to another. The curriculum includes songs, rhymes, and chants to engage children during these transitions. Intentional movement and physical activity is integrated throughout curricular activities and routines and opportunities are provided to practice both gross motor and fine motor skills as well as self-help skills. The curriculum provides resources such as Intentional Teaching Experiences and Mighty Minutes that offer specific experiences to promote physical development.

3.3 CURRICULA

WNCSource will implement *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos* in our Early Head Start classrooms and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* in our Head Start classrooms. Each component of these curricula is based on scientifically valid research. There are guides which offer support to implementation as well as *Coaching to Fidelity* resources for assessing and improving implementation. Professional development is available both by online resources as well as face to face. Every classroom will have access to the curriculum materials. Both curricula revolve around 38 objectives for development and learning which are aligned with the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* as well as with NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development. There is an organized, developmental scope and sequence that includes plans and materials for learning experiences based on progressions for development and learning. Staff are supported to effectively implement curricula through supervision, observation, feedback, training, and professional development.

WNCSource supplements the Creative Curriculum by utilizing a mindfulness-based approach for intentional instruction of social emotional learning. Early Head Start uses Baby Doll Circle Time to form

one-on-one connections and promote secure attachments. Head Start uses The Kindness Curriculum to promote positive conflict resolution, acts of kindness, and identification and management of emotions in healthy ways.

3.4 CHILD SCREENINGS AND ASSESSMENTS

WNCSource asks families to sign a consent at enrollment for us to conduct screening and developmental assessments. WNCSource uses *The Ages & Stages Questionnaires, Third Edition (ASQ-3)* and *The Ages & Stages Questionnaires Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ-SE2)* which are standardized screening tools. Screening forms will be given to families within a week of enrollment with an explanation of the purpose of the screening. Materials will be offered if the family needs materials to try out the activities on the screening tools. The parent will complete the screening and will return it to the teacher who will then score it and will communicate back with the family regarding the results. If families fail to complete the screening, then the teacher will complete the screening after 40 days in order to meet the required 45-day deadline.

If screenings indicate below-age or if communication by physicians, families, or teachers indicate concerns, then with the family's consent a referral for further evaluation is made. WNCSource staff support the child and family through the evaluation process and if the child is determined to be eligible for services under IDEA, staff will partner with families and the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to assure that services are being delivered as needed. If after formal evaluation the child is not deemed eligible for early intervention or special education and related services, then staff will partner with families to seek other options from outside agencies to determine if the child could be served using the family's insurance for private therapy or Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services. WNCSource will also work with therapists to provide support items such as weighted materials, compression shirts, or communication supports as needed.

Our classroom teachers use ongoing, authentic, observation-based assessment to follow children's progress, guide planning and instruction, and communicate with others. This involves a four-step assessment process of 1) observing and collecting facts; 2) analyzing and responding; 3) evaluating; and 4) summarizing, planning, and communicating.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is used to evaluate each child's developmental level and progress which is grounded in 38 research-based objectives that align with the *Head Start Early Learning Child Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and are the same objectives as focused on by the curriculum. This system allows teachers to use outcomes information to inform individual and group planning and checkpoints will be conducted four times per year for Early Head Start children and three times per year for Head Start children. Teachers will also make ongoing decisions based on informal observations, family communication, and preliminary information that occurs between checkpoints. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* includes reports that offer recommended activities to support developmentally appropriate teaching practices and individualized learning. If assessment information indicates a lack of growth or a concern in development over time, then a referral will be made for further evaluation even if an earlier screening did not indicate a concern.

Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment has been proven to be valid and reliable with infants, toddlers, twos, and preschoolers from diverse cultures, linguistic backgrounds, program settings, and ability levels. Improved child outcomes have been observed when teachers use the tool with fidelity. Teachers are considered reliable assessors once they have completed the Inter-rater Reliability certification,

available to all GOLD users. *GOLD* is available in both English and Spanish and the Spanish language and literacy objectives were especially written to reflect the unique progressions of Spanish language and literacy development and learning. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* guidance supports caregivers to assess both the child's progress in their home language and in English language acquisition. *GOLD* includes two English language acquisition objectives measuring children's receptive and expressive language skills if the home language is not English. *GOLD* can be used to support dual-language learners in any language because many of the objectives are not language dependent.

The Milestones by School Readiness Domain is used for ongoing assessment by our Home-Based program. Completion of the milestones form is informed by observations of the child and discussion with family members during each personal visit. This information then is used to assist Parent Educators with planning visits that will best support the child and family as they track children's progress over time. The Milestones by School Readiness Domain is part of the Parents as Teachers program used by our home-based program. It aligns with the five central domains in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework*.

WNCSource will use screening and assessment data only for the purpose of supporting children's growth and development, providing training and assistance, setting program goals, and working toward continuous improvement. Neither will be used to exclude children from enrollment or participation or for rewards or sanctions for children or staff.

3.5 PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

WNCSource recognizes parent's roles as children's lifelong educators and will encourage families to engage in their child's education. WNCSource centers will be open to families during all operating hours and teachers will regularly communicate with families about their child's routines, activities, and behavior. WNCSource teachers will hold at least two parent conferences per program year and will use this as an opportunity to share children's developmental progress and activities in the program. These conferences will occur following assessment checkpoints. Families will be offered information about the curriculum and instructional materials and will be given opportunities to provide feedback. WNCSource will also provide opportunities for families to volunteer in the classroom and to participate in center events. *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, & Twos* and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* supports family engagement. Both curricula include guidance on partnering with families, recommends and provides *Learning Games* and Letters to Families, and offers opportunities for families to participate in the classroom. WNCSource staff will share both screening and assessment results with families and will offer suggestions for ways that families can support learning at home.

Resources include a collection of ASQ learning games that go along with the screening tool. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* also has a resource library of Development and Learning activities and other curriculum resources that can be shared with families to offer them support and resources to implement learning at home. The Family Tab on MyTeachingStrategies is used as a communication platform for families and families are invited to share their interactions and observations at home with teachers. In addition, WNCSource invites families to participate in the research-based parenting curriculum *ReadyRosie* which is a learning website and add that provides families with meaningful activities that they can do at home to support language/literacy, mathematical thinking, social/emotional development, and healthy routines. This includes 2-minute videos that model the activity as well as videos of experts in the field of child development that address issues that families may have questions about.

Teachers will also conduct at least two home visits per program year. The first home visit will be used to get to know the family, to invite the family to engage in the child's learning and development, and to share information about the classroom. The other home visit will be used to communicate developmental progress and any other applicable communication that needs to take place.

3.6 EDUCATION IN HOME-BASED PROGRAMS

WNCSource provides a home-based program that includes home visits and group socialization activities that promote secure parent-child relationships and help families provide high-quality early learning experiences in language, literacy, and mathematics, social and emotional functioning, approaches to learning, science, physical skills, and creative arts. Home visits are planned jointly by the Parent Educator and families and will reflect the critical role of families in the early learning and development of their children. Families are asked to complete a Home Visit Parent Agreement form stating that they will share an active role and be present during the home visit rather than relying on babysitters or other temporary caregivers during the scheduled visit. WNCSource utilizes bilingual staff for effective communication with families. Home visits are planned using information from on-going assessment as well as observation by families to individualize learning experiences and are scheduled with sufficient time to ensure education, health, family and community engagement, disability services and transition services can all be addressed.

WNCSource will ensure that home visits focus on promoting high-quality early learning experiences in the home and growth towards the goals described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*. The home-based program will use Parents as Teachers Foundational Curriculum: Prenatal to 3 for Early Head Start enrollees and Parents as Teachers Foundational Curriculum 2: Three Years through Kindergarten for Head Start enrollees. This curriculum promotes a variety of research-based home visiting practices for building positive and responsive relationships with families and encourages parent educators to adopt a strength-based perspective to point out what families are doing well in relation to identified "protective factors". It also includes research-based parenting practices to support children's development and learning in social-emotional development, problem-solving skills, emerging mathematical thinking, physical development, and language and literacy development. The curriculum includes Activity Pages with suggested learning experiences and identifies specific skills, behaviors, and concepts that the experience promotes. These are part of each visit in addition to other resources. Handouts follow a sequence of learning experiences that support children's development at different ages. The curriculum provides guidance on how to collaborate with families to plan or adapt learning experiences based on families' traditions, cultures, values, and beliefs as well as how to support families in using their home language in addition to providing experiences to expose children to English. Family development and well-being is embedded in Parents as Teachers including engaging families in setting goals, tracking progress, and referring families to community resources.

WNCSource will ensure group socialization opportunities and these will be planned jointly with families and conducted with both child and parent participation. Curriculum guidance and resources will be used to provide age appropriate activities for participating children assuring that experiences are aligned to the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*. Families will be encouraged to share their experiences related to their child's development with other families in order to strengthen parent-child relationships and to help promote parent's understanding of child development. WNCSource will also provide opportunities for families to participate in activities that support parenting

skill development or family partnership goals. This will include times of bringing in a speaker to address topics of interest to families. Peer interaction will be encouraged with a focus on promoting children's social, emotional, and language development and progress toward school readiness goals while encouraging families to observe and actively participate in activities as well.

4 HEALTH PROGRAM SERVICES

4.1 PURPOSE

Health program services are provided in conjunction with various staff and consultants to ensure that we are providing high-quality health, oral health, mental health, and nutrition services that support each child's growth and school readiness. To ensure that our services are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate, we organize a Health Services Advisory Committee that meets **quarterly** to collaborate on best practice and ensure we are doing the most we can with our community to support our children and families.

4.2 COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

Transparent communication and collaboration regarding health and nutrition begins during enrollment and carries on throughout all health program services. The process begins with staff asking families information to determine the child's pediatrician and dentist. During enrollment, WNCSource staff inform families of the various health services that are required to be carried out and elicit consent for WNCSource to conduct these screenings (evidence-based vision, hearing, and dental screenings.) All forms given during enrollment are provided in both English and Spanish as needed.

If a parent refuses to give authorization for health services, WNCSource obtains written documentation for record purposes. In cases where concerns around child health and/or nutrition are raised by a parent, staff member, or medical provider, a referral can be made to our registered dietician or nurse contractor. If families deny the participation of their child in any of these services, the Health team notes this in ChildPlus along with referral information.

WNCSource staff involved in enrollment also notify families of all policies for health emergencies that require an immediate response or medical attention. Head Start complies with the Emergency Medical Care procedures required by North Carolina child daycare licensed centers. Each center is required to post the Emergency Medical Care plan, and Evacuation plan in a visible location.

4.3 CHILD HEALTH STATUS AND CARE

All children enrolled in our programs are required to have a current physical (dated within 1 year of enrollment) and immunization record on file within 30 days of their start in the program. If a child does not have a source of ongoing care and/or health insurance, the Health team works with the child's Family Advocate or Parent Educator to assist the family in finding a source of ongoing care and/or health insurance. The health team maintains an up to date list of accessible local health service providers, including pediatricians, health departments, health centers and pediatric dentists.

As a part of receiving the child's physical and immunization record, the health team determines whether or not the child is up-to-date on the recommendations of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis,

and Treatment (EPSDT) to establish a health maintenance baseline. The Health team works with the child's Family Advocate or Parent Educator to assist the family in bringing the child up-to-date as quickly as possible.

Within 45 days of each child's start of the program, evidence-based vision and hearing screenings are performed by the Health team on all children in classrooms, Homebased socializations, and in the child's home. To ensure the screenings are evidence-based, the Welch Allyn Spot Vision Screener and Otoacoustic Emissions test are used systematically on all children. The Health team monitors the completion as well as any follow-up or referrals that occur based on these screenings.

At enrollment, families complete a nutrition intake form which details their child's health history and current health conditions. Families use this form to also communicate any food preferences or weight/eating concerns their child has. Before a child's entry into the program any special dietary requirements and/or food allergies are addressed with the cook that prepares the meals, our nutrition consultant (if necessary) and the child's primary caregiver in our program (Teacher, Parent Educator).

The Health team conducts weekly and monthly monitoring of child health files to monitor whether or not the child is up-to-date on a schedule of age appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care services, and then support the family in getting these services.

Throughout the year should there be a concern raised by our staff or the family regarding the child's medical, oral, or mental health concerns, the staff member uses the Early Alert Procedures to alert the appropriate staff to the concerns so they can be followed-up with by the Health Team.

At enrollment, families sign a Permission to Administer Fluoridated Toothpaste Form to give consent for the use of fluoridated toothpaste in the classroom. The Health team supplies all classrooms with age appropriate toothbrushes and fluoride toothpaste. Tooth brushing is monitored by teacher's supervisors and spot checks by the Health team. We also partner with a mobile dental office to screen our children and provide services at some of our locations throughout the year.

To ensure follow-up care is present, all blood pressure, lead, hemoglobin, vision and hearing results are recorded into ChildPlus and monitored through reports generated by the Health Team. If abnormal results are indicated, additional information is requested through the child's health care provider and the family. The Health team also tracks and monitors all referrals in ChildPlus through pulling monthly reports. If needed, WNCSource will ask the family to sign a new consent form to request any new information from the provider administering follow-up care. When follow up is needed on referrals, the Health team, Parent Educators, and Family Advocates will contact families. WNCSource staff also work on a regular basis with families and local community agencies to facilitate obtaining any prescribed medications or equipment needed for the medical or oral health conditions of any child.

The Health Team tracks each child's medical insurance information. All children with limited or no access to health insurance are flagged and noted in ChildPlus. When assisting families in providing medical resources, this is considered and appropriate referrals and steps are taken based on this information. Family Advocates, Parent Educators and the Health team collaborate with local agencies to obtain the necessary health services for the family. If no other funding resources are available to the family, WNCSource will use program funds for the necessary medical or oral health services.

4.4 ORAL HEALTH PRACTICES

WNCSource promotes effective oral health hygiene and education by requiring all teachers to model and assist in children brushing their teeth at least once a day in the classroom. Teachers are trained upon hire about the importance of children brushing their teeth during the day and how to facilitate this process daily with the children. Children are required to brush their teeth at least once a day at the center with the assistance and supervision of teachers. If a parent chooses to not have their child use a fluoridated toothpaste, a waiver is kept on file and the child brushes their teeth with water.

Entering the 2022-2023 program year, we continue to not brush children's teeth in the classrooms due to guidance received around the COVID Pandemic. We will bring toothbrushing back as soon as guidance supports that decision. In the meantime, our classrooms are modeling healthy behaviors by brushing the teeth of their dolls and toothbrush dragons in the classrooms.

4.5 CHILD NUTRITION

We ensure that each child in the program receives two thirds of their daily nutritional needs through breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack. Upon arrival all children are offered breakfast. All classrooms have access to snacks to use at any point a child is hungry. Children are encouraged to drink water throughout the day and it is readily available to them at all times. Teachers take small coolers of water to the playground as well.

The Health Team requests any allergy, intolerance and medical action plans for children needing accommodations. These accommodations are identified through interactions with the families, teachers, and medical information as noted in each child's current physical and medical file. Nutrition services provided by Early Head Start and the Head Start program follow the guidelines set in place by state and local agencies, licensing agencies, and Early Head Start/Head Start. Staff, including teachers and cooks, prepare food as needed to accommodate each child. To assure that menus are culturally and developmentally appropriate, WNCSource updates the menu on a regular basis with the assistance of a licensed dietician and nutritionist.

WNCSource receives reimbursement from the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for all nutritious meals and snacks given to children. We ensure that each child in the program receives two thirds of their daily nutritional needs through breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack.

We serve children ages three to five meals and snacks that adhere to USDA requirements. Breakfast consists of milk (mandatory), meat or meat alternative, fruit/vegetable (mandatory) and a bread or bread alternative (mandatory). The lunch we provide includes 1 serving size of milk (mandatory), meat/meat alternative (mandatory), fruit and vegetable (mandatory) and bread/bread alternative.

WNCSource follows USDA requirements in feeding infants and toddlers by ensuring they are fed on demand. Teachers are allowed to provide food in between meals. All bottle-fed infants are not laid down to sleep with a bottle and our teachers are required to hold infants during feeding. If a classroom needs additional support in caring for infants, floater teachers are available to step in, as well as center managers.

To promote breastfeeding, all centers have the proper storage for breast milk with a refrigerator in the classroom. WIC posters displayed in centers also encourage breastfeeding as a healthy practice. The physical environment in Early Head start classrooms facilitates breastfeeding, specifically the large and

comfortable rocking chairs that are present. At infant home visits, our Registered Nurse will ask about infants feeding and encourage breastfeeding. If a mother expresses that she needs assistance with breastfeeding, we can reach out to WIC for services.

CACFP funding is used to cover a large portion of food expenditures across all programs. We apply yearly for CACFP funds and maintain CACFP standards throughout the year such as providing healthy meals and snacks as directed by the USDA and regular monitoring visits to sites to make sure standards and regulations are being met.

4.6 CHILD MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

WNCSource provides mental health services to our enrolled children, their families, staff, and enrolled pregnant women by promoting wellness, recognizing and coordinating the treatment of current mental health challenges, and preventing future mental health related challenges.

We seek to create a wellness culture that promotes children's mental health and social - emotional well-being. To this end, our teachers and site administrators are trained in using the Creative Curriculum with fidelity and implementing additional social-emotional supports from Conscious Discipline, the Kindness Curriculum, and the Pyramid Model.

WNCSource is committed to the mental health and well-being of our staff knowing that many of them are experiencing second hand trauma from the children we work with. To support the well-being of our staff, Human Resources provides an employee assistance program to all of our staff so they have the opportunity to talk with a professional confidentially that can provide support for personal stressors. We also provide an On-site Clinic for our employees to treat minor illnesses that is free of charge. WNCSource encourages all of our staff to participate in an online community wellness program to encourage healthy lifestyles.

When any staff member or family member raises a concern about the mental / behavioral health of a child in our program, the staff member will make an in-house referral for further evaluation using the Early Alert Procedures. We use an interdisciplinary approach to find the best support in meeting the child's needs.

WNCSource recognizes that we serve children who have experienced trauma and that these children's needs are different from the rest of the population. Our staff are devoted to continually learning about trauma informed caregiving and using new knowledge to inform decisions regarding our programming. All WNCSource programming decisions take into close consideration the unique needs in relationships and classrooms impacted by trauma.

We provide group and individualized training to our staff to ensure that staff have the skills to safely respond to children who have experienced trauma and are exhibiting extreme behaviors.

We have secured mental health consultants (MHC) to work directly with our staff and families in supporting all children and specifically those with challenging behaviors and other social, emotional and mental health concerns. Our MHCs provide direct support to the enrolled children, their families, and their caregivers/teachers. The services provided involve promotion, prevention, and intervention activities such as classroom observations, participation in school-wide events (such as open house), leading teacher and family trainings, participating in team meetings, crisis intervention support, team

creation of behavior intervention plans, support implementation of behavior intervention plans, and assist WNCSource in linking children and families to community mental health services.

4.7 FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES FOR HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Through ongoing interactions with teachers, Family Advocates, Parent Educators and the Health Team, families are encouraged to make appointments to stay up to date on EPTSD standards for their child. Parent Educators and Family Advocates serve as advocates for families and support them in making appointments, providing transportation and interpreting services. If families need a new medical or dental provider, an extensive medical contact is provided.

During enrollment, WNCSource provides information on safe sleep, shaken baby policy and our tobacco free policy for all of our centers. We make sure that families have the opportunity to ask questions and feel well informed and included in understanding all best practices. Per the Family Service Curriculum, Family Advocates are required to cover at least three components from topics such as safety, and nutrition and emotional wellbeing at either home visits or a parent meeting. These topics include gun safety, birth control, family planning, healthy eating, and physical activity.

WNCSource staff also support families during enrollment through creating a space to discuss their child's eating patterns, habits, or any concerns they may have with their child's weight. In cases where the family has concerns and requests additional support, WNCSource submits a referral to a partnering community Nutritionist. In our home-based program, the curriculum covers topics on healthy eating habits and physical activity. To provide further opportunities for nutritional counseling and education, WNCSource partners with WIC and holds WIC satellite dates at different centers where families can sign up for WIC services.

All pregnant mothers with children enrolled in our programs receive home visits. During this time, Parent Educators discuss the importance of breastfeeding, health pregnancy, postpartum care and perinatal depression. All of these topics are part of the pregnant mother curriculum that we implement.

WNCSource incorporates vehicle and pedestrian safety education for families into their parent meetings with Family Advocates. The Health Department hosts a car seat class in these meetings as well. The Family Service Curriculum includes a whole section on vehicle and pedestrian safety to ensure this topic is discussed with families.

Conversations to help families better understand how to navigate health systems and services occur during enrollment. All families are asked to provide what insurance they have in order to determine which families need to be linked to resources. WNCSource provides families that do not have access to health insurance with local resources that meet their needs, including the Health Department and Blue Ridge Community Health. The Health team tracks all referrals in ChildPlus and are responsible for explaining any results of diagnostic and treatment plans with families. We familiarize families with the health services and ongoing care their children will receive through explaining to them during enrollment how they are conducted and their purpose. Families sign a consent form if they understand and agree to these services being carried out.

4.8 SAFETY PRACTICES

All facilities where children are served adhere to Head Start Performance Standards, NC Child Care Rules for licensing, and guidance from our licensing consultants. The Facilities and Safety Director works collaboratively with **Site Supervisors** to monitor that all components of WNCSource's safety procedures are being followed and implemented in entirety. The Facilities Team monitors all sites for safety and hazard compliance. We safeguard the safety of all children in the classroom by requiring that all equipment and materials used in the classroom meet the standards set by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

All staff follow the guidelines for disinfection and sanitation in place by Child Care Licensing and Sanitation regulations. Before any staff member can start orientation or new hire training, they must have completed and passed a background check. In addition, all staff with regular child contact are required to complete training on health, safety and child care requirements within 6 weeks of their start date.

WNCSource requires all staff to follow various safety practices during all times in the classroom. If cases of known child abuse and neglected are suspected, staff must report immediately following our Mandatory Reporting Guidance. All teachers and staff in the classrooms must practice appropriate supervision as per our Supervision Policy & Procedures, including releasing a child only to the authorized adult.

All programs follow administrative safety procedures in every center. Head Start complies with the Emergency Medical Care procedures required by North Carolina Child Care licensed centers. Each center is required to post the Emergency Medical Care Plan in a visible location that is also easily accessible to staff and families. This form contains the location of where emergency information on all children is kept, and the location of the staff and volunteer emergency information.

Also found on this form is the number for poison control and the staff responsibilities in dealing with a medical emergency. In immediate follow up to staff calling for emergency medical assistance, the **Site Supervisor** is contacted. The **Site Supervisor** oversees determining the appropriate care needed, contacting medical assistance and assessing transportation needs. To ensure the plan is complying and up-to-date, it is reviewed at least 4 times a year at a staff meeting.

All of our program locations are required to post an evacuation plan. Each classroom is required to have a file for every child, which contains relevant health information and an emergency contact. All allergies are required to be posted in kitchens, and areas in the classroom where eating takes place. Classrooms are supplied with first-aid and blood borne pathogen kits. The emergency kit contains supplies for severe bleeding, CPR and poisoning along with prompts for CPR and Poison control. WNCSource requires all staff that work directly with children to maintain a pediatric first-aid and CPR certification.

In the event of a fire drill or other short-term evacuation, the teacher should immediately take roll in an outside area by calling the children's names from a class roster. All children, whether present or absent from class for any reason, must be accounted for on that list. Each center has updated Materials Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) information to assist in the event of an accident involving chemicals. The MSDS sheet does not take the place of notifying poison control if needed.

Each site has an individualized COVID plan and all sites adhere to the DCDEE COVID toolkit.

5 FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM SERVICES

WNCSource Early Head Start/Head Start program serves Henderson, Transylvania, and Polk Counties in our traditional programs. WNCSource serves children in Henderson, Transylvania, Polk, and Rutherford counties through the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership (EHS-CCP) grant. This plan outlines parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development.

While all Early Head Start and Head Start staff are responsible for engaging families, guardians, and primary caregivers in activities and experiences in center-based and home-based programs, the Early Childhood Family Services Coordinator is responsible for the implementation of this program plan in all counties served.

5.1 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

WNCSource recognizes families, guardians, and primary caregivers as the first and primary teacher and nurturer of their child.

Engaging activities and experiences are provided for families, guardians, and primary caregivers of children in center-based and home-based programs in the Early Head Start, Head Start, and Childcare Partnership programs. Family engagement services will be conducted in the family's preferred language or through an interpreter.

The goal is to empower families by providing them with helpful information, tools, and experiences that will:

- Increase their understanding of financial security, safety, and healthier lives
- Promote the development of warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development
- Help families be prepared for school
- Structure services to encourage trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and families
- Nurture and encourage participation in everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in the community
- Expand parental strengths and interests
- Support and promote advocacy for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments
- Connect families, guardians, and primary caregivers with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational
- Facilitate the participation of families, guardians, or primary caregivers in leadership development, decision making, and program policy development to improve children's development and learning experiences.

Families, guardians, and primary caregivers will have access to their child's classroom during program hours. Individuals will be welcomed as visitors and will be encouraged to observe the children and participate with the children in group activities. The participation of families, guardians, and primary caregivers in program activities is encouraged, but is not required as a condition of the child's enrollment. Additionally, a variety of opportunities are made available for the interaction with families

and children throughout the year including, but not limited to: orientation overview, open house, home visits, family meetings, family training sessions, Policy Council meetings, advisory committee meetings, kindergarten transition meetings and activities, IFSP/IEP meetings, field trips, social activities, and volunteering in the center and/or classroom and in home-based socialization activities.

Families are given the opportunity to participate in the program as employees and volunteers. Shortly after enrolling in the program, families complete an “Opportunity Checklist” to indicate how they would like to participate in the center and/or classroom setting. Teaching staff and Family Advocates will work with families to ensure opportunities are made available to them.

COVID safety guidelines, procedures, closures may impact Family engagement activities and procedures

5.2 PARENTING ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE CHILD LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Families, guardians, and primary caregivers are provided a variety of opportunities to enhance their parenting skills, knowledge, and understanding of educational and developmental needs and activities of their children. Strategies are designed to foster parental confidence and skills in promoting children’s learning and development. Such opportunities include:

- Home visits
- Handouts, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters
- Parent-Teacher conferences
- Parent meetings
- Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings
- Family partnership agreements
- Kindergarten transition meetings
- Observation of staff in the center or at socialization experiences
- Involvement in planning the weekly home visits and the weekly lesson plan with the home-based teacher
- Parenting classes or information from *ReadyRosie* or through a referral process.
- Staff will provide families with information about the importance of the child’s attendance, and will work with them as necessary, to promote consistent attendance.

The above mention activities may be impacted and or altered due to COVID regulations

5.2.1 Family Literacy

Opportunities are provided for children and families enrolled in the home-based program and center-based program to participate in family literacy services. When children are identified as having limited English proficiency, families are provided information regarding instructional services that may be utilized to help children make progress towards increasing the level of English proficiency.

Opportunities are provided to children and families to participate in family literacy services by:

- Families will be given increased opportunities to access materials, services, and activities essential to family literacy development. Information is provided regarding the services available at the local public libraries in each county. ~~Individual classrooms and home-based have lending libraries for their families.~~ Community volunteers from various organizations volunteer in classrooms throughout the service area to increase one-on-one reading experiences for enrolled children.

- Staff will assist families as adult learners and help them recognize and address their own literacy goals. In developing the Family Partnership Agreement, goals that are appropriate to the individual literacy needs of each family are established. Referrals to adult literacy programs, such as ESL classes, are made when appropriate.
- Staff will plan special family literacy events. The focus of such events will be to provide a welcoming environment for families and their children to participate in literacy activities together, provide education to families to extend literacy activities into the home, and to promote positive parent-child relationships.
- For dual language learners, information and resources will be given to families, families, or primary caregivers about the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy.

5.3 FAMILY PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

Early Head Start, Head Start, and the Early Head Start Childcare Partnership implements family partnership agreements with families. This process includes supporting the family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability, to support child learning and development, and to provide, if applicable, services and support for children with disabilities. Staff collaborate with families to identify interest, needs, and aspirations. Staff also help families achieve identified family engagement outcomes by jointly developing a goal. Throughout the school year staff, in collaboration with families, review individual progress, revise goals as needed, evaluate, and track whether identified needs and goals are met. Staff will take into consideration if a family has an existing goal with another community agency to avoid duplication of efforts. Resources and strategies will be provided to the family to assist in the family partnership agreement.

During the creation of family partnership agreements, the program will identify a family's strengths and needs. A strengths and needs assessment is completed and relates to the Head Start Parent Family and Community Engagement Framework, including family well-being, parent-child relationships, families as lifelong educators, families as learners, family engagement in transitions, family connections to peers and the local community, and families as advocates and leaders. **The Family Services Coordinator monitors the completion of the Family Partnership Agreements.**

5.3.1 Family Meetings

Center and home-based family meetings are held throughout the program year. **Center-based Family Committee meetings occur at a minimum monthly and are led by the Family Advocate. Family Engagement events with Center-based families also occur monthly and are separate from the Family Committee). Parent Educators conduct a minimum of 22 Socializations that also function as a Family meeting.**

At the time of enrollment, families are asked to complete a "Parent Training Survey" listing the possible training topics by component areas. The results of these surveys are reviewed by Family Advocates, and parent meetings are planned accordingly.

5.3.2 Home Visits

Home visits for children enrolled in the center-based program are conducted a minimum of twice a year by Family Advocates. Home visits are not a condition of the child's participation in the center-based program if families forbid such visits; however, every effort is made to explain the advantages of home

visits to the families. Under certain conditions in the center-based program, a home visit may be scheduled at an Early Head Start or Head Start site or at another safe location with privacy.

Home visits for children enrolled in the home-based program must be conducted in the home with the participation of families, guardians, or primary caregivers. Home based teachers are required to meet with families weekly (46 for Early Head Start and a minimum of 32 home visits per year for Head Start). Each weekly visit must last a minimum of 1 ½ hours.

5.4 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

WNCSource establishes ongoing, collaborative relationships with other local agencies. Such organizations include: health care providers, agencies that provide services to children with disabilities, child protective services, family support services, educational and cultural institutions, Work First, housing assistance providers, domestic violence prevention and support providers, and other organizations or businesses that provide support and resources to families. **Family Advocates and Parent Educators share resources with families on an ongoing basis as the family shares their needs.**

5.4.1 Ongoing Monitoring

The Early Childhood Family Services Coordinator will:

- Maintain all family meeting minutes and review them to make sure all requirements are met. These requirements include, but are not limited to, verifying that policy council members are elected at the first family meeting, training topics are planned accordingly to the families' needs and interests, and that all staff receive appropriate training in family engagement
- Monitors the monthly reports submitted by the family services staff
- Conduct monthly family service staff meetings in which peer file reviews will occur in effort to ensure parent participation and engagement
- Visit WNCSource and Early Childcare Partnership sites and seeks feedback from families on the quality of services provided
- ~~Meet with each Family Advocate monthly for a minimum of one hour to provide reflective supervision~~

6 ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Early Intervention Team is responsible for ensuring that program requirements relating to services for children with disabilities are met.

6.1 FULL PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS), in partnership with local agencies, implement services to children with disabilities in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), part of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Subpart F of the HS Performance Standards provides the standards and guidance for carrying out these services. EHS/HS requires that at least 10% of the children served have a diagnosed disability and qualify for Preschool Services (Part B of IDEA) or qualify for Infant Toddler Services, based on risk factors or developmental delays (Part C of IDEA). All children in our programs are served in inclusive classrooms, meaning that children with disabilities are integrated into the least restrictive possible environment and they fully participate in all program activities. As an

inclusive environment, all individuals with disabilities are protected from discrimination and we abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

6.2 ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

WNCSource partners with the family to ensure that services are provided and the child can fully participate in the full range of activities including providing any necessary modifications. Teachers and Family Advocates will attend IFSP, IEP, and other related meetings regarding the implementation of services for the child. The delivery of services will be discussed and agreed upon by the IFSP/IEP Team members.

When an IFSP, IEP, or therapy plan is developed for an individual child, the teacher receives a copy of the plan and incorporates the goals from the plan into the child's curriculum, where appropriate. Teachers also use ongoing assessment to determine if the child is progressing in the documented areas of delay. The child may receive speech/language, special education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, or any other necessary related services and is conducted in the classroom when appropriate.

During the time in which a child is being determined if they are eligible for services through IDEA, the teachers provide individualized support using a Child Action Plan.

When children with disabilities are transitioning from EHS or HS to another program (into HS, Kindergarten, or other) or from an IFSP to an IEP, the Early Intervention Team participate in the transition process with each child's family, the LEA, and other team members determined by the LEA. If the child should drop from the program suddenly, we will alert the LEA of their enrollment status in our program to ensure the continuity of services for the child.

Every child eligible for Infant-Toddler, Preschool or Private Services will have a file maintained in Child Plus to include a copy of all applicable information applicable to the child such as: screenings, evaluations, IFSP/IEP, permissions or releases obtained, progress reports, therapy plans.

6.3 ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

All EHS/HS staff, with support from the Early Intervention Team, provide the following support services to families:

- Help families understand the referral, evaluation, and service timelines required under IDEA
- Support to help families better understand their child's disability and how they can advocate for the services that their child needs
- Refer to support groups of families with children with disabilities when this support would be helpful
- Ensure that families receive their handbook of rights for children with disabilities from the CDSA/LEA and that they understand those rights
- Inform families of resources available in the community for families of children with disabilities
- Provide transportation services to attend meetings and evaluations

6.4 COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING IDEA

Each year WNCSource creates interagency agreements with the Local Education Agencies we partner with to serve the needs of our community's children and fulfill the IDEA requirements: Children's Developmental Services Agencies in WNC and Shelby; Henderson County Schools; Transylvania County Schools; Polk County Schools.

Interagency agreements include

- How children are identified in the community through Child Find efforts.
- How referrals will be made and services will be provided in the least restrictive environment.
- How children and families are supported through transitions.

WNCSource's involvement in the creating and implementation of the IFSP or IEP when requested by the child's family which may involve documentation, observations, and participation in the meetings.

The Program Support Services Manager or designated Early Intervention Team member will attend the Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) meetings in Henderson, Polk, Rutherford and Transylvania Counties to network with providers and administrators involved with Child Find and Early Intervention services and will attend Community Forums sponsored by NCDHHS.

The Early Intervention Team will work closely with applicable providers who provide screening, evaluation, and/or special services including but not limited to special instruction, therapies, and service coordination. Revisions to existing in-house policies and procedures regarding special needs children will be made as needed.

7 TRANSITION SERVICES

Our goal at WNCSource is to create seamless transitions for our families when they are moving from one program to another.

7.1 TRANSITIONS FROM EARLY HEAD START

Transition planning for children nearing the end of participation with Early Head Start will begin at least 6 months prior to the child's third birthday or 6 months prior to the child's fourth birthday for a child in an EHS CCP family child childcare home. Transitions will occur as soon after the child's 3rd birthday as possible but no more than 6 months following.

The initial transition planning meeting is initiated by the Family Advocate/Parent Educator and set up by the Teacher/Parent Educator in conjunction with the family. At this meeting the following will be discussed as a team with the family:

- Child's growth and progress
- Any special needs or considerations that need to be addressed
- Current and changing family circumstances
- Availability of continuing in Head Start or the need to locate another early care and education option. If the plan is to continue onto Head Start, re-verification will be discussed as well.
- Timeline of expected transition.

- Strategies for families to remain involved in their child's education and care.
- If the child has an IFSP, The Early Intervention Team will also be a part of these transition conversations with the family.

The transition plan is completed by the team over the course of 1 or more meetings together. The plan is kept in ChildPlus. As additions and adjustments are made to the plan, family and staff signatures are maintained.

The plan includes sections on:

- Family Profile – current and/or changing family circumstances
- Child Profile – health, development, temperament, routines, etc.
- Plans for Staff & Family – what changes will occur and how to prepare the child.

7.2 TRANSITION FROM HEAD START AND/OR NCPREK TO KINDERGARTEN

Families will be involved in transition training and implementation as children near the end of Head Start or Head Start/NC Pre-K and approach the beginning of kindergarten. Families will be kept informed regarding their child's progress while enrolled in the Head Start or Head Start/NC Pre-K program and will be provided information about their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their child. Families will be encouraged to take copies of their child's records to the school as relevant or encouraged to give permission for sharing of information between Head Start or Head Start/ NC Pre-K and public-school staff.

When children are receiving special services from the public-school system and are leaving Head Start or Head Start/NC Pre-K to attend kindergarten, the school special education teachers will initiate transition activities. These teachers will forward the special education records to the appropriate elementary schools and will coordinate any related services like transportation or resource teaching. Head Start or Head Start/NC Pre-K teachers, Parent Educators, and the Early Intervention Coordinator will participate in placement meetings with school personnel in order to facilitate continuation of services.

WNCSource collaborates with Henderson County Public Schools in conjunction with the Children and Family Resource Center and Henderson county Smart Start Partnership for Children to implement general transition practices throughout Henderson County. WNCSource also collaborates with Transylvania County Public Schools, Transylvania County Smart Start and the Health Department. Center staff participate on community transition teams when offered by the school and directly communicate and coordinate activities with individual personnel from local schools in an effort to strengthen school to school communication and understanding. We partner with Polk and Rutherford counties to support the transition of our EHS children into their HS and NCPreK programs.

Two Henderson county NC Pre-K sites are part of the NC Pre-K Kindergarten Transition Pilot to increase transition efforts in the county. Transition practices may include visits by school personnel to HS or HS/NC Pre-K classrooms, visits by HS or HS/NC Pre-K children to public schools, distribution of packets of suggested learning activities for families to work on at home, and transition parent-meetings for HS and HS/NC Pre-K families. Families will obtain knowledge of their rights and responsibilities concerning the education of their children in the school setting during staff communication, through written information, and during parent-meetings. **In addition, WNCSource jointly sponsors and/or participates in a Kindergarten Readiness community and or school site events held in the Spring in both Henderson and**

Transylvania counties and encourages families to attend with their children. This is an opportunity for gaining information about kindergarten, meeting kindergarten teachers, participating in action packed child-oriented experiences, and receiving health and dental information.

The WNCSource Head Start and Head Start/NC Pre-K curriculum includes school readiness goals to help prepare children for success in school. Additional specific transition strategies include using books and stories relating to making new friends or going to school, writing letters to a Kindergarten class, role playing expected school experiences, and talking about similarities and differences between Head Start and kindergarten or discussing questions and concerns. In addition, children who attend a Head Start/NC Pre-K classroom housed within a public school are already familiar with many aspects of the school setting.

7.3 TRANSITION BETWEEN PROGRAMS

When children depart from Early Head Start or Head Start, the health and early intervention teams will provide leadership and work with families to assure that records are made available to the schools or to the child's next placement as requested or applicable. Families will be asked to provide consent and sign release of information forms prior to transfer of any child/family record. Families who are moving out of the WNCSource service area will be aided in locating a new program for their child when requested.

8 SERVICES TO ENROLLED PREGNANT WOMEN

At the time of enrollment, the ERSEA team will determine whether or not a pregnant woman has an ongoing source of continuous health care and health insurance coverage. Following Enrollment, the Health Team will work with the pregnant mom to help her get access to sources that will meet her needs.

All efforts are made to enroll the mom with the baby's due date in mind. The pregnant mom has the choice to enroll with our program to reserve a space for her child in one of the following options:

- Center Based Classroom and will be assigned a Family Advocate to support them
- Family Child Care and will be assigned a Family Advocate to support them
- Home Based Program and will be assigned a Parent Educator to support them

As a part of our pregnant mom's program, all of our moms have access to various resources through community partnerships with other programs in our area that cover nutritional counseling, food assistance, oral health care, mental health services, substance abuse support, emergency shelter, child development education, and more.

When the baby is born, WNCSource's nurse visits mom and baby within the first 4 weeks to provide support and ensure their needs are cared for. Transition plans will also be made for the baby to enter the program of mom's choice. Should the space that was anticipated, not be available, the Enrollment team will work with the family to place the child on a waiting list and/or enroll in a different program option.

Education & Services provided to the enrolled pregnant mom and other family members of her choice through our staff or through partnerships with community partners.

- Prenatal health
- Fetal development
- Importance of nutrition
- Risks of alcohol, drugs, and smoking
- Labor and delivery
- Postpartum recovery
- Parental depression
- Infant care & safe sleep practices
- Benefits of breastfeeding
- Emotional well-being
- Nurturing & responsive caregiving
- Family engagement
- And individualized topics based on the needs of the mom and family.

Family Partnership services provided to the enrolled pregnant mom and other family members of her choice are the same for any enrolled child in the program and involve developing a family partnership agreement, identification of family strengths and needs, developing goals and supports to reach those goals.

9 HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

9.1 PERSONNEL POLICIES

WNCSource's Human Resources Policies and Procedure Manual was updated August 1, 2020 and approved by WNCSource Management, Policy Council and Board of Directors. After approval, the document was emailed to all employees and placed on the employee website. In addition, to ensure that all employees have access to the WNCSource Human Resources Policies and Procedure Manual, the Manual is housed in Work Force GO (WFG), the current payroll system. The Manual includes sections on: Employment Policies and Practices, Employee Benefits Procedures, Timekeeping and Payroll, and Employee Conduct. WNCSource also makes the Manual available to all employees, volunteers, vendors, board members, and clients upon request.

The WNCSource Human Resources Policies and Procedure Manual goes through a complete review every two years by Senior Management for any possible changes in the first Quarter of the year. The 2021 was completed by the Human Resource team. Policy Council and Board members must approve all changes prior to implementation. New Board and Policy Council members are sent a copy of the WNCSource Human Resources Policies and Procedure Manual by the WNCSource Executive Assistant (Board) or the Family Services Manager (Policy Council) within 30 days of their appointment. WNCSource also offers a yearly training in the spring regarding the Manual and members also attend state and/or national conferences as they are interested. One on one meetings are also made available to Policy Council and Board Members by the HR Director to answer questions or provide more information.

9.1.1 Background Checks

WNCSource maintains a rigorous selection process that includes ensuring background checks are completed prior to starting their employment with WNCSource. Once an employee has been selected

for an open position, the Hiring Manager in conjunction with the Human Resource Assistant employee verifies the applicants' references, conducts a background check, requests the applicant to complete a national fingerprint check and schedules the applicant to complete a health assessment. If the applicant is required to have a certification and/or license, that requirement is also verified.

Background checks are processed through North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Criminal Background Check Unit. A Criminal Background Check is required by law for all persons who provide child care in North Carolina. Thus, WNCSource ensures that staff do not start work until they have a qualifying letter from DHHS stating that they are approved to work with children. The background check must be renewed every three years. To ensure that all employees renew their background check in a timely manner, a HR Assistant reminds employees and their supervisors 90 days prior to the expiration date and supports staff in ensuring that the renewed background check is completed. The HR Generalist completes quarterly audits of staff background checks.

The Human Resource Generalist reviews all applicant's paperwork the day before new hire orientation and again at the end of the orientation. The HR Generalist enters the new hire information into the HR payroll system. The HR Assistant uses a paper checklist to verify all new hire files are complete with all required documentation. Quarterly reviews of new hire files are performed by the HR Director.

9.1.2 Standards of Conduct

WNCSource's Standards of Conduct statement meets the requirements and language of Head Start Performance Standards. Most recently updated in 2020 to be inclusive that all staff, consultants, contractors, volunteers, and families are expected to abide by these standards. All of the aforementioned individuals are provided a copy of the Standards and must sign to acknowledge that they received and read the Standards. Staff are required to complete this on their first day of employment. Families are informed at enrollment. Volunteers, Consultants and Contractors are provided a copy of the Standards and must sign that they understand them before they are permitted to work in our facilities with children.

Training on the Standards of Conduct occurs annually during Preservice and is tracked by the Human Resource Assistant. All new employees watch the recorded training video on the Standards of Conduct during their new hire orientation. To ensure new employees have completed the training, the HR Assistant completes quarterly audits of staff records.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring staff adhere to the Standards of Conduct and work closely with the HR Director for any additional training or disciplinary action needed. The appropriate Supervisor and Program Director address any situations of non-WNCSource employees failing to adhere to the Standards.

9.1.3 Communication with Dual Language Learners and their Families

It is of utmost importance to ensure that we can communicate with all our families, including those who do not speak English, the primary language in our community. We have families who speak various languages with a primary secondary language of Spanish. We ensure that all forms, policies, resources, letters, and any other communication are provided in both English and Spanish. WNCSource offers interpretation for Policy Council, IFSP/IEP meetings, behavioral meetings, Open House, other parent meetings and family engagements or socialization events.

Our Home Visiting program serves a higher number of Spanish speaking families and so only bilingual staff are hired and are encouraged to use the family's native or heritage tongue during the visits. Time and resources are used to support these families in learning Basic English.

Hiring preference is given to bilingual Teaching staff and Family Advocates as possible and appropriate. WNCSource can ensure that all our Spanish-Speaking families are paired with a bilingual Family Advocate. Both our Parent Educators and Family Advocates take the Family Development Credential to better understand cultural competence and empowering families. Through our partnership with the local school district's ESL Director, staff may also receive training in how to best work with Spanish speaking families, how to understand their culture and values and how to make them feel welcome and comfortable.

During the tiered enrollment process, teaching teams are reviewed and re-assigned to ensure the language needs of the classrooms are being met. For occasions where staff and families do not speak the same language, translation devices and google-assistant are readily available to support communications. Additionally, the local school system is able to provide support and resources, especially when supporting a family that speaks a language other than Spanish or English.

9.2 STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

In 2020, the agency reevaluated staff qualification and competency requirements. These were developed to be a higher qualification than what is required by Head Start in some cases. This is also reflective of WNCSource's ability to serve NCPReK families as well. The following includes the requirements for key Children's Services positions.

Children's Services Director: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education, Human Services or related degree. Master's degree preferred and experience in supervision of staff, fiscal management, and administration. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Minimum of five years professional leadership/management and supervisory experience preferably in a comprehensive child development program, and at least two years of which are in a senior level management/supervisory capacity. An understanding of Head Start philosophy and the ability to implement its principle of shared authority and decision-making.

Fiscal Officer: Graduation from an accredited college or university with a Bachelor's degree in accounting or finance. Preferred candidate will have a CPA or a Master's degree in finance and/or accounting. 10 years or more experience in accounting or financial management experience. Prefer familiarity with non-profit grant funding.

Family Services Manager: Baccalaureate degree in Human Services, Non-Profit Management, Business, Education or related degree. Master's degree preferred. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Minimum of three - five years of job-related experience.

Health & Nutrition Coordinator: Baccalaureate degree in Health Administration, Health Care Management, Public Health, Human Services, Early Childhood or other relevant discipline. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Three years of experience working with young children and families, coordinating public

health services, and working with disadvantaged children and families. Early Head Start/Head Start/NC Pre-K experience preferred.

Program Support Services Manager: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education, Special Education, Early Childhood Mental Health or a related field. Master's degree preferred. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Minimum of three - five years of experience in Early Head Start, Head Start, NC Pre-K or other similar programs working with children birth to five in the areas of disabilities and/or mental health. Minimum of three years of supervisory experience.

Education Coordinator: Minimum: Baccalaureate degree Early Childhood Education or other relevant discipline. Preferred: Master's degree with coursework in Early Childhood Education. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Five years of experience teaching children ages birth to six. Engagement with families in a management/supervisor role. Early Head Start/Head Start/NC Pre-K experience preferred.

Early Head Start Teacher: A minimum Infant Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) credential OR a state awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential. Prefer an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education or related field with equivalent coursework in early childhood development with a focus on infant and toddler development or Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field with focus on infant and toddler development. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Two years of infant/toddler teaching experience or two years within a NC licensed 5-star child care facility/program. Early Head Start/Head Start experience preferred. **Due to the current Early Child Care Workforce shortage, we have reduced the minimum for EHS teachers to an Infant Toddler CDA.**

Head Start Teacher: Minimum: Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education, actively working towards a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Preferred: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Two years of teaching experience within a NC licensed 5-star child care facility/program. Head Start experience preferred.

NCPREK Teacher: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field and hold or be working toward a NC (NC) Birth through Kindergarten (B-K) Continuing License or B-K or Preschool Add-on License issued by the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI). Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Two years of teaching experience within a NC licensed 5-star child care facility/program. Nc Pre-K experience preferred.

Teacher Assistant: A minimum Child Development Associate (CDA) credential OR a state awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential. Prefer an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education and or enrolled in a program that will lead to an associate's or baccalaureate degree. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Two years of teaching experience or two years of experience within a NC licensed 5-star child care facility/program. Head Start/NC Pre-K experience preferred. **Due to the current Early Child Care Workforce shortage, we have reduced the minimum for HS teacher assistants to a Preschool CDA which is the minimum requirement for HS Performance Standards.**

Bilingual Parent Educator: Minimum: Associate’s degree in Early Childhood Education, working towards a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Bilingual English/Spanish skills. Preferred: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education or a related field. Must be bilingual (English/Spanish). Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Prefer two years of infant/toddler and/or preschool teaching and/or home visiting experience. Early Head Start/Head Start experience preferred.

Bilingual Family Advocate: Minimum: An associate’s degree in related field or high school diploma/GED is required with a minimum of a credential or certification in Social Work, Human Services, Family Services, Counseling or a related field. If minimum education requirements are not met upon hire, a certificate/credential must be attained within eighteen months of hire. Preferred: Baccalaureate degree in Social Work, Human Services, Family Services, Counseling or related field. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Prefer two years of case management or early childhood classroom experience. Early Head Start/Head Start experience preferred.

School Readiness Coach: Baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development or related degree. Degree(s) must be from an accredited college recognized by the NC Department of Child Development and Early Education. Two - five years of experience in working with young children in group settings. Early Head Start/Head Start/NC Pre-K experience preferred. Experience and/or knowledge of Practice Based Coaching preferred.

Health Professionals: All of our staff and consultants who provide health related services are licensed as necessary. Our Nurse is a Registered Nurse. Our Mental Health Consultants are Licensed Clinical Practitioners. Our Nutrition Consultant is a Registered Dietician. This ensures that we are providing quality care and information to our children and families.

9.3 TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

9.3.1 New Hire Orientation

To ensure that our staff enter classrooms prepared to provide quality care and education, we developed a rigorous orientation program. Our teaching staff complete the required training for the state as well as engage in learning activities to understand our program’s goals, philosophy, program plans and how we implement our plans. Staff meet all of our management staff as well as specialists. Teaching staff spend up to 30 hours in training directly related to implementation of curriculum. WNCSource wants to ensure staff start out on the best possible path to safeguard their success and longevity in our programs.

Classroom volunteers, Therapists, Consultants, and Contracted individuals who work in the classrooms with children, staff, and/or families receive an orientation, complete a background check, and complete additional paperwork required by North Carolina State licensing before they are released to be present on site with the children. The Early Intervention team oversees their work and coordinates this process for Therapists, Consultants, and contracted individuals. Volunteers work with the Staffing Specialist and Site Supervisor for their assigned location for orientation. The Staffing Specialist oversees their work and ensures paperwork is completed for volunteers.

9.3.2 Training and Professional Development

Throughout the year, all staff have the opportunity to engage in training and professional development designed to provide the knowledge and skills to support our growth as individuals and as an agency. Training is offered at the beginning of each program year with one week of “Pre-Service” and throughout the year on designated full and half days, which total over 15 hours of training. All staff are also encouraged to seek out workshops and webinars to continue their education in ways that align with their Professional Development Plan. The Program Support Services Manager provides a weekly email with information on upcoming professional development opportunities.

The topics are directly related to our program goals, community assessment, and self-assessment. In addition, staff receive yearly training on how to handle suspected and known child abuse and neglect cases and best practices in implementing family engagement strategies. The teaching staff also receive yearly and on-going training in implementation of the *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos* and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* along with our Social Emotional supplemental supports.

All staff are also encouraged to participate in our Education Assistance program where we support staff in furthering their education. WNCSource leverages T.E.A.C.H. NC Early Education Scholarships to allow our T/TA funds to support more staff.

9.3.3 Coaching Strategy

At WNCSource, coaching is designed to give teachers support and skills they need to prepare children for success in school and in life. The WNCSource school readiness policies, curriculum and assessment policies along with HS Standards provide the focus for our coaching efforts. Ultimately, the role of a coach is to help build internal capacity to support ongoing commitment and effort towards high quality care for children. Both teachers and coaches are expected to interact in respectful and empowering ways.

To clarify the roles of coach and coachee, a coaching agreement is signed at the beginning of each school year. The coaching process at WNCSource encourages growth and building capacity through the reflective process of Practice Based Coaching. The work that occurs between the coach and coachee is a collaborative process and is not used for staff evaluations.

Data collected through the Coaching to Fidelity Tools, My Teaching Strategies GOLD, and CLASS Observations are used to determine staff in need of intensive or self-coaching methods. Teaching staff participate in group coaching sessions as well as individual coaching and teaching team collaboration.

Both CCP and WNCSource teachers have the opportunity to expand their skills by becoming Mentors to other staff. The CCP Program has one mentor chosen from each CCP site to support the progress of their peers at that site. WNCSource mentors are chosen to support one to two teachers that teach a similar age group. The mentors work closely with the coaches to ensure best practices are implemented in all classrooms.

9.4 STAFF HEALTH & WELLNESS

Once an individual accepts a position, the Human Resources Assistant works with the potential staff to ensure that they complete a health examination to ensure that they are fit to work in child care. All applicants are offered the choice to have their Health Assessment conducted at Pardee Hospital with our partnership in the Pardee@work Clinic. Some employees choose to have their Primary Health Care

Provider complete the Health Assessment. Prior to employment, The Human Resource Assistant reviews all applicant's documents including the required Health Examination.

WNCSource offers a health clinic "Pardee@work", a free service provided by Pardee Hospital to all WNCSource employees. The clinic provides wellness services to employees, including physicals, drug screenings and health education

An Employee Assistance Program is also provided to all WNCSource employees. EAPs address issues affecting mental and emotional well-being, such as, stress, grief, family problems, and psychological disorders. The counselors work in a consultative role with managers to address employees' needs.

We have also implemented practices to support our staff's mental health and wellness. Wellness Circles are offered as a safe time and space for individuals to meet with our Early Intervention Behavior Specialists to staff to focus on wellness so that we are able to be present with the children and families. The Program Support Services Manager sends a weekly email to all staff to help us think about, reflect, and grow together in our mental health and wellness.

9.5 VOLUNTEERS

WNCSource is committed to helping to cultivate new professionals in the field of Early Childhood Development and we constantly look for ways to involve volunteers in our work. This is part of our commitment to involving the community in all aspects of our mission to serve the community. We reserve certain tasks and roles for volunteers, to provide career-development experiences to emerging professionals and fulfillment goals. Through these experiences, volunteers are able to gain skills and experiences that can help them in their career exploration and job searches. These volunteer roles mean that a person who works in one of our child care facilities is encouraged to engage with children/teaching staff and participate in activities as applicable, but is not counted in state regulated staff/child ratio, does not have unsupervised contact with any children, and is not monetarily compensated by the facility. To ensure no unsupervised contact, WNCSource teachers and supervisors receive training in what is appropriate and allowable volunteer tasks and assignments. Site Supervisors monitor and make sure staff follow the set protocols for volunteers assisting with Children's Services programs. Before volunteers are approved to work in our program, they must complete a background check (if in the classrooms) Health Questionnaire, Emergency Information Form, and TB screen within the last 12 months, which follows North Carolina Child Care Licensing regulations.

10 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WNCSource's management system includes staff, policies, procedures, and processes that are supported by integrated databases that allow WNCSource to oversee all areas of the agency. These areas include but are not limited to student recruitment and enrollment; student progress data; staff recruiting, credentialing and onboarding; budget development, analysis and reporting. WNCSource's Human Resources department has an HR Director with a Master's Degree in Human Resources as well as two HR generalists. WNCSource's Finance Department has a Chief Financial Officer with an MBA, a Controller with a CPA and two staff accountants with BA's in Accounting. There are three coordinated policy manuals for management activities: the HR Policies and Procedures manual; the Fiscal Manual and Program Plans. Policies and procedures are implemented via WNCSource's databases that support Program, HR and Fiscal Operations. These databases include: ChildPlus for student eligibility, enrollment

and tracking; Sage Intacct Accounting for budget, monthly and annual accounting and WorkforceGo for employee recruiting, payroll and performance management.

WNCSource's integrated databases, Sage Intacct and WorkForce Go, allow WNCSource to track budget and staffing patterns at multiple levels within the organization. Cloud based software allows managers and team members access to performance plans and recruiting updates real time from any location and even via their mobile phone. Dashboards and financial reports allow finance staff to track performance against budget at the location, department, employee or item level depending on what information is needed. Seamless data transfer between the two databases creates a uniquely updated system so that changes happen in real time without the need to conduct significant monthly reconciliation.

Sage Intacct accounting is an industry leader in internet accounting and is one of the few systems endorsed by the AICPA. Its flexible structure allows WNCSource to track budgets and expenditures at the location, department, grant, employee and item level. This detailed tracking ensures that WNCSource is able to identify changes in costs, isolate issues and anticipate trends in future spending. The system is secure and accessible to staff from almost any location and via mobile phone, if necessary.

At the beginning of each program year, the Children's Services Management Team develops a coordinated approach to ensure that professional development, support for dual language learners and children with disabilities and the use of data aligns and supports our organization's growth towards meeting our program goals. This approach is reviewed throughout the year during monthly management team meetings. The use of our Community Assessment and Self-Assessment guide the development of this approach as well as ensuring that we are able to use community resources effectively.

10.1 ACHIEVING PROGRAM GOALS

WNCSource has established both short- and long-term measurable program goals with the assistance of the Children's Services Management team, Policy Council and Board. The five-year program goals were developed by looking at the organization's most recent and past community assessments as well as current Head Start Program Standards and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages birth to Five. Our current main program goals are around School Readiness, Health Services, and Family Engagement.

To monitor program performance, WNCSource utilizes ChildPlus, [shared Google Sheets](#) and Monday.com. These tools allow for the Children's Services Management Team to monitor progress towards the program goals and provide seamless and real time reporting to Policy Council as well as other stakeholders. The status of the program goals is reported monthly to the Children's Services Director and Policy Council.

In addition to program goals, WNCSource has developed a detailed monitoring plan to ensure that staff are able to effectively monitor each of their program areas. Each Children's Services Manager is responsible for monitoring their own areas and reporting their findings to the Children's Services Director monthly. The monitoring plan ensures that any quality or compliance issues can be quickly addressed. WNCSource has also developed several monitoring checklists, held in ChildPlus, to ensure that sites are monitoring, as required.

WNCSource conducts a rigorous self-assessment annually that includes child assessment data, professional development data as well as family engagement data. WNCSource then uses the self-assessment data to monitor progress towards goals as well as to establish new goals that may arise from the self-assessment. The self-assessment includes collaboration with the board and Policy Council and the findings of the self-assessment are submitted and presented to the Board and Policy Council upon completion.

While WNCSource uses Monday.com and Google Suites to assist with monitoring progress towards the program goals, it uses ChildPlus to house all the program data. WNCSource recently moved all its child files to ChildPlus and now operates completely paperless. This allows for consistency of recording and housing data and produces accurate reports for monitoring. Because all the data is now stored in ChildPlus, WNCSource can use the tools in ChildPlus such as reports, Dashboards, To-Do-Lists and Monitoring Checklists to track data and ensure that any issues that arise can be quickly identified and addressed. WNCSource then uses this data along with information from the self-assessment as well as the program data collected on teaching practices, staffing and child-level data to help drive the professional development program and address training needs for staff. Continuous Quality Improvement is monitored monthly by WNCSource Managers and any successes or issues are reported to the Children's Services Director.

WNCSource reports progress on the program goals and insight on the data collected to the board and Policy Council at least twice a year. However, general progress towards program goals are reported monthly to the Policy Council by the Children's Services Management team. ChildPlus also allows for WNCSource to quickly report any issues to HHS along with data as requested. Each year, WNCSource publishes an Annual Report that includes information on the organization's most recent community assessment.