My Classroom is __________________________________ Phone Number: ________________

My Classroom hours are ____________________________

My Teacher(s) are_________________________________________________

My Family Liaison is _____________________________ Phone Number: ________________

My Cook(s) is/are _______________________

My Center Supervisor is __________________________ Phone Number: ________________

My first day of school is _________________________________________________________

Administrative Offices
Early Head Start & Head Start
P.O. Box 72, 6 Spruce Street, Sanford, ME 04073
(207) 324-5762 1-800-965-5762 FAX (207) 324-4197

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer
Welcome to York County Community Action Corporation
Children’s Services

Thank you for choosing Children’s Services! We are excited to welcome you and your child and have you as part of our Head Start/Early Head Start family!

We provide a complete child and family development program, for children ages six weeks to five and their families. We believe that families are the child’s first and most important teacher. We encourage each family to participate in all aspects of the program.

Children Services is funded through state and federal Head Start and Early Head Start funds. We operate in accordance with the Head Start Performance Standards and we are licensed by the State of Maine Child Care Licensing Unit in all locations.

Children’s Services is one of the many programs of York County Community Action Corporation (YCCAC) which offers a wide variety of services to people in the community including Community Outreach, Energy Services, Housing and Economic Development, Health Services, Transportation and WIC services.

Children’s Services does not discriminate against any child or family because of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability or religion.

The mission of York County Community Action Corporation is to alleviate the effects of poverty, attack its underlying causes and to promote the dignity and self-sufficiency of the people of York County, Maine.

Family Services:

Here at Children’s Services we embrace the child’s family as their first and most important educator; we work to build off of this philosophy by encouraging families to take part in their child’s educational experiences here within our programs. Throughout the year family liaisons will schedule times to meet with each individual family; at these meetings liaisons will help families create their own Family Partnership Agreement that identifies: strengths, interests, needs, wants, and goals. Liaisons will also be available to provide support in taking steps towards achieving identified goals and needs; examples of ways Children’s Services staff can help are:

- Assisting in referrals to other community resources
- Assisting you to get household needs and clothing
- Providing opportunities, which will offer training and education
- Contacting services to help with crisis situations
- Ensuring that your family receives all services to which it is entitled
- Linking your family to other YCCAC support services

If you have any questions, concerns or would like more information please contact the Family Engagement/ ERSEA Manager, 459-2980.
Parent and Family Engagement:

Family engagement is the backbone to our program. The success of our program comes from our commitment to build partnerships with families, and families committing to actively supporting their child(ren)’s learning. There are many ways to partner with the program and support your child’s education. Within the first two months of your child’s enrollment, and at the beginning of each school year, you will meet with your Family Liaison in order to start the Family Partnership Process.

Here are some opportunities to get involved:

Family Linkz—All Families are encouraged to attend these family gatherings. Family Linkz gatherings are a great opportunity for you to:
- Meet new people and have fun
- Share ideas, thoughts and feedback
- Give input to program decisions
- Plan activities for your child(ren) and their classroom
- Plan activities for your family and community
- Hear about Policy Council and other program updates

Policy Council –
- Represent your child’s classroom at a program wide level – become a Policy Council Representative!
- Share ideas for your classroom and home activities.
- Represent your child’s program by being a part of community events Children’s Services participates in such as: parades, local festivals, community educational events, etc.
- Parents/Families are always welcome to come into the classroom, attend field trips and volunteer in our program!

**Becoming a volunteer is simple. If you are interested in volunteering speak to your child’s teacher or family liaison. **

In-Kind

Federal funding requires Head Start & Early Head Start to show that 25% of our funding is matched by local in-kind sources, such as volunteer hours. The hours that you volunteer make up the bulk of this match. Some other examples are: volunteering in the program; working on activities at home to support your child’s individual goals; volunteering time at home to complete activities and classroom preparation; participating in meetings where program decisions are made or discussed; donating classroom materials and more! The time that you contribute benefits your child, your family and the Head Start Program.

Educational Services:

Curriculum and Assessment

YCCAC Children’s Services values and appreciates the diversity and capability of all children, their families and cultures. We welcome all children at their own developmental level and support their growth in each stage, realizing that this is a unique and individual process for each child. We believe that growth occurs best in a safe, supportive environment where children are free to learn and explore their world, grow and develop.
through active learning experiences. We also believe that the parents are their child’s first and most important teacher, and should be partners with teachers and children in this educational process.

Our program follows Teaching Strategies: The Creative Curriculum (Infants, Toddlers and Twos and Revised Preschool Editions) which is a developmentally appropriate, research based curriculum that supports children as active participants in their learning. Children learn from interest areas of the classroom through support and guidance from adults. All of our teachers have received intensive training on both planning and assessment, and receive ongoing support to best meet the needs of the children in their classroom. Our children and families benefit from a curriculum that fosters the development of children ages Birth to Five as they grow and develop.


Teachers use Teaching Strategies: Creative Curriculum materials/tools to design an effective learning environment and incorporate the 38 objectives for development and learning. Through authentic, on-going documented child observations, Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold) allows teachers a way to document observations of children and use those observations to guide, assess and extend learning experiences in helping all children succeed. TS Gold is an online system that connects parents to their child’s progress in the classroom, giving meaningful ways to involve families, as well as to see weekly lesson plans and upcoming education activities.

Teachers will print reports, lesson plans and observations (some with accompanying photos) to share with families. Families can also have direct access to their child’s information through the TS Gold parent portal where they can see their child’s latest info, observations, photos and videos of their child’s interactions. Families will receive guidance on how to access TS Gold, if they are interested, and ongoing support will be offered.

Families will receive 2 Educational Home Visits from their classroom teacher to discuss School Readiness Goals, ideas and activities in the home to enhance school readiness. It’s a wonderful time for the teacher, child and family to meet and get to know each other, and what the child’s strengths are at both home and school. The 2 Center Visits are a great time where teachers and parents can discuss classroom progress; discuss strengths, observations (both in the classroom and at home) and ways to plan together on how to best meet the child’s goals for school readiness.

Data gathered by teachers and parents is used:
- To show growth of our classrooms in meeting School Readiness Goals program-wide.
- For reports to Administration, Policy Council and YCCAC Board of Directors
- To guide our program for continuous program improvement.

School Readiness
The Office of Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. The YCCAC Children’s Services approach to
School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children, birth to age five. Children’s Services established school readiness goals which were created with Policy Council, local School Districts, and program staff.

You and your teacher will plan your child’s development plan based on the School Readiness goals at your home visits. A copy of the readiness goals will be provided at this visit and together you and your child’s teacher will discuss and plan what is appropriate for your child.

For more information on Educational Services please contact the Early Childhood Education Manager at 459-2924.

**Special Services:**

Children’s Services serves all children including children with disabilities and limitations. Teaching staff conduct developmental screenings within 45 days after your child starts the program. The developmental screenings teachers administer are called the ASQ, or Ages and Stages Questionnaire, and the Social-Emotional screening tool is called the DECA. These screenings are done in partnership between teachers and families. Your teacher will ask for your input and will ask you different questions referring to your child’s development while administering the screenings. Occasionally a child may be identified for further screening or referred to Child Development Services for additional services. If you have any concerns, please talk to your child’s teacher or speak with the Special Services Coordinator at 459-2972.

**Behavioral Health Services:**

Children’s Services contracts with a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) who provides support to our classrooms and educational staff by conducting classroom observations. The LCSW provides feedback and recommendations. With parent permission, individual child observations may occur.

Healthy social and emotional development in children is the cornerstone of success in school and in life. Mental health affects the relationship between children and parents and the relationships of everyone in our lives. Quality early childhood programs provide opportunities for children to develop social skills which lead to positive self-esteem and healthy relationships.

Children’s Services staff help children learn to share feelings, build trust, problem solve, resolve conflicts and develop independence, as well as secure attachments. Community resources are also available and can be found by calling 211. Your Family Liaison is also available to support you.

**Head Start Nap/Rest Time**

All of our full-day Head Start classrooms allow children time to nap/rest each day. By following Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities for the State of Maine and also Head Start Performance Standards, children are supervised at all times by Head Start Staff.

Each child has their own cot for rest that is disinfected daily. Cozy items from home, that your child would like to bring for nap are wonderful, but please know we are limited on space so plan to only bring items that can be
stored neatly in your child’s backpack or cubby. We cannot store large items that require additional space or that spill over into another child’s cubby space.

If a child doesn’t nap, he/she will be encouraged to rest with books or enjoy a quiet activity to allow other friends to sleep. It is important for children’s bodies to rest from a busy day of play and exploration, so nap/rest time for children to listen to stories on CD or enjoy soft music and snooze if needed. After, children place their cozy items back in their cubbies/backpacks and enjoy a tasty snack before end of day activities begin!

**Nutrition Services: Building For the Future**

This Head Start Program participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a Federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks to children receiving care.

Each day more than 2.6 million children participate in CACFP at day care homes and centers across the country. Providers are reimbursed for serving nutritious meals which meet USDA requirements. The program plays a vital role in improving the quality of day care and making it more affordable for low-income families.

**Meals:** CACFP homes and centers follow meal requirements established by USDA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch or Supper</th>
<th>Snacks (Two of the four groups:)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit or Vegetable</td>
<td>Meat or meat alternate</td>
<td>Meat or meat alternate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains or Bread</td>
<td>Grains or Bread</td>
<td>Grains or bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two different servings of fruits or vegetables</td>
<td>Fruit or vegetable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participating Facilities:** Many different homes and centers operate CACFP and share the common goal of bringing nutritious meals and snacks to participants. Participating facilities include:

- **Child Care Centers:** Licensed or approved public or private nonprofit child care centers, Head Start programs, and some for-profit centers.
- **Family Day Care Homes:** Licensed or approved private homes.
- **Afterschool Care Programs:** Centers in low-income areas provide free snacks to school-age children and youth.
- **Homeless Shelters:** Emergency shelters provide food services to homeless children.

**Eligibility:** State agencies reimburse facilities that offer non-residential day care to the following children:

- Children age 12 and under,
- Migrant children age 15 and younger, and
- Youths through age 18 in afterschool care programs in needy areas.
Children attending five hours or more will receive breakfast, lunch and snack. All enrolled children in our program are served nutritious meals during their day. Children are encouraged to serve themselves and pour their own milk and water. Menus will be sent home to parents monthly, so you will be kept informed on what is being served to your children. If your child has any food allergies, or is unable to have certain foods for religious or personal reasons, please notify education staff so accommodations can be made. Parents and children will learn about healthy foods and good nutrition at Head Start through weekly nutrition activities. The WIC program helps to support our nutritional services throughout the county and is available upon request. When appropriate, children are involved with meal preparation and clean-up. **We welcome and encourage family involvement in menu planning.**

**FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions**

“My child is on a special diet. She may not be able to eat the food prepared at Head Start. How will this work?”
The first step is to create a special diet care plan with the Health/Nutrition Manager, or qualified center staff. The special diet care plan identifies if the child has any food allergies, intolerances, or any other special diet needs due to medical, religious, or personal reasons. A physician signed medical statement with substitutions/modifications is needed for any child that has a special diet due to medical reasons. Any food that is withheld because of personal preference or religious reasons must be listed as a dietary need on the special diet care plan form, and sign by you and the Health/Nutrition Manager. After the special diet care plan form is filled out the Health/Nutrition Manager will train kitchen staff and modify the menu to meet your child’s needs.

“I don’t think my child will eat the food at Head Start. Can I pack a lunch to send with him/her?”
Much of the learning for children takes place during meal times. Sometimes familiar foods are prepared in different ways or new foods are introduced. Children and adults talk about healthy eating along with likes and dislikes. Children are encouraged to try each food, however they are never forced.

**Children’s Services has a food policy that protects children and staff against food borne illness and allergies. Food cannot be brought in or taken home from Head Start centers.** For more information please contact the Health/Nutrition Manager at 459-2976.

**Breastfeeding your child**
The program accepts breast milk in ready to feed sanitary containers labeled with the infants name on them, and date it was expressed. It must be used within 72 hours or discarded. If you do not breast feed your child, formula is provided by the program. Only sanitized bottles (BPA free) will be used and will be provided by the program. Solids such as cereal will not be added to the bottle unless your doctor supplies written information and a medical reason for this practice. Bottles will never be warmed in the microwave oven, since it is a dangerous practice. Children will be fed bottles and food as it is introduced, on demand. Only formula or breast milk will be served up to the age of 12 months. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come in to breastfeed their child at any time.
**Frozen Breast milk:** Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations, frozen, labeled, and dated breast milk may be kept for two weeks in classroom freezer compartments. After two weeks it must be discarded. Frozen breastmilk shall be thawed under running cold water or in the refrigerator.

**Transitions:**

Starting at an early childhood center is a big transition for children! We find that, in most cases, children do adjust well to our program. If your child does have some difficulty, we will talk to you about it. We can work together to figure out ways to best support your child’s needs.

**For Early Head Start (EHS) Children:** The EHS Program is designed and funded to serve children from birth to three. Starting 6 months prior to your child’s third birthday the transition process will begin. This will include Family Liaison and/or Classroom Teacher having a conversation with you to discuss our Head Start Program options. Steps for transition include:

- Conversation with your child’s teacher and/or family liaison to develop a plan.
- Re-verify income to determine income eligibility if you wish for your child to attend HS - please know that income eligible families have priority to enter HS.
- If you are not interested in having your child transition into a HS classroom, or are not income eligible for HS, your transition plan will include having conversations around program options in your community. Your family liaison and/or teacher will also discuss a date in which your child will end their enrollment in EHS – this date will be on, or around, your child’s third birthday.

**Kindergarten Transition:** Heading off to kindergarten is a big transition for children. We will support you and your child through this process. Each classroom teacher and center has different approaches to help in this process. The process of transition may look different for each child due to the school district and your child’s/family’s individual needs. We will partner with you in this process. Some of these transition activities may include:

- Receiving information about registration and screenings
- Sharing your child’s educational and assessment information, only with your permission, to the public school
- IEP meetings, if your child has an identified disability
- Visiting your child’s new school
- Kindergarten Teachers coming to your child’s classroom
- Kindergarten screenings

**Health Services:**

Our goal is good health for your child and your entire family. We work with you to get the Health Services you and your family need. Head Start provides the following screenings as needed: hearing, vision, height, and weight.

**Head Start requirements – All children must have on file**

1. **Immunization (shot) Record**
   
   Maine State Licensing requires that every child has up-to-date immunization records. Children who do not have immunization records received by the program, or proof of exemption will not be able to attend school after 30 days, and may be in jeopardy of losing their slot.
2. **Physical Exam Record**
   Records for the most recent physical exam for every child will be obtained.

3. **Dental Exam Record**
   We will request dental records if available. If a child is in need of a dentist but does not have one, we will help find available dental providers in the area.

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2. **Age-appropriate Well Child Check** (including height, weight, and lead test results for 12 months and 24 months) will be obtained.

   *You may be asked to sign a release of information. This release lets our staff talk with your child’s doctor or dentist’s office so that they remain up to date throughout the school year.*

   *If you do not have a doctor or dentist for your child, or lack of insurance, then our staff will help you and your family. We will provide assistance to obtain MaineCare services. If MaineCare or other resources are not available, and there are no other means of payment, we will pay for the initial physical and dental exam, if you are enrolled in HS or EHS.*

**Staying Safe and Healthy**

Teachers and parents can work together to help children understand different ways of keeping their bodies healthy and safe. Healthy eating, getting medical and dental checkups, taking medicine and learning the difference between good touch and bad touch are some of the topics that will be shared with children.

**To keep germs away –**

- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Cough/sneeze into sleeve or use a tissue
- Avoid contact with others who are sick
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth where germs will enter

**Please remember to keep children home if they are sick.**

**Emergencies or Sudden Illness –**

- Our teachers are CPR and First Aid certified
- We will provide emergency First Aid and call 911, if needed
- We will call you at home, school or at work. If you are not available, we will call an emergency contact that you have listed on your *Emergency* form. This form must remain updated, please tell us when phone numbers for you or your emergency contacts, doctors or dentists change. This form also states that your child may be treated in a hospital in case of serious injury or illness when we are unable to reach you or your emergency contacts.
- When your child is not feeling well, it is sometimes difficult to decide if he/she should go to the center or stay home. If your child has an elevated temperature, vomiting, diarrhea or a rash with other any symptoms, they must stay home. Please call your child’s teacher if your child is going to be absent.
- If your child is exposed to anything contagious at school, the staff will notify you with instructions to follow.
Head Lice

Head lice are common in settings where large groups of children come together. If your child has head lice we will call you to notify you. You may choose to pick your child up early or at the end of the day. The child may return after treatment has begun.

Contagious Illness Guidelines (most common)

*Children will be excluded for contagious illnesses according to their pediatrician recommendations, or recommendations provided from the Centers for Disease Control*

**Influenza (flu):** Avoid work, school or travel until 7 days after symptoms begin and until symptom free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Symptoms include: fever, cough, sore throat, runny/stuffy nose, aches, headache, chills, fatigue, vomiting and diarrhea.

**Chicken Pox:** Incubation period is 10 days to 3 weeks. Exclude child from school for 6 days after rash begins; Blisters must be dry and crusted over with no new lesions appearing before returning to school with a doctor’s note.

**Conjunctivitis (pink eye):** Excluded from school according to doctor’s recommendations and/or for 24 hours from the time the treatment with an antibiotic has begun.

**Impetigo:** Excluded from school for 24 hours from the time an antibiotic treatment has begun. Lesions must be covered upon return to school.

**Ringworm:** Exclude from school at end of program day, may return once treatment has started.

**YCCAC Children’s Services are required to follow the Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities. Section 17.1.3 states: “In the event of a disease outbreak, children not vaccinated for religious, philosophical or medical reasons must be excluded from the program until the outbreak no longer exists or until the child received the necessary immunization.”**

**Disease and Exclusion Policy**

If a child is ill and exhibits signs of a fever of 101°F or higher, vomiting, has two or more episodes of diarrhea, has a rash with any other symptoms, conjunctivitis or does not feel well enough to participate in class or go outside to play, they should stay home. Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to the center. The center staff will be advised if a child who is not fully immunized should be excluded for any period of time during an outbreak of a contagious disease.

*Full copies of York County Community Corporation’s Children’s Services Disease and Exclusion Policy are available upon request.*

**Taking Medication**

If at some point during the program year, your child may be taking a prescription for a short term illness. If this happens, please plan with your child’s doctor to give your child the medicine before and/or after the school day whenever possible.

*If your child regularly takes medication for ongoing health needs, an Individualized Health Plan must be written with the Health/Nutrition Manager.* Your input is required at this meeting. No medication can be given at Head Start without a current Individualized Health Plan and signed directions from your child’s doctor. Please talk with the staff at your center to arrange a meeting, if necessary. The staff will give you more information about the Medication Policy which needs to be followed.
Over –The- Counter Products and Medication
In accordance with “Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities” York County Community Action Corporation’s Children’s Services cannot administer any non-prescription medications to a child without written, signed and dated parental permission naming the medication and dosage.

Over-the-counter products (petroleum jelly, non-medicated lotion for dry skin, lip balm):

- All products supplied by the family must be:
  - In their original container
  - The manufacturer of the product must have an established Material Safety Data Sheet.
  - Products must only be used for their intended use.
  - Clearly marked with child’s name

Topical products that contain “active ingredients” (including diaper cream) will be considered “medicated”. In accordance with York County Head Start Policy and Head Start Performance Standard 1304.22(c)(3), A facility must “obtain physician’s instruction and written parental or guardian authorizations for all medications administered by staff.”

- Staff will obtain a signed Over the Counter Application Form from the child’s parent/guardian.
- Doctor’s instructions (for prescription topical medication) and parental consent (for non-medicated over-the-counter products) must be obtained before administration of any medication.
- If product is provided by the parent, it will be labeled with the child’s full name and stored in a locked cabinet.
- Over-the-counter products will be applied in accordance with the label instructions at all times.
- Staff will record the application of over-the-counter products on the “Over the Counter Application Form”.

Health Emergency Information
Child Health and Safety are important both in the home and at our program. Each classroom has emergency policies, procedures, evacuation routes and local emergency phone numbers posted. Staff and children practice monthly fire drills using alternative routes. You can contact your Center Supervisor for more information about your center’s Emergency Plan, as well as for more information on Child Care Licensing, Pesticides and the Health Care Plans. If parents are interested in developing their own plans for their home, please let your center staff know. For any questions, concerns or information regarding our health services please contact the Health/Nutrition Manager at 459-2976.

Use of Pesticides
Pests can pose significant problems to people, property and the environment. Pesticides pose similar risks. Children face greater potential for health effects resulting from pest and pesticides exposure. By reducing reliance on pesticides and practicing low risk control options, everyone will benefit. When it is determined that pesticides must be used, the least hazardous materials and methods of application will be chosen. All pesticides will be handled by professionals, following State and Federal law and all parents will be notified. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with your teacher.

Policies and Procedures:
Open Door Policy
YCCAC Children’s Services maintains an open door policy for families. Families are welcome to visit or call anytime during operational hours. We ask however, that families consider their child’s temperament and stage of development before visiting, since at times it can be difficult for a child to separate from their families more than once a day.

Early Head Start Classroom Policy
Early Head Start (EHS) hold high standards for the provision of a safe, sanitary setting for infants and toddlers. EHS encourages the development of all children by providing a nurturing environment in which little ones are able to freely explore their surroundings. Which means that at this age, children are often on the floor. Therefore, only shoes worn exclusively at the center (indoors), or slippers may be worn inside the classroom. Infants and toddlers may wear socks or be barefoot, but others cannot be due to OSHA regulations. Booties are provided for all parents and visitors to use. This policy applies to staff, visitors and volunteers.

Sleeping Policy
Infants and toddlers have unique needs. All infants will be placed on their backs to sleep in accordance with Safe Sleep, as well as having no stuffed toys or soft objects in the crib. Children must never have their faces covered by blankets. Each child up to 18 months will have a crib available; toddlers will have a mat available. Individual care will be given each child’s sleeping patterns. Blankets are not permitted in cribs; however, sleep sacks are available for each child.

Pacifier Policy
Pacifiers may only be used with written permission and instructions from parents/guardians. Pacifiers will be used in accordance with Head Start Performance Standards, Maine Child Care Licensing and best practices. Should you want your child to use a pacifier during program hours, please request a copy of our Pacifier Policy for further information.

Diapering
The program will provide diapers and wipes for children enrolled in our program. We use Seventh Generation or Pampers diapers and wipes brand. If your child has an allergy to the brand that the program uses and medical documentation is provided we will accommodate doctor’s recommendation.

Toilet Training
Teacher’s always follow the parent’s lead. We can help you look for signs that your child is ready to try the toilet. Children who will be toilet trained need extra underwear and clothes at school. Please talk with your child’s teacher about the use of training pants and pull-ups.

Tobacco-Free, Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Environment Policy
The purpose of the Tobacco-Free, Drug-Free and Alcohol-Free Environment Policy is to remove exposure for children, staff and families in the Children’s Services program. Smoking is banned within a 50 foot radius of our buildings; this includes spaces used by the program, outdoor play areas and vehicles. When we come to your home please consider the staff member’s health by not smoking during the visit and keeping pets secured until the staff member has left. It is against the law to smoke in a motor vehicle when a minor under 16 years of age is present. The law applies even if the windows are open.
Weapons Policy
In accordance with York County Community Action Corporation’s policy, deadly weapons, including concealed firearms, are prohibited on YCCAC premises.

Professional Boundaries
Staff have professional boundaries and are not allowed to participate in your personal life, including, but not limited to:

- Providing childcare
- Attending non-work related functions
- Engaging in romantic relationships
- Writing letters regarding child custody issues
- Social Networking Websites
- Providing personal contact information

Transportation Agreement
York County Community Action Head Start does not provide transportation to and from its program. In certain instances, travel stipends may be available for parents to support transporting a child to and from home-based services. We will work with parents to find community resources to help with transportation challenges. In our Pre-K collaborative classrooms, at JFK Elementary School, bus services are provided by the school department.

Absences and Attendance
As a parent you hold the key to your child’s success in school and life. A child who is not present at school due to chronic absence will not gain what he/she needs to know to be successful in kindergarten. Kindergarten readiness is the key to your child’s school success throughout their educational career. Early absence predicts low levels of academic achievement throughout high school. Students who struggle in school have a higher dropout rate than their peers who perform at grade level.

To provide the best possible program we need staff and parents to work together. Head Start Performance Standards require our program to maintain 85% attendance. It is your responsibility to call the center before class begins to report your child absent. Staff will call or visit your home if your child is absent for more than three consecutive unexcused days. If your child’s attendance falls below 85% in a month, or in most cases is absent for 3 or more days in a month, staff will set up a meeting with you to discuss your child’s attendance. During this meeting a family plan will be developed in order to help support and improve your child’s attendance.

Child Arrival & Pick Up
When you bring your child to and from the center, please remember the following.

- Get specific times for arrival and departure from staff.
- Parents must bring their child into the classroom, wash their hands, put on shoes covers (EHS Classrooms) and let one of the teachers know that their child is there.
- You, or the person picking up your child, must sign your child in and out every day.
- It is important for each child to participate in our full daily routine and transitions. In order to support your child we discourage late arrivals and pick-ups
• Chronic tardiness to pick up or drop off will result in a need for an attendance plan.

You must notify the center of any changes in who is authorized to pick up your child and ensure that these changes are reflected on the **Emergency Contact and Parent Authorization Form**. In a situation where someone else needs to pick up your child, you must notify the teaching staff ahead of time.

- We will only allow a child to leave the center with authorized person listed on the **Emergency Contact and Parent Authorization**. If the authorized person picking up your child is unfamiliar to the staff, he/she will be asked to please show a valid photo identification before the child is released; they will also be asked to sign your child out.
- Children will only be allowed to be released to adults over 18 years old as stated in the **Rules for Licensing of Child Care Facilities** for the State of Maine.

Occasionally, a situation may arise in your schedule that changes your child’s pick up time; under such circumstance, please let classroom staff know in advance when possible. In this case, it is an expectation that you will arrange for someone else on the emergency list to pick up your child.

**Late Pick up Policy**

Upon enrollment into the program, YCCAC Head Start staff will inform you about your classroom closing time. All children need to be picked up by this time. If your child has not been picked up by classroom closing time, parents will be charged a late fee of a dollar ($1.00) per minute after five minutes of the classroom closing time. Late fees will be determined by your classroom clock.

You will be notified and given a Late Fee Notice. Within 5 days of receiving the Late Fee Notice you will need to contact your Family Liaison to:
- Discuss why your child was picked up late
- At this meeting, your late fee must be paid in full (cash payments only)
  - **Payment plans may be arranged on a case-by-case basis**

If late pick-ups continue, the Family Liaison and the Lead Teacher will set up a meeting with you to discuss if the program option is appropriate. Staff will work with you to decide on what other options may be available for your family.

*Regarding Twins, Triplets, etc: There will be one late fee for the family.*

If your child’s has shortened classroom hours based on a plan that was put into place by the Head Start team, your late fee will begin at the pickup time established by the plan.

**THE FOLLOWING STEPS WILL BE TAKEN WHEN A CHILD IS NOT PICKED UP AT CLOSING:**

- Two staff will remain with the child.
- Attempts to contact parent(s)/guardian(s) will be made. If parent/guardian cannot be reached, emergency contact numbers will be called.
- If parent/guardian or emergency contacts cannot be reached within 30 minutes, the staff will call the police and DHHS. After the child has been picked up a second call will be made to update DHHS and the police.

**Field Trips**

In keeping with our program’s philosophy: all families need to be included in our programs and everything that takes place during the day; field trips will be planned with staff and families so that the curriculum and activities are enhanced by bringing community experiences into the classroom.
Cancellations and Delays
If York County Community Action Corporation, Children’s Services and the school system in your area is cancelled due to bad weather, Children’s Services will also be cancelled. If YCCAC is closed, and your school district is open, the classroom will also be cancelled. For classroom delays and/or early releases due to inclement weather we will follow the same protocol: if the school system in your area has a delay and/or closes early – your child’s classroom will do the same. If YCCAC has a delay or closes early – your child’s classroom will do the same.

It is our goal to keep classrooms operating daily, however, we will not compromise the safety of children or quality of care that we provide. We are required to meet Maine State Childcare Licensing Regulations and Head Start Performance Standards therefore, there may be times that due to staffing challenges we will have no choice but to close a classroom. We will do all that we can to ensure that classrooms are running daily. Please know that we understand that closing a classroom may be an inconvenience to families.

Celebration and Diversity
Holidays/Birthdays are not celebrated as part of our program, but you and your child may celebrate other special events. These are events that all children and families are able to take part in despite any differences there may be in religious, ethnic, and cultural beliefs. Some of these special days may include changes in the seasons, colors, celebration of children and families, and many more.

Children’s Services celebrates the uniqueness and diversity of all families in following these principles, our program will honor the importance of celebrations. By working together, staff and families will create an environment of including everyone, by respect and appreciation for each child’s family, culture and life style.

Dual Language Learners
For dual language learners who participate in our programs, every effort will be made to support the development of the child’s home language and stress the child’s connection to their family as well as their learning of the English language. Staff members working with dual language learners will be supported in locating and using resources based on the needs of the child and those of their family. Resources may include but are not limited to: translators from community agencies; volunteers and/or family members who can translate; written materials translated into the primary language; training opportunities in topics such as language development and instructional strategies, etc. Teaching staff create a classroom environment that is inclusive of dual language learners home language and culture.

Behavior Policy
The Head Start program uses an approach to discipline and guidance that emphasizes respect for each child; developmentally appropriate expectations of children’s behavior; and the use of positive discipline and guidance strategies.

This institution is an equal opportunity employer and provider.
Our staff members strive to create a relaxed, positive environment that enables children to explore and experiment while remaining safe and feeling well-supported. Through positive guidance strategies and modeling social skills, staff helps children learn pro-social behaviors, build confidence and self-esteem, and develop greater respect for others’ rights and feelings, as well as a sense that they are themselves respected.

Discipline concerns are handled by staff in a way that encourages children to solve problems and develop a sense of inner self-control. Children are given authentic choices and the opportunity to be an active part of decision-making in their environment, thus fostering a sense of personal responsibility. Staff helps children to understand the reasons for rules and limits and to feel good about the choices they make.

**Outdoor Activities and Dressing for School**

Children will spend at least **60 minutes** each day outside. Make sure that your child:

- Has sunscreen applied to exposed skin before coming to class. (Permission forms to have sunscreen and/or bug spray applied at school are offered during enrollment).
- Wears comfortable play clothes that are easy to wash - we do lots of messy activities inside and outside!
- Dress for the weather. This includes hats, mittens and boots.
- Has an extra set of clothes to be left at the classroom with their name clearly marked.
- Wears shoes that are safe for running, climbing and playing.

Please note that we will make all attempts to go outside each day. If your child is too sick to play outside we ask that you keep your child at home until they are feeling better.

**Pedestrian Safety for Your Child**

### Set a Good Example

- Cross streets at a corner. Use signals and crosswalks when they are there.
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them.
- Look left, right and left again before crossing. Keep looking as you cross.
- Walk across streets. Don’t run.
- Walk on sidewalks or paths. If there are no sidewalks, face traffic and stay left.
- Watch for cars that are turning or backing up.

### Rules for Kids

- Teach kids all of the safe walking rules to follow.
- Never allow kids under age 10 to cross streets alone.
- Tell kids never to run into the street for any reason. They shouldn’t chase a ball, a pet or anything else.
- Make sure kids use direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- Teach kids to cross 10 feet in front of the school bus, never behind.
- Make sure kids play in safe places like yards, parks and playgrounds. Kids should never play in the street.
Hold kids’ hands in parking lots and while crossing the street.

**Being Seen**
- Keep kids from walking alone when it’s hard to be seen. That includes dawn, dusk, the early evening and rainy and foggy weather.
- Make sure kids wear retro reflective materials. They bounce back light so the wearer can be seen. Retro reflective materials are found on clothes, shoes, stickers and arm and leg bands.

**Car Seat Safety**
Children’s Services staff is required by both policy and Maine State law to assure that children are secured correctly in the vehicle as they arrive and depart from the center. When a staff person sees that lack of or improper use of a restraining device threatens a child’s safety, that person is to follow these guidelines:

- Provide you with educational materials and resource information, including where to get free or low cost devices and a car seat inspection.
- Remind you that proper use of a child restraint is the law. Staff members are directed by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to notify the police when a child is not properly secured in a vehicle. This offense is reportable to DHHS.

**Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**
There are laws in place for the safety and protection of your child. If any Children’s Services staff has reasonable cause to suspect that any child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected, staff are mandated to report their concerns to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This includes cases of domestic violence. If a report is made, either by our program or an outside source, our staff will assist you through the process. Together we will work with you and Child Protective Services.

**Domestic Violence and Order for Protection from Abuse**
Children’s Services recognizes that domestic violence affects not only the victim, but also children and other family members. As part of Head Start’s family focus belief, we are committed to supporting children and families in achieving safe, self-sufficient lives free of family violence and to promote a zero tolerance for domestic violence. Our commitment includes being informed of and adhering to any Order for Protection from Abuse.

This will ensure that:
- Children do not have contact with any person prohibited to be around them at any Children’s Services center/function.
- Children enrolled in the our program are not released to any person who is prohibited from having contact with them as ordered by the court.
- When staff is aware of any violation of an Order for Protection from Abuse, either in the home or at the center, they are responsible to report it to their immediate supervisor and that person will determine the next step.
- Staff will not remain in the home if a person there is in violation of an Order for Protection from Abuse.

As stated above, domestic violence is reportable to DHHS. This policy is consistent with the written agreement between DHHS and York County Community Action Head Start.

**Confidentiality**
Families participate in our program in many ways; from transporting their own child and/or other children to and from the center, volunteering in the classroom, to attending Family Linkz gatherings or other family activities. We ask that as you participate, you respect the privacy of the children, families and staff, both here at
the center and in your conversations out in the community. Sometimes specific child or family information, shared in an innocent exchange, may be hurtful or damaging (example: a conversation in the grocery store about a child who attends the center when his/her family does not want that information shared.) While at our centers, if you should hear or see something that causes you concern, please ask to speak to the teacher privately, away from the classroom and share your concern with them immediately. **We appreciate your sensitivity to the rights and needs of our Children’s Services community.**

Staff members are also bound by confidentiality and are unable to discuss any information with parents and volunteers about other children and families in the program.

To ensure confidentiality, the program will:

- Keep all records in locked file cabinets.
- Not release any information verbally or in writing to anyone outside of YCCAC Children’s Services unless the parent/guardian has given written permission.
- Only disclose records without written permission, if ordered by the court or in the case of reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

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**Welcome to our Children’s Services Family!!!**

We hope this handbook serves as a guide, and provides you with an overview of Children’s Services and all we have to offer.

We look forward to embarking on this journey with you and your family!