

# Family Handbook



*Together We Build Bright Futures*



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## Semcac Head Start's Visionary Mission Statement

To empower all children and families to reach their goals, we will foster strong relationships, offer multi-generational support, and provide family, education, and health services.

### To accomplish our mission, we value:

- Our Head Start family
- Families as their child's first and most important teacher
- Diverse and welcoming environments
- Community partnerships and resources
- Commitment to making a difference through continuous improvement
- Building Bright Futures



### Philosophy

We believe that parents are the first and most important teachers of their children for a lifetime. Every child is entitled to a safe, loving, respectful and nurturing childhood. Each family is unique, deserving of respect and dignity. Open communication, partnership and shared commitment between parents, teaching teams, and community is essential for quality services.

### School Readiness Goals

Our goal is for all children to grow and develop to their full potential. In Head Start and Early Head Start, we talk about "School Readiness." For children, this means they have the skills, knowledge and attitudes they need to be successful in school and for later learning and life. These goals guide us in what and how we teach. You will be part of making a plan that includes activities at home and school that move your child towards an individual goal. We are eager to know and learn how best to support you and your child.

#### Approaches to Learning

Children will develop and increase skills in self-regulation, creativity, independence, persistence and curiosity.

#### Social and Emotional Development

Children will create and sustain positive relationships with adults and other children and manage their emotions.

#### Language and Communication

Children will develop and increase skills in receptive (attending and understanding) and expressive (communicating and speaking) language and emergent literacy.

#### Cognition

Children will develop and increase skills in exploration, discovery, using memory, reasoning and problem solving, Children will increase skills in emergent mathematical thinking and scientific inquiry.

#### Perceptual, Motor and Physical Development

Children will develop and increase skills in perception, motor, personal care and health and safe behaviors.

*Semcac Head Start values every child and family no matter race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age. We ask that children and families enrolled in our program do the same.*

*Our exciting journey together is ahead. Whether this is your child's first year or you are returning, you will have an awesome experience – depending on your interest and participation. Take this as a challenge and get involved! Have fun growing with your child and other parents!*

### Semcac Head Start Helpful Tips

If you have ever made a move from one location to another or separated from friends, you know how hard a transition can be. Going from a familiar, comfortable environment to one that is different can be stressful.

A parent can show, in both words and actions that school is a safe place for a child to learn and grow. School is your child's first job. By encouraging daily attendance and participation, your child and you will have the best year yet!

#### Here are some everyday tips

- Sick children cannot function and endanger the health of other children in the classroom. **If your child is sick, keep them at home. Ask teaching teams “when is too sick for school?” Be sure to call and let us know when your child will not be in school.**
- **Preschoolers need 10 to 13 hours of sleep each day, including naps.** A tired child does not learn as well as one who is well rested and ready for the day. It is important that you and your child get up early enough so there is time to get ready.
- Plan your morning schedule so you do not have to rush out the door. A picture schedule can be helpful for children who have a hard time getting ready. Ask your child's Teaching Team for ideas or help with morning routines.
- Be sure your child's body and clothing are clean before leaving for school.
- Set aside time each day for you and your child to enjoy some fun learning activities together. Turn off the television during this time. Talk to your child's Teaching Team for ideas on what you can do.
- Read to your child each day to help lay the foundation for future success in school
- Send your child to school with a smile, a hug and an encouraging word each day.
- Check your child's backpack for newsletters and other information daily.
- Team members will also check backpacks daily to ensure children are not bringing Toys, food or anything dangerous to school.
- Ask your child about their day at school.



#### COVID-19 Plan

Semcac Head Start's COVID-19 plan is regularly updated using information provided by Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the CDC. If you would like to view a copy of our Covid Mitigation Plan, or if you have additional questions or concerns, please reach out to your child's teacher or the Health Coordinator. It is all of our responsibility to keep children safe and healthy. **If your child is sick, keep them at home.**

## Center-based Services

### Attendance

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves! Start building this habit in early childhood so your child will learn that going to school on time every day is not only important but is their job in their family. Good attendance will help them do well in elementary and high school and in their future job! Attendance matters!

- Make your child's attendance in the program a high priority.
- If your child will be absent, please call your child's classroom BEFORE the start of class. Please give the exact reason your child is missing school. Classrooms have cell phones so you can reach Teaching Teams immediately. Meal orders and other daily scheduling depend on knowing if your child will be absent.
- If an extended absence is necessary, due to illness or family emergency, such as a death of family member, or traveling out of the state or country, please notify your child's Teacher of the expected return date. An *Extended Attendance Agreement* must be initiated.
- If your child is unexpectedly absent and you have not contacted the program within one hour of the expected arrival time, the Teaching Team will contact you to ensure your child's well-being.
- Teaching Teams will conduct a home visit with you if your child has missed two days in a row and we have not heard from you. We need to ensure you and your child are safe.
- Children missing two days each month **for any reason** are considered chronically absent. When Teaching Teams review attendance data and notice your child's absences are adding up, they will call you or make a home visit to give needed support. Your child's Family Education Paraprofessional or Family Service Advocate will complete *My Child's Success Plan* with you. This plan includes:
  1. What you as a parent will do to assure regular attendance of your child and
  2. What will happen if there continues to be irregular attendance. If the plan is not followed, your child will be dropped from the program.
- All Teaching Teams will work with you to overcome any barriers to help get your child back to regular attendance. Let us know how we can help!

Your child's regular classroom attendance is a high priority in our program. Full participation is strongly encouraged because it will maximize your child's feeling they are part of their school family. Children are able to greet friends and Teaching Teams at circle time, choose a classroom job, interact with children and adults during free choice and small group time as well as have a good understanding of the daily scheduled and planned activities. Full participation also enables children to build academic life skills. Celebrate good attendance as a family!

### Behavior and Guidance Policy

Our philosophy on behavior guidance is to use each undesired behavior as a learning opportunity to teach the missing skill for continued growth in safety, connection and problem solving. Our program uses Conscious Discipline, which encourages self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation.

### Teaching Teams will:

- Implement and model Conscious Discipline language and practices daily with children.
- Implement the teaching tools from the Social-Emotional Teaching Tool Kit, daily with children. These teaching tools are a variety of resources that will be helpful in the classroom; visual timer, Daily- "How I am feeling today chart", walking rope with handles, sensory fidgets, first & then binder with picture schedules, mobile picture schedule, solution visual ring, and social stories.

### When Team Members begin to notice:

- Behaviors that are not responding to supportive, nurturing relationships in the class environment, and a child's behavior becomes unsafe for themselves and/ or others:

### **Here are some supports that can happen:**

- The child can be placed in the adult's lap until the child calms (A gentle hold)
- Model Conscious Discipline self-regulation strategies, I.e., (Breathing, feeling buddies, etc.)
- Redirect to a quiet space with a Team Member I.e., Conscious Discipline-safe place.
- Redirecting to another activity, giving the child a choice, I.e., (Social storybook, fidgets, active mat, brain break with songs, etc.)
- Separation from the group may be necessary (notification of the Site Manager and the Inclusion Coordinator must happen first) and then, **if needed the Teaching Team will call the family to come and support the child in the classroom.** In addition, The Inclusion Coordinator will notify the MHP.
- If a child is on a current IEP/IFSP, the Teaching Team will notify the Site Manager and the Inclusion Coordinator, and a meeting with the parent/family and the current LEA partner will be scheduled to discuss the current concerns.

**In certain situations, support may change due to the severity or needs of the child. Head Start may not be the best setting for your child, In the event that Head Start is no longer the best fit for the child, families will work collaboratively with Head Start Team to find a more appropriate fit; for example:**

- **Specialized educational services**
- **Weekly Home –Visits.**

In accordance with DHS licensing and Head Start Performance Standards the following measures can be initiated for persistent unacceptable behavior:

- Individual observations completed by our contracted Mental Health Professional
- Implementation of an Individualized Behavior Plan completed by the classroom teacher and Inclusion Coordinator
- Meeting with you, classroom teaching teams, Education, Inclusion, and Health Coordinators to discuss best supports.

All Head Start employees are **prohibited** from using discipline such as:

- Subjecting a child to corporal punishment, this includes rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, slapping, spanking, etc.
- Subjecting a child to emotional abuse, which includes name-calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family, and using communication (yelling, sarcasm, ignoring and silence, etc.) that threatens, humiliates, or frightens the child.
- Punishment for lapses in toilet habits.
- Withholding food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care.
- Using mechanical restraints, such as tying.

If you believe an employee is using inappropriate discipline, please bring it to the attention of the Site Manager, or if you prefer, the Head Start Director at 507-864-8233. All employees, consultants, and volunteers sign and respect a Code of Conduct to state that they will not leave a child alone or unsupervised while under our care and that they will use positive methods of child guidance. Team Members will follow strictly the program's procedures concerned with children's behavior guidance.

### **Curriculum**

Young children learn through exploring and experimenting with a variety of materials, interacting with adults and other children. Children need a variety of experiences to build skills, knowledge and understanding.

Curriculum is the framework for planning activities and experiences. Semcac Head Start uses:

- Creative Curriculum System for Preschool (3–5-year-olds for Head Start {HS})
- Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos (Early Head Start – {EHS})

Both curriculums are recognized as quality, evidence-based approaches to Early Childhood Education with a foundation in theory and research.

Weekly lesson plans organize activities around a topic that is meaningful and interesting to children. The lesson plan is posted in the classroom so you can see what your child is learning and doing. Teaching Teams send home monthly newsletters that offer information and activities to do with your children. We encourage your engagement by suggesting classroom activities or volunteering to share your interests or talents with the children. You are always welcome in your child's classroom.

### **Daily Schedules**

Teachers develop a daily schedule for indoor and outdoor activities that is appropriate for the age of the children in the class. Daily schedules are posted at the center.

A typical day includes:

- Large Group – Children practice listening to others and expressing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Group time provides an opportunity for children to experience a sense of belonging to the group.
- Small Groups – Teaching Teams introduce new ideas or materials to children. They may teach a specific skill like counting or telling a story. Small groups provide a time to talk and share ideas.
- Choice Time – Children have the opportunity to investigate, explore, and experiment. They are able to choose activities that interest them. Time is allowed for play to develop.
- Meals – Mealtime is learning time too. Healthy food choices, good manners, conversation, and enjoyment of sharing food with friends are important parts of meals and snacks.
- Outside/Gym – Active play indoors and outdoors. Physical activity is vital to good health and muscle development.
- Rest – Six-hour or more class sessions have a rest time scheduled.

### **Naps and Rest**

- Classrooms that operate for six or more hours will provide a rest or quiet time consistent with the developmental level of each child enrolled in the program.
- A quiet, dimly lit area will be provided for the nap and rest area.
- The area will be physically separated from the area where children may be engaged in quiet activities.
- A child who has completed a nap or rested quietly for 30 minutes will not be required to remain on a cot.
- Each child will have their own cot.
- Blankets will be provided to every child. These blankets will be kept at the center and laundered weekly and as needed.

### **Nutrition**

Nutrition is an important part of the Head Start Program

- Due to strict health and safety guidelines, all foods offered at Head Start must be purchased or provided by Head Start. No other food will be allowed.
- A consultant Dietician is available to parents, pregnant women and employees. The dietician provides:
  - menus, and guidance with prescribed special diets; and
  - provides nutrition guidance and training for families and employees.
- Children are served a nutritious breakfast and/or snack and lunch every day.
- Semcac Head Start takes part in the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- All meals served meet the USDA meal pattern requirements and are provided at least 1/3 of the child's daily nutritional needs.
- You will receive a copy of the monthly menus. You are encouraged to be a part of menu planning by offering menu suggestions.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- (2) fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### Releasing a Child

- A child will be released only to their Parent(s) or to those persons who are listed on the Emergency and Release Information form. We must have two people for contacts other than the Parent.
- Teaching team members must see the Parent or the designated, responsible person before releasing the child.
- In the event of an emergency, if the child is to be released to a person not listed on the Emergency and Release Information form, the parent must provide verbal permission. This must include the date, child's name, parent's name, and a brief description of the responsible person the child is to be released to. The person responsible will be required to show picture identification.
- **The Teaching Team will request identification before releasing the child to anyone they have not met before.**
- To ensure the safety of all children, we will not release children to persons behaving in a way that poses a risk to the children or to the facility. The appropriate agency will be called if this situation arises.
- If Parent or designated person does not arrive to pick up a child, employees will make every effort to reach Parent or persons listed on the Emergency and Release Information form. Thirty minutes after class ends when there has been no communication from the person responsible, Teaching Teams will contact law enforcement.



## Home-based Services

### Attendance

- Make your child's attendance in the program a high priority. We are receiving Federal tax dollars to provide this program to you and your child.
- Home visits are offered Monday – Friday. You and your Home-based Educator (HBE) will decide on a day of the week and a time to meet that works best for both of you for your home visit. This schedule will be the same each week.
- Occasionally something may happen that causes you to be unavailable for a scheduled home visit. If this occurs, please contact your HBE as soon as possible to reschedule your home visit. The home visit should be rescheduled for another time that same week or you have the option to complete a makeup visit the following week.
- If there will be an extended absence due to illness or family emergency, please notify your HBE of your expected return date. An Extended Attendance Agreement will be initiated.
- **Attendance is a Concern** when your child misses one home visit and the visit is not rescheduled, your HBE will complete an Attendance Agreement with you. The Attendance Agreement will include:
  - What you as a parent will commit to, to assure regular attendance, and
  - What will happen if there continues to be irregular attendance
  - You and the HBE will both sign and date the plan.
- If the Attendance Agreement is not followed, your child will be dropped from the program so that other families can be given the opportunity to attend.
- All teaching teams will work with you to overcome any barriers to help get your child back to regular attendance. Let us know how we can help!

### Curriculum

Semcac Early Head Start has chosen *Partners for a Healthy Baby* as our Home-based curriculum. This evidence-based series stresses the importance of prenatal and early childhood development and the power of early family relationships.

### Home Visits

During your weekly home visits, you and your HBE will work closely together to help your child develop. Your home environment is used to help you create rich learning opportunities that build on everyday routines that support your child's growth. Early Head Start Home-based families will receive 46 home visits. The home visits will be scheduled during the 12-month program year. This will allow for time off during holidays and vacations, as well as to schedule make-up days.

### Nutrition

- A meal or healthy snack is provided at Socializations following CACFP guidelines.
- All participants are encouraged to participate.
- Nutrition is part of ongoing learning activities on Home Visits, and at the Socializations.
- A consultant Dietician is available to parents, pregnant women and employees.

### Socializations

During the program year you and your child will meet with your HBE and other families. These times are called Socializations. You will have time to get to know other parents and share parenting experiences. You and your HBE will plan activities that strengthen your relationship with your child and provide opportunities for your child to interact with other children. There will be presentations about safety, nutrition, discipline and other topics of interest to you. A snack or meal will be provided. There are 22 planned socializations for Home-Based families in a program year. We encourage you to make these gatherings your own, become involved and name your family group!

## Background Study Checks

No Head Start employees will be hired in any capacity until a criminal record check for the individual has been completed. A full background study of the four checks includes: Verification of references; Sex offender registry check; Full criminal record check by the Department of Human Services (DHS) which includes when available, fingerprint checking; and, Child abuse and neglect state registry check, if available.

All volunteers, including AmeriCorps, interns, practicum students and Head Start Parents must be directly supervised. This means that they are to be within sight of and hearing of employees at all times. Therefore, no background check is needed. If a person volunteers on a regular basis, for an average of three to four hours per week, s/he will complete a Criminal Arrest and Conviction Declaration.

## Calendar

Teaching Teams will provide a monthly Important Dates section within the classroom newsletter. The list of important dates shows upcoming events or changes to the routine schedule. This will help you to plan ahead.

### Birthdays/Holidays

Families in our programs have many different religions, cultures and beliefs. We believe that holiday traditions are family events that are celebrated differently from home to home. Therefore, our program will not celebrate religious, cultural or commercial holidays. We will not design events that exclude any child or family or discriminate against any family's beliefs, values, or customs. We encourage and support families in celebrating their own holidays and other traditions at home with their children.

Families also recognize birthdays in different ways. Our policy is that birthdays are acknowledged as a special day for each child. Teaching Teams plan specific activities/privileges for the birthday child. "Birthday parties" will not be held in Head Start classrooms. Do not send birthday treats.

### End of Year Events

The end-of-year event is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the time children and families have spent in Head Start. Celebrations might include a family get together at the park or something that everyone can enjoy. Events are planned locally by parent groups and Teaching Teams.

### Field Trips

Field trips are planned for children to have a chance to learn about the community. Teaching Teams will send out slips in advance for you to sign giving permission for your child to participate in field trips. Home-based parents and children will attend field trips together.

## Center Closing, Late Starts or Home Visit Cancellations

Notices are sent to you via text, email, and the Learning Genie Application or you will be called if an email is not provided.

**It is important to let your child's Teaching Team know if your cell phone number and/or email changes.**

Closing, cancellations or late starts will happen when:

- The local school system is closed due to bad weather.
- There are hazardous road conditions.
- Outdoor temperature falls below a safe level for young children.
- Unusual circumstances; such as a pandemic.
- Furnace failure, no water, etc.
- And in the event of multiple teaching team members' absences.



## Conscious Discipline

Social/emotional development is key for children to be successful in all areas of life and learning. Forming relationships with others and developing a sense of identity and belonging is vital. Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive, trauma informed, self-regulation program that provides guidance to Teaching Teams, leaders, children and families. Conscious Discipline promotes connectedness by building a School Family. The three core components of Conscious Discipline are safety, connection, and problem solving. It helps adults and children develop the skills of composure, assertiveness, encouragement, choices, empathy, positive intent and meaningful consequences using structures, routines, and rituals.

Conscious Discipline teaches important life skills such as:

- We are responsible for our own feelings and actions;
- The choices we make impact others;
- We teach others how to treat us;
- Conflict and mistakes are opportunities to learn a new skill; and
- Love is more powerful than fear; cooperation is more effective than coercion and compassion is more powerful than competition.

## Disabilities and Special Needs

Every effort is made to meet each child's individual needs. If your child has a diagnosed disability or special need, Head Start will work with your local school or other agencies to coordinate services.

- If you have any concerns about your child's development, talk to your child's Teaching Team.
- Referrals for evaluation are made based on information from developmental/sensory screenings, classroom observations, medical records/history, and Parent comments/concerns.
- Written parental permission must be obtained before a referral is made to a School District or any agency or you are free to make the referral on your own through <http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/Refer/>
- When the evaluation is complete, a meeting is held with parents, various school district staff and Head Start employees. It will be determined if your child qualifies for services from the school district (ECSE). If so, and you agree, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) (3–5-year old's) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) (Birth – 3-year old's) will be developed.
- Teaching Teams will support the parents/families through the referral and the evaluation process. If you have questions at any time, contact your child's teaching team.

## Dressing for Head Start

It is great when children wear comfortable play clothing that they can get dirty. We do many messy fun things throughout the day.

- Children need to be dressed to play outside, including jackets, boots, mittens and hats when the weather is cold. Because outdoor play is important, the children will go outside in temperatures down to 0 degrees F.
- Head Start promotes the physical development of children with activities like running, climbing, jumping, hopping on one foot and skipping. For your child's safety they need to wear a full tie-up shoe like a tennis shoe or one that closes with Velcro. **No sandals, flip-flops, open toed shoes, dress shoes or high heels permitted.**
- Please send an extra change of clothing to keep at the center.
- Head Start will not be responsible for damage to or loss of children's clothing.

## Dual Language Learners

Dual Language Learners (DLL) are children who “acquire two or more languages simultaneously” and learn a second language while continuing to develop their first language. Head Start's goal is for every child to grow and learn to his/her fullest potential. We are continually improving our best practices to best support every child.

We respect and honor the cultures of all Head Start families. Culture, traditions, and language are an important part of your family. They give your child a sense of belonging and help them understand how they fit in the family and community. For that reason, we encourage you to teach your children your home language and use it often. Research shows that a strong foundation in the home language makes it easier for children to learn to read, write and speak English.

Our classroom language model is English with Home-language support. This means that lessons will primarily be taught in English, with support from teaching teams by engaging families and providing examples of each child's culture and language in the classroom. Your child's Teaching Team will be sharing activities for you and your child to work on together at home. This will be a good opportunity to make connections between home language and English. We invite you and your child to share songs, stories or traditions that are important to your family with the rest of the class. Your child's Teaching Team will let you know about opportunities to come into the classroom to share or to help in other ways. We look forward to sharing these learning experiences with you.

### **Health Requirements**

Children need to be up to date on a schedule of age-appropriate preventive and primary medical and oral health care, based on the well-child visits and dental periodicity schedules as prescribed by Minnesota's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program. Immunization recommendations are issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Head Start will collaborate with you to bring your child up to date with these health requirements as quickly as possible. Notify your child's Teaching Team of all scheduled appointments. They will be happy to assist you in making the necessary arrangements.

#### **Your child must meet the following health requirements:**

- 1. A current physical examination** must be obtained from your family physician or local health department. It is a state childcare licensing requirement that each child must have a medical exam on file before they can start the program or within 30 days of starting the program.
  - a. If the well child exam is not completed as required, children enrolled in center-based classrooms will not be able to attend until an exam is completed and on file.
  - b. Your child's teaching team will complete a weekly home visit until your child is brought up to date.
  - c. Children (ages 2-5) returning to the program will need to complete a yearly well child exam within 30 days of the previous exam date, to stay up to date with state requirements.
  - d. Returning children in center-based programs who do not have a well child exam within 30 days of previous exam will not be able to attend until an exam is completed and on file.
- 2. A current dental exam** must be completed by a dentist, dental therapist or dental hygienist within 90 days of starting the program.
  - a. Follow up dental treatment must be completed in a timely manner.
  - b. If your child is unable to attend a scheduled dental appointment, it is very important to call the dental office to cancel your appointment in order to stay in good standing. Some dental offices will not reschedule a 'no show' appointment.
- 3. Immunizations must be kept up to date.** State law requires an immunization record for each child before starting the Head Start program.
  - a. At least one dose of each vaccine (DTaP, Polio, Hib, Hep A and B, MMR, & Varicella) is required for your child to attend the center. Influenza vaccination is also required per CDC recommendations but will not deny your child entry.
  - b. Enrolled infants and toddlers will follow the required immunization schedule according to their age.
  - c. If you are opposed to immunizations, you must indicate this on the Child Care Immunization Record Form and have it notarized before your child can attend center-based classrooms.

- 4. All families need a medical and dental home and health insurance coverage.** Teaching Teams will assist you in finding care and coverage if you do not have any established.

### **Payment for Services**

The billing for your child's well child and dental exam and any follow-up care must be submitted to your health insurance plan. If your child is not covered by a health insurance plan, Teaching Teams will assist you in accessing resources. Head Start has limited funds, therefore, all other resources must be considered before Head Start can pay for services

### **Medication**

- Prescribed medication may be administered to your child while attending a center, only when necessary.
- We encourage you to administer medications at home.
- If necessary, teaching teams will ask you to complete a form which gives them specific information and permission to give the medication to your child.
- All Head Start employees receive training in medication administration as necessary.
- All medications, with the exception of rescue medications, are secured in a lock box.
- The medication must be brought in by an adult in its original container with a pharmacy label indicating:
  - The doctor's name;
  - The child's name;
  - Dosage and name of the medication;
  - Instructions for use; and
  - Expiration date.

### **Mental Health Professional**

A Mental Health Professional (MHP) is a part of the Head Start team and is available to Head Start employees and families. The contracted MHP will:

- observe in the classroom;
- review social/emotional screenings;
- provide guidance and training;
- work with teaching teams and parents to find resources to help meet children's needs; and
- Head Start employees and/or parents may request further assessment and referral.

### **Oral Health**

We take care of our teeth by making tooth brushing a part of our daily routine. In our classroom, we brush our teeth as a group. The children and Teaching Teams brush with a dry toothbrush and a ½ pea size dab or less of toothpaste at the classroom tables in a group. Teaching Teams guide and direct the children. This process allows the children to get the full benefit of the fluoride in the toothpaste.

### **Safety**

Safety measures are in place to assure your child is safe and always accounted for.

- Teaching Teams will keep you informed of health and safety issues if they should arise. In return, it is important to keep them informed of any issues that could affect the health/safety of your child or others.
- During the school year, if your child experiences a serious injury or is hospitalized for a health issue or any other circumstance that may possibly affect your child's ability to be in a childcare setting, a note from the doctor will be required for your child to return to the classroom, stating when your child can return and noting any restrictions.
- Head Start employees are certified in Pediatric First Aid and CPR and trained in emergency preparedness. In the event of an urgent/emergency situation, appropriate action will be taken including contacting emergency resources as needed.

- Each site has a First Aid Kit, Fire Extinguishers, a Crisis Kit, Emergency Plans and maps of Emergency Exits, which are posted. Please take note of these items when you are in the classroom. Emergency drills are conducted on a regular basis
- Each child must have an *Emergency and Release Information form* on file, which gives teaching teams contact information and necessary approval for emergency treatment if needed.
- Parents will need to list 2 local contact people other than themselves whom we can call if there is an urgent/emergency situation or if your child is ill. **The timeframe for your child to be picked up is 30 minutes, or they will be released to law enforcement.**
- In an urgent/emergency situation you will always be contacted first, however if we are unable to reach you, the emergency contacts will be called. **The timeframe for your child to be picked up is 30 minutes, or they will be released to law enforcement.**

### Exclusion of Sick Children

If a child becomes ill while in our care, parents will be asked to pick up your child. If your child's Teaching Team is unable to reach you, they will call people on the *Emergency and Release Information form*.

A "Health Alert" notice will be posted at the site and available to you informing you of any communicable disease your child may have been exposed to. Contact your child's teaching team within 24 hours if your child has a communicable or contagious disease.

Your child needs to be kept home if they have:

- A reportable illnesses or conditions as specified in 4605.7040 that the Commissioner of Health determines to be contagious, and a physician determines has not had sufficient treatment to decrease the health risk to others;
- Chicken pox, until the child is no longer infectious or until the lesions are crusted over;
- Tested positive for Covid-19;
- Vomited two or more times since admission that day;
- Had three or more abnormally loose stools since admission that day;
- Contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye;
- A bacterial infection such as strep throat or impetigo and has not completed 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy;
- Lice, ringworm or scabies that are untreated and contagious to others;
- A 100-degree Fahrenheit axillary or higher temperature of undiagnosed origin before fever reducing medication is given;
- Unexplained lethargy;
- An undiagnosed rash or a rash attributable to a contagious illness or condition;
- Significant respiratory distress;
- Or who is not able to participate in activities with reasonable comfort; or
- Who requires more care than the program staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children in care.

**If Teaching Teams have a home visit scheduled and someone in your family is ill, it is important to call your child's teacher and reschedule the visit.**

The Health Coordinator is informed of all health or safety issues that arise. The Health Coordinator may contact you about specific health issues. You are welcome to contact the Health Coordinator by phone # 507-686-0008 with any questions you may have.

## **WIC Information**

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program.

WIC is a program provided in all counties supporting pregnant women, infants, and children up to age 5 nutritional needs. WIC provides:

- Nutrition advice and tips;
- Healthy foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals, bread and tortillas, low fat milk and baby foods;
- Breastfeeding support; and
- Caring and supportive staff

To learn more, contact your family education paraprofessional or HBE; call 1-800-WIC-4030 or visit <http://www.health.state.mn.us/wic> for a WIC clinic near you. This program is no cost to you. What you have to gain is a healthier baby, healthier family, and healthier you.

## **Parent Engagement**

You are your child's first teacher! Your involvement is essential to a successful school year and beyond. There are many opportunities to be involved and enjoy your child's early education experience. Your presence in the classroom, at home visits and parent/teacher conferences is not only helpful, but also important to your child. For your child to be ready to succeed in school and in life, we need to work together. Some things you can do at home include:

- Establishing family routines
- Promoting positive discipline
- Creating a language and experience-rich home environment
- Reading or engaging in other literacy-based activities every day

**The possibilities are many and the rewards are endless. Come join in the fun!**

## **Family Partnership Agreement**

When Head Start and families are partners, they "agree" to work together on behalf of their child and their family. Head Start will develop this partnership with you, in a comfortable way that respects your needs and privacy. The family partnership process takes time.

The Family Partnership Agreement has some important pieces, which we offer to all families:

- *Family Interview*

During the first few weeks of the program year, Teaching Teams will ask you questions as a way of getting to know you and your child. Examples of questions are who lives in your home, areas you are interested in volunteering in, and how often you read to your child. The interview helps us get to know you better and plan activities based on your interests. In addition, the interview will engage you in a private conversation with your team that over time will help you discover your strengths and identify your interests and needs.

- *Reach for the Stars Goal*

Next, together with your child's Teaching Team, we will build on your strengths. Some families want to find an apartment with more space, some want to find a dentist. You may want to learn better ways to guide your child's behavior, earn your GED, or learn to speak English.

- *Community Resources*

Occasionally, many of us need help from others to reach our goals. Teaching Teams will work with you to help you find answers to your questions and the resources to make your goals and dreams a reality. When your goals are reached, we will be ready to help identify new dreams. We are striving for your child and family's success, now and in the long-term, even after you leave our program.

## Parent Contacts, Home Visits and Conferences to Review Progress

Parents and Head Start are partners working together to help children grow and learn. Family contacts are scheduled throughout the year - four times for Preschoolers in center-based and five times for year-round programs. With your help, your child's teaching team will:

- Identify your child's strengths and needs along with your family's strengths and goals.
- Evaluate your child's progress.
- Set goals and plan activities that will help your child grow.
- Review community resources and information available to help your family.
- Develop and provide written reports on your child's progress.

## Participation Matters

Giving your time to Head Start not only benefits your own child and family, but it also shows others that Head Start is a valuable resource for families and communities. A Head Start child's preschool center-based education costs approximately \$11,000. Some ways you can be involved:

- Volunteer in the classroom.
- Help plan activities/field trips with Teaching Teams or your sites.
- Participate on the Policy Council (our governing board).
- Sign-up for the Learning Genie app. We utilize this app as a tool to stay in contact with families and keep them involved in their child's day-to-day experiences. We ask that all families register for the Learning Genie app and are happy to support them in doing so!

We invite your family's participation at local family events and Parent Committee Meetings. The activities are organized by parents and happen throughout the year. They provide time too:

- Share ideas, concerns, and opinions about what is happening at your site or in your community.
- Gain knowledge from special speakers.
- Share, learn, and strengthen parenting skills.
- Learn about and help plan activities for your child.
- Learn about Policy Council decisions.
- Meet other parents; make friends and HAVE FUN!



## Policy Council

The Policy Council is a **group of Head Start and Early Head Start parents and community members who help lead and make decisions about their program**. Policy Council members are elected by the parents of children enrolled in the program. Parents often join the Policy Council after serving on a parent committee.

Parents with children in the program now, past parents, and community members make up the Policy Council. Every Early Head Start/Head Start class elects two Parents to represent the class/site at Policy Council. This gives Parents the chance to take part in making decisions to better our program. The work of the Policy Council is to:

- Voice ideas of your local parent committee to better the whole program.
- Share Policy Council information with your local parent committee.
- Give input into program design, planning and policies. For example, help determine the criteria for selecting who is in the program.
- Be involved in the hiring of Head Start employees.
- Serve as a link to the community and advocate for the needs of children and families.



The Policy Council meeting information is available for all parents/guardians to read on our Semcac website: [www.semcac.org](http://www.semcac.org) > Head Start > Policy Council. Other information for parents/guardians is located there also.



## **“What Else Do I Need to Know?”**

### **Grievance Procedure**

The grievance procedure is a problem-solving mechanism in which every attempt is made to resolve issues at the lowest level of authority, with the least possible amount of program disturbance. A grievance is a written complaint alleging that Head Start Regulations, Program policies and procedures, and/or Semcac policies and procedures:

- were not followed; or
- were administered in a discriminatory (unequal) fashion; or
- were administered in an arbitrary and capricious (unfair) fashion.

Situations may arise that are not covered by any existing policy and/or procedure but seem to merit action; these situations would be addressed in most cases by the development of new policies and procedures that apply to that type of situation in the future.

1. Before a grievance can be filed by a parent or community member, direct discussion must take place between the person(s) whom the complaint involves. They must make more than one attempt to resolve any problem or conflict. Teachers or designated staff will case note with the date and summary of the informal discussions along with who was in attendance in ChildPlus/Family Services/events.
2. Failing resolution at that level, the person with the complaint must attempt to resolve problems or concerns at the center level with supervisors. More than one meeting must occur prior to the issue becoming a grievance.
3. If the informal discussion process fails, the grievance or complaint must be prepared in writing using the Problem-Solving form and given to the individual about whom the complaint is made. The staff person about whom the complaint is made will have a maximum of five working days to respond after receiving the written complaint.
4. If the complaint is not resolved, or if no action occurs within five working days, the complaint may be presented in writing to the supervisor, who has five working days to hold at least one meeting and to make a recommendation.
5. If the complaint is not resolved, or if no action occurs within five working days, the complaint may be presented in writing to the Director, who has five working days to hold at least one meeting and to make a recommendation.
6. If the complaint is not resolved, or if no action occurs within five working days, the complaint may be presented in writing to the Policy Council’s Grievance Committee, which has ten working days to schedule at least one meeting and to make a recommendation.
7. If a satisfactory resolution to the grievance is not made at the Grievance Committee level, the complaint may be presented in writing to the Executive Committee of the Semcac Board, which has ten working days to schedule at least one meeting and to make a recommendation.
8. If the finding is appealed to the full Semcac Board, it has a maximum of ten working days to review the matter. If determined that this grievance procedure was followed, the matter is closed as far as the program Agency is concerned and the recommendation of the Executive Committee shall remain in effect.
9. The following concepts will be used for the written grievance procedure:
  - a. Information is submitted in writing, signed and dated;

- b. No anonymous complaints will be accepted or considered;
  - c. Witnesses may be called at the discretion of the parties involved;
  - d. Supporting information may be submitted;
  - e. The content of all meetings is kept confidential, unless the complainant discusses the process with people outside of the process. In such a case, staff may discuss the issue with the same people.
  - f. Mediators or other neutral parties may be asked to assist in resolving differences any time after Operational Procedure #5, above.
  - g. Efforts are made to keep the grievance local, involving as few people as possible.
  - h. Grievances alleging criminal acts or immediate danger to children are dealt with immediately by program officials, parents, and other authorities as appropriate.
10. Once a person has taken a grievance through all of the steps, the grievance may not be returned to the lower level of authority to begin all over again.
11. The grievance procedure applies to all program operations and staff unless an alternate version is developed and approved by the Agency and Policy Council.
12. The hierarchy of authority to resolve parent and/or community grievances is as follows:
- a. Originator (parent or community person) and team member
  - b. Supervisor – Site Manager
  - c. Director
  - d. Policy Council Grievance Committee
  - e. Semcac Executive Director
  - f. Board Executive Committee
  - g. Board of Directors
13. If the grieving party is not satisfied with the response, they may write to the federal program office.

### **DHS Licensed Centers**

Head Start Centers are licensed under Rule 3 by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The exceptions would be our school partnership centers. Licensure provides guidelines to ensure safe, nurturing environments for children in our care.

### **Individual Child/Family Files**

All Head Start employees are mandated to protect data and information on all children and families. All employees, consultants, policy council, and volunteers receive information on what confidentiality entails and sign a Code of Conduct that covers confidentiality and ethics.

- Information about your child or family cannot be given out to anyone unless we have received your written permission, a court order, or child protection is involved. Do not ask Semcac employees or volunteers about other enrolled children or families. By law, Semcac employees are prevented from sharing information to protect all families and Head Start.
- Parents have the right to inspect their child's records, and to amend records, if needed. Teaching Teams will provide a copy of child records at no cost if requested.
- Every child will have an individual file containing information regarding the child. All children's files will be kept confidential, in a locked file. These files are open only to:
  - Head Start administrative and Teaching Teams,
  - Federal or state program staff, including Department of Human Services Licensing,
  - Child's parent(s)/legal guardians,
  - Individuals with Child Protection Court Order
- Parents must sign a release giving Head Start permission to forward records to other agencies, persons or appropriate school district.

## **Insurance Coverage of Children**

Head Start has insurance which covers your child if there is an accident/injury in the classroom or while participating in any Head Start activity.

## **No Smoking**

**To ensure a healthy environment for your child all Head Start facilities and properties are smoke free.** Smoking is not allowed in agency vehicles nor during field trips. We ask that you refrain from smoking when Head Start employees visit your home.

## **Permission for Research and Public Relations**

- Written permission must be obtained from a Parent before a child is involved in any research project or experimental procedure.
- Parents must give permission for children to be involved in public relations or media coverage. Permission for public relations materials that promote the Head Start program such as photos used for display boards, brochures, etc. is granted through completion of the Family Program Agreement.
- Permission for media coverage of special events will be requested separately if/when needed.

## **Pets at the Center**

Before bringing a pet to the center or socialization, Teaching Teams must approve the visit, and a signed permission slip by all parents must be completed. This gives the Teaching Team an opportunity to notify other parents and confirm that all approve. Be sure to tell your child's Teaching Team if your child has an allergy to or has a strong fear of animals.

## **Problem Solving**

Should a problem arise, please:

- Call or stop by the center to set up a time to discuss your concerns with your child's teaching team. They will make every effort to resolve your concerns according to our Problem-Solving procedure. You will receive a copy of this procedure when you meet to discuss your concern.
- If this does not resolve your concerns, contact the Site Manager. They will follow-up based on the Grievance Policy, which is approved by Policy Council and Semcac Board.
- Possible violations of Minnesota Statutes or Rules that govern our facilities could be reported by calling the Department of Human Services, Licensing Division at 651-431-6600.
- **Please remember that Head Start employees will not discuss your child when the child or other children/parents are present.**

## **Reporting Maltreatment of Minors – Child Abuse and Neglect**

Any person may voluntarily report abuse or neglect. If you know or suspect a child is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.

**All Head Start employees are mandated by Minnesota law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect.** If Head Start employees know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused, they must make a report to an outside agency (within 24 hours).

Reports regarding incidents of suspected abuse or neglect of children are made to the local county social services agency or local law enforcement. County contact numbers:

- **Dodge County Human Services: 507/431-5725**
- **Fillmore County/Social Services: 507/765-2175**
- **Houston County Human Services: 507/725-5811**
- **Mower County Human Services: 507/437-9700**
- **Steele County Human Services: 507/431-5725**
- **Winona County Human Services: 507/457-6500**

All reports concerning suspected abuse or neglect of children or unsafe conditions occurring at a licensed facility will be made to the Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing at 1-651-431-6600.

If Semcac Head Start comes to know that an internal or external report of alleged or suspected maltreatment, or of other licensing violations, has been made about Semcac Head Start, the Head Start Director will act immediately. They will pursue Semcac's Personnel Policy on Misconduct/Dishonesty/Fraud. If the concern relates to the Director, then Semcac's Human Resources Director will complete the investigation.

### **Semcac Head Start Prohibits**

All of our Head Start locations prohibit the following:

- No Alcohol
- No Drugs or Drug Paraphernalia
- No Smoking
- No Weapons



### **Sex Offenders**

- Semcac Head Start does not allow convicted sex offenders to volunteer in our classrooms. This policy applies to Head Start parents who are convicted sex offenders.
- Head Start parents who are convicted sex offenders will not be allowed to come into our centers or have any contact with other children.

### **Transitions**

#### **Early Head Start Transitions**

All families collaborate with team members in planning for their child as they transition. This includes going from one classroom to another, Home-Based to Center-Based or vice-versa, and/or as the child moves into a preschool program. Early Head Start/Head Start planning begins by the time the child is 2 years 6 months and a written document – Transition Guide – is developed to guide the family and team members.

#### **Head Start Transition to Kindergarten**

The goal of Head Start is to help your child be ready for school. Head Start works together with parents to ensure a smooth transition from Head Start to Kindergarten or any other educational setting. We want to make the transition to the next year as smooth as possible for both you and your child. In the spring, the Teaching Team will work with you and your child on transition activities, if your child will be attending Kindergarten. We will be inviting you to a kindergarten transition meeting where you can ask questions about kindergarten.

### **Video Surveillance**

Semcac Head Start has video surveillance in Head Start classrooms (excluding partnership sites). Each classroom will have a public notice posting stating video surveillance is in use. This has been implemented for the safety of children and adults in the classroom. Video surveillance is used to assist with educational observations.

### **Volunteers**

- Volunteers are never left alone in the classroom or unsupervised with children.
- Volunteers (other than family members) must complete an application process. If a person volunteers on a regular basis, for an average of three to four hours per week, they will complete a Criminal Arrest and Conviction Declaration.



This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider

I have read the Family Handbook with the parent/caregiver of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Child's name)

I \_\_\_\_\_ (parent/caregiver), have received a copy of the handbook.

I agree to follow the handbook guidance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Caregiver

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Team Member

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Leave attached to the handbook** – Take a Picture – Scan to Child + Family Services > Attachments