



**Worcester Community Action Council, Inc.
Head Start Prenatal to Five**

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CAREGIVER HANDBOOK



Welcome to WCAC's Head Start Prenatal to Five program!

Dear Caregivers:

Thank you for entrusting us with the care and education of your child. Head Start Prenatal to Five supports children and families. You, the caregiver, play a vital role in your child's development as you are the main educator of your child. Head Start Prenatal to Five provides you with many opportunities to actively participate in your child's early learning experiences. With your input, assistance, and support, we will give your child a fun and valuable experience that supports their growth and overall well-being.

As a caregiver, there are numerous ways in which you can participate in our Head Start Prenatal to Five programs. All caregivers are encouraged to volunteer in our classrooms, attend meetings, and attend family conferences. In addition, we have several committees you may wish to join. Center committees meet monthly to discuss and plan activities and other essential information pertaining to the program. The Policy Council is a caregiver advisory component of the program. All are encouraged to join the Policy Council and take an active role in learning more about how our program operates and provide input. By being an active participant, both you and your child will benefit.

This handbook has been developed to assist you with familiarizing yourself with the Head Start Prenatal to Five programs, functions, and philosophies. Please use the handbook as a reference guide.

We look forward to getting to know you and your child and partnering with you throughout your involvement with the Head Start programs.

Sincerely,

WORCESTER COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL, INC.
Breaking the cycle of poverty one neighbor at a time

Statement of Purpose:

- A. The Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. (WCAC) Head Start Prenatal to Five program is based on the premise that all children share certain needs and can benefit from a comprehensive developmental program that meets the needs of individual children. The Head Start Prenatal to Five program approach is based on the philosophy that:
1. A child can benefit most from a comprehensive, interdisciplinary program to foster development and remedy problems as expressed in a broad range of services.
 2. The child's entire family, as well as the community, must be involved. The program should maximize the strengths and unique experiences of each child. The family/guardian who takes part in the child's development, must be a direct participant in the program. Local communities collaborate in developing creative program designs, so the basic goals, objectives, and standards of a comprehensive program are adhered to.
- B. The goal of the Head Start Prenatal to Five program (birth-5), is to bring about a greater degree of social competence which considers the connection between cognition and intellectual development, physical and mental health, nutritional needs, and other factors that enable a developmental approach to helping children achieve social competence. To the accomplishment of this goal, Head Start objectives and performance standards provide for:
1. The improvement of the child's health, physical abilities, and overall well-being.
 2. The encouragement of self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline will assist in the development of the child's social and emotional health.
 3. The enhancement of the child's cognitive skills with particular attention to conceptual and communication skills.
 4. The establishment of the patterns and expectations of success for the child will create confidence for present and future learning efforts and overall development.
 5. An increase in the ability of the child and the family to relate to each other, enhancing the sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and their family.

Statement of Non-Discrimination:

Everyone who is eligible shall have an equal opportunity to take part in the services provided by the WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five program. WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five is passionately committed to a program of equal opportunity. There shall be no discrimination in any activities or programs because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, creed, physical or mental disabilities, and toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment; cultural heritage, political beliefs, marital status, or gender identification. Discriminatory practices are against the law.

Early Education and Care Programs: WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five:

Head Start Prenatal to Five serves families prenatally through the child's transition to Kindergarten (typically age 5).

Home-based Program:

Home-based visiting services are available Monday-Friday from 8:00am – 4:00pm. The home-based program, in addition, offers center-based activities through socializations at the Head Start centers and in local libraries as well as community field trips.

Head Start Center-based Program Options:

Head Start Center-based programs service three- to five-year-old children Monday through Friday with the following options available:

Part Day/ School Year (Leicester Location Only): 8:00am - 12:30 pm for 10 months from September – June. This option follows the public-school vacation schedule closing for winter break, February, and April vacation weeks.

Full Day/ School Year: 8:00am – 4:00pm for 10 months September -June. This option follows the public-school vacation schedule, closing for winter break, February, and April vacation weeks.

Full Day/ Full Year: 8:00am – 4:00pm for 12 months. This option remains open for winter break, February, and April vacation weeks. The full-day option is offered to caregivers who are working, in training, or attending school for a minimum of 30 hours per week; verification must be provided.

Open Door Policy:

Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. Head Start believes in an “Open Door” policy for caregivers. Caregivers are welcome to visit without advance notice at any time, spend time

observing as well as participating in our activities. Caregivers do not need to inform the classroom teacher when coming into the building.

Regulatory Agency:

WCAC Head Start is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care caregivers may contact the EEC (Early Education and Care) office regarding regulatory compliance at:

Main Office
50 Milk St 14th Floor
Boston, MA 02109
(617)-988-6600

Western MA Office (Region 1)
1441 Main St Suite 230
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)-788-8401

Expectation of Families:

Please familiarize yourself with the following expectations:

1. All children should arrive at school at 8:00 a.m.
2. Caregivers are responsible for the supervision of their child while bringing your child in to and out of the program at the beginning and end of the day.
3. Cell phones must not be in use when dropping off and picking up children.
4. Caregivers should keep their child/children home if they appear sick in any way (elevated temperature, diarrhea, or a cold, etc.).
 - When children are sick, caregivers are expected to contact the program at the beginning of the day to report their absence. Attendance is important and monitored. You may be contacted by your Family Advocate if your child is chronically absent.
 - If a child is on medication, such as penicillin, antibiotics, etc. or under a physician's care, caregivers must notify the Health/Nutrition Specialist by phone before taking the child to school. The first dose must be given at home, and the child should be monitored for allergic reactions
5. Caregivers will arrange transportation for their children. At no time are program staff allowed to provide transportation to children and families enrolled in the program unless they are a family member.
6. Caregivers will participate in two home visits with the child's teacher, two or more home visits with their Family Advocate, and three family conferences during the program year.
7. Caregivers must inform the child's Family Advocate of any restraining orders that prohibit someone specific from picking up the child.

8. Caregivers must inform their Family Advocate of any change in family information such as address, phone number, emergency numbers, and places of employment/school.
9. Caregivers must inform the Health/Nutrition Specialist of any allergies to food or environmental hazards (bee stings, mosquito bites, insect bites) or if the child has any health conditions (asthma, seizures).
10. Please be sure there is someone that we can reach at home or a number where we can reach you or an emergency contact if your child gets sick or injured at school.
11. All WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five locations are smoke-free. Smoking is not allowed in buildings or on the grounds.

Attendance:

Attendance is taken daily and monitored by the program. It is important for your child to attend the program and to be on time. The program needs to call in the lunch order in the morning. If the caregiver does not contact the center by 8:30am, the Family Advocate will call to find out why the child is absent.

Documentation about attendance will be gathered by the Family Advocate. A home visit will be made after two consecutive unexcused absences, or any time considered necessary by the Family Advocate.

When a child is identified to be at risk of missing 10% or more of the service days the family, Family Advocate, teachers, Center Director, and Family Engagement Specialist will meet to determine if an attendance plan is needed to address the excessive number of absences.

Child Drop Off Procedures: for the safety of everyone, please remember:

- Watch for running children.
- Shut your engine off and take the key.
- Never leave your child unattended once in the building. Wait for the child's classroom teacher to greet you and your child.
- Do not leave other children in the car without proper supervision.
- When walking your child to or from your car, please make sure he/she is with you and not running ahead.
- Caregivers must sign in when dropping off and picking up their child from the center.
- Always have all children in the proper age-appropriate safety restraints in the vehicle.
- Enter and exit the center through the designated door. Do not use side doors.
- Caregivers must follow posted speed limits.
- Caregivers at the Southbridge and East Brookfield locations must park in assigned areas, not in the public-school parking lots.

Pick-up Policy:

At the time of enrollment, you may choose others who have permission to pick up your child from the program. This may be updated at any time, as necessary. It is important that you keep us informed of any changes as soon as possible.

Your child will not be released to anyone without the caregiver's permission.

Written or verbal permission will not be accepted by the person to pick up your child. They must be at least 16 years old and will need to provide a photo ID, which will be photocopied and kept on file.

In the event someone on your approved pick-up list comes to pick up your child, you must notify the program in advance. If you call to inform us, you will have to provide a code to verify your identity.

The well-being of children enrolled in the Head Start program is our primary concern. It is the responsibility of the staff to ensure that children are always supervised to include arrival and pick-up times. When an adult appears to be “under the influence,” intoxicated or impaired in their ability to safely get the child home, the staff will contact DCF and/or the local authority.

Late Child Pick Up:

For the half-day program, if your child is still at the center at 1:30 p.m. and we have not been able to contact anyone on the pick-up list, your child will be considered abandoned.

For the full-day program at 5:00 p.m. and we have not been able to contact anyone on the pick-up list, your child will be considered abandoned.

The staff will inform the DCF (Department of Child and Family), and the local Police Department as stated above, if your child is considered abandoned.

Child Abuse and Neglect:

The safety and wellbeing of children attending our program is the WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five primary concern. The State of Massachusetts under Chapter 119, Section 51A of Massachusetts General Laws requires that all staff members file a report with the Department of Children and Families when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected. The filing of an abuse or neglect report (51A) is not done with the purpose of punishing the family but with the explicit purpose of protecting the child.

If for any reason a program staff member or a caregiver suspect that a child is the subject of abuse or neglect by a staff member, they must report that information to the accused staff person's direct supervisor who would immediately document the reported abuse and/or neglect.

The supervisor will inform the WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five Director of the allegation. An internal investigation will be conducted relative to the accusation.

The employee is removed from the program location and will have no contact with children pending the results of an internal investigation in cooperation with EEC (Early Education and Care) and DCF (Department of Children and Families).

All WCAC personnel will be cooperative with any agency investigating the suspected abuse and/or neglect charges.

If the allegations are substantiated, employment with the agency will be terminated.

Family Engagement:

Caregiver's Rights:

ALL CAREGIVERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Ask a teacher or staff member for an individual conference.
- See their child's file and ask for copies of the information. Children's records are kept for at least five years after a child has left the program. Upon written request of the Caregiver, a copy of the child's records will be provided.
- Give their input on policies and on the development of the center and request a written response.
- Sign or not sign specified items on the permission slip.

Home Visits:

Home visits are an important part of the staff and Caregiver connections. They provide the staff and Caregiver a wonderful opportunity to be together in an environment that is comfortable for the child and the Caregiver. Teachers conduct two home visits per year at the beginning of the year and in the winter. The Family Advocates will make at least three home visits per year.

Family Conferences:

The classroom staff will meet with the caregiver to discuss the child's progress in the center. These conferences occur in the Fall, during the winter Home Visit, and in the Spring.

Family Volunteers:

Volunteering in the program is fun for both the caregiver and your child! It helps to promote awareness about how your child spends their day and helps to build a good relationship between caregivers and the staff who care for your children. Volunteers are welcome in the classroom to help in curriculum planning, attend and organize field trips, and plan center events. All volunteers who are spending more than an hour a month in the classroom must have a background record check (BRC). Please speak with your Family Advocate for further information.

Program Governance:

Head Start governance is the Leadership Team, Policy Council, and WCAC's Board of Directors. Each branch has a role to play in ensuring that the Head Start program is providing the best service and meeting our obligations to implement Office of Head Start Performance Standards.

Center Committee:

Each center establishes a Center Committee comprised of caregivers whose children are currently enrolled in the program. The Center Committees plan and execute projects working closely with classroom teachers, Family Advocates, and all other center staff members. All are welcome and encouraged to participate. Center Committee members approve spending of center committee money and elect representatives to Policy Council and advisory committees.

Policy Council:

The Policy Council is comprised of elected representatives from all program options, home based, center based full day, half day and full year for each center committee, and community agencies. The composition of the Policy Council is determined within the Policy Council By-Laws. The Policy Council is the governing board of Head Start. They assist the Leadership staff in decision-making program policies, recommending staff hiring, reviewing the budget, and providing input on grants and advocating for the program. All caregivers are welcome to attend Policy Council meetings. However, only center committee representatives that have been elected to the Policy Council will be able to vote.

WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five Child Development Services:**Developmental Screening:**

Upon enrollment in the program, the Family Educators and the Head Start Specialists will screen each child's overall development including large and small motor abilities, speech and language development, and social skills using the Brigance screening tool.

The Home-Based Family Educator and the Center Based Teachers discuss with the caregivers the child's social emotional health using the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Screening Tool. This screening is completed by the caregivers of the child.

The goal of this screening process is to identify the child's strengths and any areas of concern. In the case of a developmental concern, under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) caregivers may be referred to the local public school system for additional screening and/or evaluations for preschoolers. Infants and toddlers will be referred to an Early Intervention program to be fully assessed for appropriate services.

The Inclusion Specialist will help caregivers through the evaluation process and attend any related meetings if invited to participate.

Home Based Program:

WCAC Home –based is a program that understands that the Caregiver is the child's first teacher, and that the caregiver relationship is crucial to the development of infants and toddlers. We partner with the Caregiver during the home visits and during the Socializations meetings to provide support in meeting the needs of their child.

Head Start Home Based is a program that provides comprehensive services to expectant women, children (birth to 3 years), and their families. Home-based provides Caregivers with valuable opportunities to actively participate in their child's early educational experiences at home visits, during socialization activities, parent trainings, and workshops.

Home Based Home Visit:

The Home-Based Family Educator visits each family for ninety minutes a week. During this visit, the Family Educators help caregivers develop interactive play skills. Caregivers and their educators jointly plan these visits. Activities focus on child development, health and nutrition, family development, and community resources.

Home Based Assessments:

WCAC Home Based uses the Desired Results and Developmental Profile (DRDP), which is an assessment tool used for observations and assessments on the children quarterly.

Home Based Socialization:

Socialization gives caregivers the opportunity to meet and share ideas with other caregivers as well as expectant moms. A nutritious meal is provided. Caregivers learn skills necessary to guide their children with social development. Socializations give children the opportunity to interact with other children their age, learning social skills such as sharing and taking turns.

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The WCAC Head Start Home Based program prepares families for the transition to Head Start Center Based with individualized plans and the choice of the best option for the child and family. Families are invited to visit classrooms and hold individual planning meetings with staff of the Center Based program.

Head Start Center Based Program:

Head Start Center Based is a five-day program that runs Monday through Friday. Each classroom will have a maximum of 16 children with a Lead Teacher and an Assistant Teacher. Developmentally appropriate practices guide our work with the children. The classrooms use an evidence-based curriculum framework; Creative Curriculum for Preschool to design their classroom environments. The Head Start day provides a variety of experiences in the areas of art, music, literature, creative movement, and science. A large part of the daily curriculum is the “work/play” period in the morning, when the children are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities to promote physical, social, and mental growth. Breakfast and lunch are served each day. An afternoon snack is provided for children who are in the classroom during the afternoon.

The teachers use the Creative Curriculum online database, Teaching Strategies Gold. Assessments are conducted three times a year. This process involves monthly child development observations and examples of children’s work to support the accuracy of the data being collected. Observations and work samples are shared during home visits and family conferences. This enhances the caregiver and school connection.

The WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five School Readiness plan is available upon request. Please ask your Center Director for a copy at any time.

Classroom Design:

WCAC Head Start preschool classrooms are places where children feel well cared for and safe. In our classrooms, your children will be valued as individuals. Individual classrooms are set up to allow children the flexibility to interact with numerous materials of their own choosing. The areas include, but are not limited to, Art Area with Easel, Block Area, Discovery Table, Literacy/Listening Center, Manipulative Area, Writing Center, Family Living, and Water Table.

Classroom schedules have a balance of activities that are active and quiet; teacher and child directed, indoor and outdoor, individual, small group, and large group.

Sample of the Daily Schedule:

8:00 a.m.	Centers open: All children go to the bathroom and wash their hands before entering the classroom. Attendance is taken as children enter the classroom. Health checks will also be done by teachers.
8:30 a.m.	Breakfast: When the children are finished, they clean their area and brush their teeth.
9:00 a.m.	Greet children: Sing good morning song and choose helpers for the day.
9:30 a.m.	Circle Time: Talk about the activities for the day and special centers that need explanation. Review classroom rules. Teach new songs, read special books, etc.
10:00 a.m.	Learning Centers: Teacher and children-initiated activities. Teachers provide individual and small group instruction at centers when needed. Gross motor and small motor activities are planned daily.
10:45 a.m.	Gross Motor: Prepare for indoor or outdoor play.
11:30 a.m.	Preparation for Lunch: Hands are washed. Helpers set tables for lunch.
11:45 a.m.	Lunch: Children and teachers sit for lunch and converse until everyone is finished. Everyone cleans their own space.
12:15 p.m.	Half-day children recap the day: prepare to be picked up.
12:30 p.m.	Half-day children are dismissed: Full-day children prepare for rest time/quiet activities.
12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m.	Rest time/quiet time: Caregivers provide the child with a small pillow, blanket, stuffed animal. Please label all items with your child's name. Blankets will be laundered by the WCAC Head Start cleaning staff. Each child has a cot and a designated space in the classroom.
2:00 p.m.	Snack: Individualization, Small Group activities.
3:00 p.m.	Gross motor activities/ Outdoor play
3:45-4:00 p.m.	Small circle time to prepare for departure.

Children's Clothing:

Every day, the children have a chance to take part in activities that may be messy or require them to sit on the floor or ground. Please dress your children in clothing that is okay for them

to get dirty, and it is easy for your child to take off and put on themselves. Because young children have accidents, it is important to bring in a full set of extra clothing (underwear, socks, shirt, and pants). Please label the inside of the clothing with your child's name so it is easily identified. **Children should not come to school wearing jewelry, clothing with drawstrings, flip-flops, crocs, or clogs.** These may cause injuries.

Toileting:

Toilet training is encouraged but not required to receive services. The teachers will work with you when your child is ready. The children are toileted together as a routine part of their day.

Please always provide a change of clothing for your child. Soiled or wet clothing will be handled discreetly. No child is punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or for not using the toilet.

Naptime Policy:

NAP TIME:

Caregivers supply the child's sleeping gear (small pillow, blanket, stuffed animal). Staff will wash sleeping gear weekly and return to the classroom for the children.

The activities described below are just a few of the many ways that children can productively use quiet time without being forced to remain on a cot or in the napping area. Quiet activities will support the children's growth and development as well as their need for rest and relaxation and will help prevent children from seeing rest time as "punishment."

- **SLEEP, REST, AND QUIET ACTIVITIES**
- During sleep, rest, or quiet activities, educators must ensure that children are easily accessible during an emergency.
- Restraints may not be used on sleeping children under any circumstances.
- Program includes, as part of the daily schedule, an extended period of sleep, rest, or quiet activities for children in care for longer than four hours.
- The length of the sleep, rest, or quiet activity period must be appropriate to the needs of the children.
- When children choose not to sleep, or awaken early, they must be offered quiet activities for the rest of the sleep or quiet activity period.
- The staff must minimize noise and disturbances, provide a separate cot for each child that is individually labeled, in good repair, and is clean. Head Start staff will also ensure safe and sanitary storage of blankets and bed linens.

Educators must ensure that there is a distance of at least two feet between each crib/cot, or there is a distance of at least three feet between children's faces while resting or napping.

Also, there must be space and adequate lighting to allow proper supervision and quiet activities for children who do not sleep.

Head Start Holiday Philosophy:

At Head Start we are committed to exposing children to a diversity of traditions, customs, and experiences through curriculum activities and Caregiver involvement. Throughout the year, we offer a variety of literature, arts, music, and cooking experiences that expose children to other cultures. We encourage caregivers to spend time in the classroom sharing their family's traditions.

Regarding the "celebrating of holidays," we feel that to support our philosophy of inclusion and diversity, it is important to celebrate the individuality of all children.

Disability Services:

All screenings and assessments are completed within the first forty-five days of the program year or at any time during the program year; program staff will meet with the caregiver to share concerns resulting from the screenings and observations. During this meeting, the caregiver may receive information discussing a recommendation for further assessment and seek written permission from the primary caregiver to help in making a referral. Referrals are always requested by the caregivers with support from the WCAC team.

In the case of a developmental concern, under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) caregivers may be referred to the local public school system for additional screening and or evaluation for preschoolers. The Home-Based infants and toddlers will be referred to the local Early Intervention program to be fully assessed for appropriate services.

Health and Nutrition:

The philosophy of the WCAC HS Health/Nutrition Component is to encourage and foster healthy habits for all staff, children, and families enrolled in the program. This will be done through meeting the following objectives:

- Offer caregiver training on specific Health/Dental/Nutritional issues.
- Provide access to Health/Dental/Nutritional services through collaboration with community services/agencies.
- Provide and help families with referrals to health-related services.
- Referrals are made to agencies based upon identified needs of the children or families.
- Please call the health office and we will be able to assist when needed.

The following assessments are done on all children annually and the results are kept in the child's health record:

- Hearing/Vision Screening is completed on all children yearly. Results of the screening can be sent home to caregivers and sent to pediatricians if referral is needed.
- Height/Weight Screening: Height and weight are measured as part of a child's growth assessment.

Health Documentation Requirements:

(Mandated by Office of Head Start Performance Standards, Department of Early Education and Care and MA State EPSDT Schedule)

- Current Physical within one year prior to enrollment. Including Height/Weight, Medical History, and Blood pressure (age 3).
- Immunization History - Certification that the child has been successfully immunized in accordance with the current Department of Public Health's recommended schedules. Or appropriate exemption from vaccination. *Note: unvaccinated children must be excluded from care in the incidence of some communicable disease in accordance with MA DPH Regulations*
- Child's most recent Dental Exam. (Every 6 months thereafter).
- Lab Tests such as Lead and Hemoglobin/Hematocrit - Pursuant to the Department of Public Health requirements, all children, regardless of risk, must be screened for lead poisoning at least once between the ages of nine and twelve months and annually thereafter at ages two and three.
- Individual Health Accommodation Plans are required for all chronic health conditions. (Such as Asthma, Food allergies, etc.)

Child Injuries:

If a child is injured while they attend the Head Start program, the staff member who saw the accident/injury will complete an injury report form. The caregiver will be notified by telephone when an injury occurs. A copy of the injury report form will be provided to the caregivers on the day the injury occurs. The caregivers must sign the injury form and return it to the agency, and a copy will be provided to you too.

In the case of a severe injury, 911 will be called and the child will be transported to the hospital with a DEEC (Department of Early Education and Care) licensed staff member in attendance.

Any injuries/accidents/illnesses that require hospitalization or medical treatment must be reported to the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) and the Office of Head Start.

Plan for Meeting the Needs of Mildly Ill Children:

When your child becomes ill at school, the caregiver will be contacted, and the child will be supervised in a quiet area until the caregivers or emergency pick up an eligible person can be reached. In cases when the caregiver or alternate cannot be reached, the staff will meet the following needs of the ill child: supervision, food, drink, rest, toileting, comfort, quiet play materials, and activities until the child is picked up.

WCAC Head Start Medication Policy:

WCAC Head Start personnel will administer prescription medications only for children with chronic health conditions with a written health accommodation plan and medication authorization form in place that is signed and dated by the caregiver and physician. These forms must be updated and completed for the child to be enrolled in the Head Start program.

Plan for Managing Infections Diseases:

WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five plan for managing infectious disease is in accordance with the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC).

The Head Start Health Department must be contacted when a child has an illness or infectious disease.

The staff must follow strict handwashing and disinfecting procedures.

Children who show symptoms of the following types of infectious diseases, such as gastro-intestinal, respiratory, and skin or direct contact infections, may be excluded from the center if any of the following exist:

- The illness prevents the child from taking part in the program activities or from resting comfortably.
- Illness results in greater care need than the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- The child has a fever, unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or other signs of serious illness.
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting two or more times in 24 hours at home or once at the center.
- Mouth sores, unless the physician says the child is non-infectious.
- Rash with a fever or behavior change until the physician has decided that the illness is not a communicable disease.
- Tuberculosis, until the child is non-infectious.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has started or all the sores are covered.
- Head lice
- Strep infection, until 24 hours after treatment, and the child has been without a fever for 24 hours.
- Chicken pox, until the last blister has healed over.

The Health/Nutrition Specialist may request a doctor's note for a child to be admitted back to school after an illness.

WCAC HS reserves the right to exclude children/staff or close to a center based on information from the Department of Public Health. If any communicable disease is shown to have been present at a center, caregivers of children at that center will be notified per DPH regulations.

WCAC Head Start Mealtime Policy:

Mealtimes are conducted in a relaxed atmosphere conducive to social communication and learning. Staff members are seated with the children during mealtimes and actively take part in the lunch.

Food is not used as punishment or reward. Each child is encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste their food. Sufficient time is allowed for each child to eat. All meals are served in a family style. WCAC Head Start will serve a variety of foods that not all children may be used to receiving at home. Children are encouraged to learn about the food they are eating.

To be compliant with all state, federal, education and nutritional requirements and to ensure proper monitoring of food allergies, WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five cannot allow caregivers or family members to bring outside food into the center.

The program provides food for meals and snacks. The food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.

Social Services:

The Family Advocates /Family Educators assist the caregivers with resources in their community and evaluate strengths and needs within the home. Family Advocates participate in two (2) or more home visits each year to complete the BRIDGE, formerly, the Family Partnership Agreement and follow-up on any referrals. The BRIDGE/Family Partnership Agreement is a working tool used throughout the year based on the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.

Caregiver and family engagement in Head Start Prenatal to Five is about building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong relationships between caregivers and their children, and ongoing learning and development for both caregivers and children. The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework is a road map for progress in achieving the kinds of outcomes that lead to positive and enduring change for children and families. The PFCE Framework was developed in partnership with programs, families, experts, and the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. It is a research-based approach to program change that shows how an agency can work together as a whole—across systems and service areas—to promote caregivers and family engagement and children’s learning and development.

Care Coordination System:

The Worcester Community Action Council, Inc. Head Start Prenatal to Five program care coordination system is a multi-disciplinary team approach. Care Coordination meetings are held in each center, and meetings occur when needed with families and outside providers. An extensive Family/Child Review will be conducted for each child at weekly meetings between Family Advocates and teachers. Meetings occur each week, and each child/family will be reviewed at least once a month. The Care Coordination system includes the following:

- Initial home visits (Head Start)
- Weekly-Family/Child Reviews
- Care Coordination Meetings
- Family Case Conferences

Initial Home Visit:

Teachers and Family Advocates each do a home visit. This is an opportunity for staff to get to know the family and to discuss the goals caregivers have for their children.

Weekly Family/Child Reviews:

Family/Child Reviews will happen each week at each center between the teachers and the Family Advocates. Each child/family will be discussed at least once a month during these meetings. The family/child review is a complete family story exploring all component areas. This is an opportunity for teachers and Family Advocates to share information with each other and to delve into the child's file to ensure all information is complete and accurate. These forms will be reviewed at care coordination meetings when applicable.

In the Home-Based program, families will be discussed once a month during individual supervision with the Family Educators. The Family Educators and their supervisor will decide the need for care coordination meetings, or an in-house or outside referral based on the family's situation. An in-house referral will be made if concerns arise related to any issues.

Care Coordination Request:

If a concern related to health, disability, mental health, development, atypical behaviors, or social services arises the following steps will take place:

- Center Directors will be asked to attend a weekly meeting with the teacher and Family Advocate. The Center Director will discuss and decide what is contributing to the child's behavior in the classroom. The Center Director will determine if additional support is needed from the Child Development Specialist and/or Inclusion Specialist. The Center Director may determine if a Care Coordination Meeting (an in-center meeting with the teachers, Family Advocates, Center Directors, and Specialists) is needed. If an outside observation or testing is needed, the Family Advocate will contact the family for the proper releases and paperwork signed.

Home based:

The Home-Based Family Educators assigned to the family will discuss the case/concerns with their supervisor during individual supervision.

Assistant Program Director will make recommendations/plan of action in working with the family (i.e., providing resources, contacts, setting guidelines with caregivers).

Home Based Family Educators will implement recommendations and plan of Action.

If recommendations have been implemented, the Family Educators and the Home-Based supervisor make the determination that further service-referrals may be necessary; the child and family will be discussed at a Care Coordination meeting. The staff working with the family will make a presentation on the issues. Following the presentation, a discussion of the information presented will take place and a plan of action will be developed.

Family Case Conference:

A family case conference is used when the family meets multiple members of the Head Start Team to discuss their child. If a family is engaged with multiple agencies, the Family Advocate or Family Educators may ask the family to have those providers present. The goal

of the Family Case Conference is to support families and their children through a wraparound approach in the home and at school.

Positive Guidance Plan for Head Start:

A positive guidance plan is a philosophy and approach that all Head Start staff implements to help children develop positive self-esteem, self-control, and social competence. This philosophy is used to handle behavior management in the classroom and at home.

Positive Guidance Philosophy:

The focus on positive guidance is on behavior, not on the child. WCAC Head Start staff believes that behavior has a meaning. Often, a child engages in challenging behavior because they do not have the vocabulary to express their feelings. Challenging behavior can result when transitioning children from one event to another as sometimes the child behaves in a certain way to avoid doing something or going somewhere. Our staff's goal is to identify the behavior's purpose and replace it with a new skill. Tools from the Pyramid Model, AI's Pals, and coaching strategies are used to enhance a child's social emotional skills.

Techniques for Positive Guidance:

Using observation tools, the Inclusion team assesses the classroom environment to identify potential physical or personal stressors that can lead to challenging behaviors.

These are some of the techniques used in our classroom to promote children's social and emotional skills development and independence:

- Age-appropriate materials and activities are used.
- Shelves and containers are labeled with pictures and words to encourage children to put toys away where they belong
- The use of Pyramid Model and AI's Pals teach children how to identify, recognize, and express feelings, and how to solve problems with peers when conflicts develop.
- Staff plan and implement an organized daily schedule with a diverse group of age-appropriate activities. Such schedules are posted with visuals and cues that help children understand the classroom routine and daily events.
- Staff and children develop well-defined, simple, and consistent classroom rules.
- Positive language is used to remind children of the rules.
- Staff will work with the child to redirect them to an appropriate activity or behavior.
- Staff will respond to children who are upset with comfort, support, and empathy.

Behavior Support Plan:

If a child acts in a way that is putting other children or themselves at physical risk (hitting, kicking, throwing furniture, biting, etc.), every attempt will be made to comfort the child until they regain control. If the child does not respond to limits/redirection, the other child

or peers may be removed from the immediate area to maintain a safe environment. A staff member will help the child stay safe and transition back to classroom activities.

Caregivers will be informed of the incident. A meeting will be scheduled to develop a Behavior Support Plan with the Center Director, Teacher, and Inclusion Department.

At no time will any staff member use corporal punishment, physical restraint, or any verbal or physical abuse.

Suspension, Expulsion, Exclusion/Modified Plan Head Start Performance Standard1302.17

Suspension:

WCAC Head Start limits the use of suspension due to a child's behavior; suspensions are only temporary in nature. A temporary suspension is used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications. Before the program determines whether a temporary suspension is necessary, Inclusion Department will collaborate with the Director and Center Director, Mental Health Consultant, caregivers, and utilize appropriate community resources as needed, to determine no other reasonable option is appropriate. If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, WCAC Head Start helps the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by:

- Continuing to engage with caregivers and Mental Health Consultant and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources.
- Developing a written plan to document the action and support needed.
- Determine whether a referral to a local education agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate.

WCAC Head Start cannot expel or unenroll a child because of a child's behavior. When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, WCAC Head Start explores all steps and documents all steps taken to address such problems and facilitates the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and support from the Inclusion department.

- If the child has an IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP, the program consults with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services.
- If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, the program collaborates with caregiver consent, with the local education agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.

Expulsion:

If, after WCAC Head Start Inclusion Department has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described above, the program, in consultation with the

Director, Center Director, caregivers, the teacher, LEA (local education agencies), and the Mental Health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program works with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

Exclusion/Modified Plan:

The term exclusion/modified plan refers to the reduction of hours, services, and/or days a child will attend the program and is intended to be used for a limited amount of time while the situation is being resolved. Children who are determined to benefit best from this may be included in a regular classroom but for less than a normal school day. These children may be medically compromised, attending another program, or presenting challenging behavior. Some children can maintain control for 2 or 3 hours of the day but not because of the full-time class to operate. When this is developed, the plan is to gradually increase the child's hours/days with the intent of having the child return to a typical class day. Any modification to a child's program must be approved by WCAC Head Start Director and Inclusion Specialist.

Mental Health Services:

WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five programs collaborate with outside mental and behavioral providers.

Mental Health Clinician's Role in the Classroom:

1. Classroom consultation. This entails meeting with classroom staff regularly and identifying problem areas within the classroom or relationships with peers and staff.
2. If staff would like to discuss specific issues regarding specific children who are not referred to and may not need a referral, a release must be signed by the caregiver before the meeting takes place.
3. Classroom Observation: Once a release is signed by the caregiver, the clinician can come into the center for observation. Once the observations are completed, the clinician will meet with the staff and families to discuss a plan.

Emergency Procedures:

Emergency information:

The Head Start Emergency Card will be developed and reviewed at enrollment, Family Conferences in the fall and spring, and during the two (2) home visits by the Family Advocate developing the Family Partnership Agreement. Caregivers must keep updated phone numbers including names and emergency contacts.

Fire Emergency Procedure:

1. Center Directors develop a written fire evacuation plan for the center, and all staff are trained in the procedure. The plan is posted by each exit (fire drill procedure) door in classrooms, offices, meeting spaces, or exits out of the building.
2. A floor plan must be drawn so that each room on the floor is represented. A red arrow must mark the primary avenue of exit, and a green arrow must mark the secondary avenue of exit.
3. The teachers practice this plan monthly and twice a year it is monitored by the local fire department.
4. Alternate exit routes are practiced, as well.

Teachers will walk the children out and away from the building. Bring with them their First Aid Kit and classroom attendance. All the people in the building will leave during this time. Attendance will be taken. Teaching staff will walk with the children to the designated location. See posting in the classroom.

In the case of an emergency (including Inclement weather) WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five uses the Learning Genie system/email and the WCAC Facebook page to alert caregivers with relevant information in the case of emergencies including the following

- A power outage
- Loss of heat
- Loss of water
- Carbon Monoxide concern
- Natural Disaster

Severe weather:

In the event of severe weather, Head Start Prenatal to Five uses the Learning Genie system/email and the WCAC Facebook page to alert caregivers with relevant information in the case of school closings.

Confidentiality:

To comply with federal regulations and to respect the privacy of each Head Start participant, confidentiality of information is of primary importance.

- All records are confidential. They are kept in a locked file. When working on records, files are inaccessible to anyone other than the staff.
- At no time are records available for caregivers to go through unless it is their child's record.
- Children and families are not discussed in the presence of anyone other than program staff and/or other professionals involved with the family.
- In most conversations, names are not needed. Every family has the right to their privacy to be respected.

- Information is not given to other individuals/agencies about families without a written authorization to release the information.
- Families and staff are not discussed on social networking sites or through the internet.
- All staff members are required annually to sign a Statement of Confidentiality.

WCAC Policy and Procedure regarding Complaints:

WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five strives to continually provide quality programs and services. Input from caregivers, guardians, clients, and community members can provide helpful information to ensure that quality services are maintained, and any concerns involving staff or programs may be resolved. We believe that working together is important.

Caregiver Concerns and Complaints:

If a caregiver has concerns about the program, they should speak with their Center Director as soon as possible. All concerns will be listened to and investigated promptly. You may be contacted for more information if necessary to resolve the matter. We will work together with all involved to come to a mutually agreed upon solution whenever possible. If you are unsatisfied with the outcome, you may contact the Chief Executive Officer of the Worcester Community Action Council.

Worcester Community Action Council, INC
Head Start Prenatal to Five

Caregiver Handbook Receipt

I have received a link to the WCAC Head Start Prenatal to Five Caregiver Handbook.

I understand and will follow the procedures as noted in the handbook. If I would like more information regarding a certain policy, it will be available upon request.

Enrolled child's name

Date

Caregiver Name (please print)

Caregiver Signature

