



**Mississippi County, Arkansas Economic
Opportunity Commission, Inc.**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION
STAFF HANDBOOK**

March 2026



Mississippi County, Arkansas, Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc. has always believed in promoting an atmosphere of open communication and cooperation among all personnel. This Employee Handbook reflects that thinking. It **supersedes** in all respects any prior staff handbooks. This handbook does not constitute a guarantee that your employment will continue for any specified period or end only under certain conditions. NOTHING IN THE HANDBOOK CONSTITUTES AN EXPRESS OR IMPLIED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT, WARRANTY, OR ANY BENEFITS. Employment at MCAEOC is an employment-at-will relationship for no definite period. While we hope to have a long and mutually beneficial working relationship together, regardless of anything that may appear in this handbook, you have the right to terminate your employment.

**MISSISSIPPI COUNTY ARKANSAS, E.O.C.
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**Head Start • Early Head Start • Arkansas Better Chance • Arkansas Better Chance for School Success • Operation Parenting Edge
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*Priscilla Johnson
Executive Director*

*Shirley Pulliam
Program Director*

Dear Staff,

On behalf of MCAEOC, I would like to welcome you to our agency and wish you every possible success.

MCAEOC considers employees among its most valuable resources and believes each employee contributes directly to its growth and success. We desire that you take pride in being a member of this team. We are confident that you will find our company a dynamic and rewarding place in which to work. We look forward to a productive and successful association.

This handbook, along with the MCAEOC Personnel Policies, was developed to outline our expectations and describe the policies, programs, and benefits available to eligible employees. Please familiarize yourself with the contents as soon as possible, for it will answer many questions about employment with MCAEOC. After reading this handbook, please contact your supervisor, any management member, or myself if you have any questions.

We hope that your experiences here will be challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding. Again, welcome.

Sincerely,

Shirley Pulliam

Shirley Pulliam
Program Director

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VISION STATEMENT

All children have the right to be healthy and live in a safe and nurturing environment. Recognizing that a child's family is their primary teacher, the collaborative group of agencies and programs serving children pledges to communicate and partner at both community and state levels to enhance and ensure the provision of quality outcome-oriented services.

MISSION STATEMENT

MCAEOC is committed to empowering children, families, and communities through supportive services and strategic partnerships.

HEAD START SERVICES

Head Start programs support children's growth from birth to age 5 through services that support early learning and development, health, and family well-being. Head Start staff actively engage parents, recognizing family participation throughout the program as key to strong child outcomes.

Head Start services are available at no cost to children from birth to 5 years for eligible families. Head Start Preschool services work with families with children ages 3 to 5. Early Head Start services work with families with children from birth to 3, and many also serve expectant families. Many programs operate in both Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start services. Programs deliver child development services in center-based, home-based, or family childcare settings. All Head Start programs continually work toward our mission for eligible children and families to receive high-quality services in safe and healthy settings that prepare children for school and life. Since 1965, Head Start programs have reached 40 million children and their families. Children who enrolled in Head Start programs are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, have improved social, emotional, and behavioral development, and are better prepared to be parents

Standards of conduct.

(1) A program must ensure all staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers abide by the program's standards of conduct that:

(i) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support children's well-being and prevent and address challenging behavior;

(ii) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers do not engage in behaviors that maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including at a minimum:

(A) Corporal punishment or physically abusive behavior, defined as intentional use of physical force that results in, or has the potential to result in, physical injury. Administration for Children and Families, HHS Part 1302 — Program Operations 66 Part 1302 Examples include, but are not limited to, hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, pushing, restraining, force feeding, or dragging;

(B) Sexually abusive behavior, defined as any completed or attempted sexual act, sexual contact, or exploitation. Examples include, but are not limited to, behaviors such as inappropriate touching, inappropriate filming, or exposing a child to other sexual activities;

(C) Emotionally harmful or abusive behavior, defined as behaviors that harm a child's self-worth or emotional well-being. Examples include, but are not limited to, using seclusion, using, or exposing a child to public or private humiliation, or name calling, shaming, intimidating, or threatening a child; and

(D) Neglectful behavior, defined as the failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs including access to food, education, medical care, appropriate supervision by an adequate caregiver, and safe physical and emotional environments. Examples include, but are not

limited to, leaving a child unattended on a bus, withholding food as punishment, or refusing to change soiled diapers as punishment;

(iii) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers report reasonably suspected or known incidents of child abuse and neglect, as defined by the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C. 5101 note) and in compliance with Federal, State, local, and Tribal laws;

(iv) Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers respect and promote the unique identity of each individual and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition;

(v) Require staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers to comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members in accordance with subpart C of part 1303 of this chapter and applicable Federal, State, local, and Tribal laws; and,

(vi) Ensure no child is left alone or unsupervised.

(2) Personnel policies and procedures must include appropriate penalties for staff, consultants, and volunteers who violate the standards of conduct.

GOALS

MCAEOC Head Start Program will strive for excellence by providing comprehensive, high-quality child development services that will promote the social, emotional, and physical development of Head Start eligible infants, toddlers, and preschool children.

- I. MCAEOC Head Start will engage in collaborative partnerships with parents, early childhood agencies, and other human services agencies and resources to ensure a comprehensive, integrated array of services and support to families in fostering their child's development, meeting personal goals, and achieving self-sufficiency.
- II. MCAEOC Head Start will administer and operate by the guidelines described in Program Design and Management regulation to specifically respond flexibly to the needs of children and families in a changing society by using well-qualified staff.

Objectives: Performance Measures

Enhance Children's Growth and Development by helping children to improve:

- a. emergent literacy, numeracy, and language skills.
 - b. general cognitive skills
 - c. gross and fine motor skills
 - d. positive attitudes toward learning
 - e. social behavior and emotional health
 - f. physical health
- II. Provide Children with Educational, Health, and Nutritional Services as the:
 - a. program provides developmentally appropriate educational environments
 - b. staff interact with children in a skilled and sensitive manner

- c. programs support and respect children's uniqueness
 - d. assures children receive needed medical, dental, and mental health services
 - e. children receive meals and snacks that meet their daily nutritional needs
 - f. programs provide individualized services for children
 - g. program demonstrates sanitation and health practices
- III. Link Children and Families to Needed Community Services as parents:
- a. link with social service agencies to obtain needed services
 - b. link with educational agencies to obtain needed services
 - c. link with health care services to obtain needed care
secure childcare that allows them to further their education, improve their skills, or obtain employment
- IV. Strengthen Families as the Primary Nurturers of Their Children by encouraging them to:
- a. demonstrate improved parenting skills
 - b. improve their self-concept and emotional well-being
 - c. make progress toward their educational, literacy, and employment goals
 - d. strengthen parents' awareness of child-outcome data based on their child's data compared to their classroom, center site, and agency
- V. *Ensure Well-Managed Programs that Involve Parents in Decision-Making to Help Ensure:*
- a. programs are well-managed
 - b. parents are involved actively in decisions about program operations
 - c. programs employ qualified staff
 - d. programs support staff development and training
 - e. programs comply with MCAEOC Head Start regulations
 - f. inform parents of the importance of school attendance in closing the achievement gap
 - g. staff attendance is seen as significant to continuity and attaining goals of school readiness
 - h. staff are trained in the fundamentals of computer competencies

WE VALUE

Striving for Excellence

Mississippi County, Arkansas E.O.C. & Child Development is dedicated to providing and promoting high-quality, developmentally appropriate child development programs for children and their families. We believe learning begins before birth. The child, family, and community benefit from the operation of an Early Childhood Program.

Responds Flexibly to the Needs of Today's Children and Families

The comprehensive approach to serving families and the community addresses childcare, family literacy, alcoholism, substance abuse, violence, adolescence, and the multi-faceted needs of families in a changing society. The parent is the prime educator as the program focuses on each issue.

Linkages and Community Partnerships

MCAEOC Head Start and Child Development Programs adopt an approach to program development by emphasizing the utilization of broad-based linkages and community partnerships. These partnerships involve the public, private, and corporate sectors.

The overall goal of MCAEOC is to bring about a greater degree of social competence and school readiness for all children. Achievement of this goal will enable the child to deal effectively with both the present environment and later responsibilities.

In accordance with the National Head Start Association, MCAEOC is working toward the following goals and objectives:

A. Striving for Excellence

1. Focus on staffing and career development

- a. Follow national guidelines; ensuring requirements are met in every Head Start Program
- b. Develop a new initiative to encourage "qualified mentor teachers" to support classroom staff; reinforcing research showing one-on-one training is most effective
- c. Establish competency-based training as well as academic training for staff that work at both the local and central office levels
- d. Review current educational system to determine if the program is reflective of current information and best practices
- e. Continue to increase, when able, the compensation of Head Start staff.
- f. Strengthen the availability of training and career development opportunities at the local level; also provide training and technical assistance
- g. Establish systems to evaluate progress in the areas of educational growth and development
- h. Review program to assess the collaborative efforts between library systems, museums, and fine arts within local programs and statewide efforts
- i. Work to provide the best possible health services to young children and their families

2. Improve the management of local programs

- a. Attend management training developed by national and regional offices to emphasize and improve the quality of Head Start management
- b. Strengthen financial management policies and practices.
- c. Support strategic planning at the local level, thus providing program direction for a

given period (i.e., 5 to 10 years with definite yearly goals).

- d. Contribute to the updating of the Head Start Performance Standards.
- e. Ensure implementation of performance measures to support strong outcome-oriented results.
- f. Strive to have program staff at center and central office level computer literate (i.e., use of technology). Utilize this system and information to improve management of program.

3. Re-engineer federal and local oversight to provide for greater accountability

- a. Provide guidance to the regional and national level to reassess and design the Head Start training and technical assistance system to support program quality and expansion.
- b. Provide suggestions to the regional and national staff as they review and strengthen Head Start monitoring.
- c. Ensure prompt action to correct any identified problems in performance areas. Request technical assistance from training institutions and other Head Start grantees and assist in necessary improvements.
- d. Review agency administrative structure and staffing levels to ensure quality.
- e. Participate in professional development and training initiatives as launched by the federal government.

4. Provide better facilities

- a. Use new national regulations on facilities to improve the quality of facilities.
- b. Assess the condition of agency Head Start facilities.
- c. Secure technical assistance for facilities if needed.
- d. Explore creative ways to leverage other funds to secure quality facilities.

5. Strengthen the role of research

- a. When applicable, participate in building a strong and enduring infrastructure for Head Start research, ensuring that Head Start is able to carry out its leadership role on an ongoing basis.
- b. When applicable, participate in new Head Start research focusing on quality and other policy issues.
- c. Start programs as national office guides such issues. Support longitudinal research on children and families served in Head Start.

- d. Expand the partnership between research and practitioners by encouraging better communication and better utilization of data.
- e. Maintain awareness of the development of a long-term research plan for Head Start, which places Head Start in the broader context of research on young children, families, and communities; ensure a commitment to ongoing themes, and yet have the flexibility to respond to new and emerging issues.

B. Expanding to Better Meet the Needs of Children and Families

1. Enhance family services and increase parent involvement. Review and expand current resources used for family services, parent education, and family support.

- a. Increase efforts to involve parents in all aspects of the Head Start program.
- b. Assess program linkages with local family literacy resources and the availability of those resources to Head Start.
- c. Develop and maintain adequate case management systems for meeting family needs.

2. Assess needs and plan strategically

- a. Encourage programs to reassess their total program following expansion.
- b. Strengthen the tools and capacities for conducting community needs assessment and for assessing family resources and needs.
- c. Encourage the involvement of other early childhood and family support providers in the community assessment process.

3. Expand to reach children and families who are currently underserved

- a. Continue to expand the number of children served using an entrepreneurial approach (not always expecting Head Start to provide all resources).
- b. Set priorities to target expansion through strategic and long-range planning to areas of scarce resources.
- c. Provide additional support to address the special needs of children who are new to Arkansas.

4. Promote full-day and full-year services

- a. Head Start programs may use Head Start funds to provide full-year and full-day services if the need is established and funding is available.
- b. Grantees may choose to provide services during the summer as appropriate to respond to the needs of children and families, if funding is available.

- c. Continue efforts to maximize other resources to meet the full day needs of Head Start eligible children.
 - d. Head Start programs should work more closely with the broader childcare community.
 - e. Serve families with young children.
5. **Work to develop a new initiative for expanded Head Start support to families with children under age three.**
- a. Ensure that the services Head Start provides to infants, toddlers and their families are of the highest quality.
- C. Forging New Partnerships**
1. **Provide continuity and coordination with schools**
- a. Continue the Head Start Transition Project with agencies providing a transition program of their own.
 - b. Promote high standards, responsive assessment, professional development, effective parent involvement, and supportive services, thus providing an opportunity for all children to achieve their potential in our nation's schools as an integral part of the planned transition program.
 - c. Secure training and technical assistance for directors, staff, public school administrators, and staff on transition, jointly wherever possible.
 - d. Ensure that Head Start parents receive training on working with the public schools to support their child's education.
 - e. Encourage written linkages between Head Start, Even Start, Family Literacy Initiatives, and Part H for services to children 0-3 with disabilities, and the Educational Cooperatives to provide local services for children 3-5 with disabilities.
 - f. Continue and expand linkages between Head Start and federal, state, and local programs that meet the needs of children with disabilities.
 - g. Give suggestions for revising Head Start Performance Standards and/or guidance to address stronger transition efforts for children and their parents.
 - h. Participate in developing ongoing structure and capacity for federal Inter-Agency coordination between Head Start, Department of Education, Department of Health, and Department of Human Services.
 - i. Forge improved linkages at the local level with health services, public and private providers to ensure that the child and family health needs are met promptly.
2. **Facilitate state and local collaboration.**

- a. Develop a long-range strategic plan to better link Head Start with other federal, state, and local resources.
- b. Explore the use of incentive grants to facilitate the planning and implementation of comprehensive systems of services for young children.
- c. Expand the state collaboration grants or explore and develop other mechanisms for promoting better Head Start linkages at the state level.
- d. Promote better linkages at the local level through the community needs assessment process and training and technical assistance.
- e. Develop a clearinghouse on best practices in early childhood and innovative approaches to deliver services to low-income families.

3. Encourage partnerships with the private sector.

- a. Convene key local members of national organizations representing the foundation and business community to stimulate new linkages and support for Head Start.
- b. Document and disseminate promising initiatives with the private sector.

4. Link Head Start with other national initiatives.

- a. Provide full-day services for children of parents in training or working.
- b. Improve the quality of the developmental childcare of participating families.
- c. Provide case management and referral services.
- d. Coordinate training for participating families using all available systems such as satellites for training within communities.
- e. Serve as a site for parenting education, improving literacy skills, and job training, particularly for teen parents and families with very young children.
- f. Provide job placements for entry-level positions, resources, and support for career advancement.
- g. Assess local and state involvement with services in which National Head Start has agreements.
- h. These goals and objectives meet the national initiatives as identified in the Creating a 21st Century Head Start, Final Report of the Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

MULTIPLE FUNDING

The Mississippi County Head Start Program operates several programs to support the community that it serves. Funding sources include Head Start, Early Head Start, Arkansas Better Chance, HIPPY MICHV, and HIPPY. These programs offer quality childcare and individualized educational programs to children 0-

5 years, with before and aftercare available at some centers. Alternative funds are available from other resources for eligible children whose parents work or attend school during the summer months.

HEAD START CENTERS

As reflected from the community needs assessment, the standard program model for center-base will meet the needs of the community. This has been approved by the Governing Board, Policy Council, parents, and staff, with the option to involve before and aftercare programs in needed areas. Centers are located in the cities of: Jonesboro, Blytheville, Osceola, Leachville, Manila, Joiner, Gosnell, and Luxora. The recruitment area shall include the entire Mississippi County and a portion of Craighead County.

PROGRAM OPERATION

Assignments of Staff

All employee positions are approved by the Program Director and/or Human Resource Department and are subject to reassignment. Reassignment may be necessary to achieve equitable distribution of work, provide adequate care for children and operate a quality program. Staff must be able to arrange their transportation to and from work, be on time for their scheduled work hours, and cooperate with co-workers, parents, and volunteers. Employees who substitute for other programs when they are laid off from their regular position are paid as substitutes, not their regular salary.

Bulletin Boards/Message Center for Staff

Each site will have a bulletin board for the use of the staff. Notices and general information for and from the staff should be placed there. In addition, individual program boxes are used in the Central Office and at the Parent Center. Staff are expected to check their mailboxes weekly. Boxes may be located at the Central Office or the Parent Center, if appropriate. Center Coordinators should make every effort to coordinate this action to ensure efficient program operations and maintain the flow of information.

Cell Phones

Cell phone use, including talk and text, should not be done for personal reasons during working hours. Cell phones should be used only for emergency and authorized business reasons during working hours.

Driver's License

Staff required by their job description must have a valid driver's license. A copy of the license must be in the operator's personnel file. Operators must carry the required license while operating any agency vehicle. Driving record checks will be completed on current and prospective transportation employees through the National Driving Register Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration.

Confidentiality

It is important that all information concerning parents and children remain confidential and is discussed only with authorized staff.

Routine information is maintained on each child in a file at each program site. This information is available to consulting or treating medical professionals. Records are not accessible to unauthorized persons. Because of the confidential information in the children's folders, they must remain out of sight and in a locked file cabinet unless staff is working on them.

Information must not be released to insurance companies or other inquiring agencies without the written consent of the child's parents or guardian. This must be coordinated through the central office. Informal conversations, talking in front of staff with differing degrees of responsibility, or talking in the presence of outsiders (visitors) are a violation of the confidentiality and privacy of the family.

CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT PROCEDURES

Law of the State of Arkansas Child Abuse Reporting

Reports of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

- A. When any physician, surgeon, coroner, dentist, osteopath, resident intern, registered nurse, hospital personnel who may be engaged in the admission, examination, care, or treatment of persons, teacher, school official, social service worker, daycare center worker or any other child or foster care worker, mental health professional, peace officer, or law enforcement official has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse, he shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Arkansas Department of Human Services.
- B. Whenever that person is required to report under this subchapter in his capacity as a member of the staff of a medical or public or private institution, school, facility, or other agency, he shall immediately notify the person in charge of the institution, school, facility, or other agency or his designated agent, who shall then become responsible for making a report or cause a report to be made.
- C. In addition to those persons and officials required to report suspected child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect, any other person may make a report if such persons have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

According to Arkansas Law, child abuse is described as acts or omissions by a caretaker to a child including:

- Extreme and repeated cruelty
- Physical, psychological, or sexual abuse
- Any conduct creating substantial possibility of death, permanent or temporary disfigurement, illness, impairment of bodily organs or impairment of intellectual or psychological capacity.
- Any non-accidental physical or mental injury
- Any injury at variance with the history given

As a caregiver of children, you are mandated by the law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, states that any person participating in good faith in making a report has immunity to civil or criminal liability that otherwise might result from such actions. Failure to report subjects the person to civil liabilities and criminal penalties. Neglect is described as acts or omission by a caretaker that results in:

- A failure or refusal to prevent child maltreatment,
- Failure to take action to protect a child from maltreatment, and
- Failure, refusal, or irremediable inability to provide for the essential and necessary physical (food, clothing, shelter, medical) mental, emotional, or educational needs of the child.

All prospective employees must sign a statement of declaration that they have not been arrested, charged, or convicted of a felony/crime against children. Reference checks will be conducted to include the past six years of the applicant's employment and three personal references. Criminal checks shall be

obtained from the Central Registry. Criminal Record Checks and Arkansas Maltreatment Central Registry Checks shall be conducted in accordance with Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers and Head Start Performance Standards.

All prospective volunteers will complete an application and must sign a statement concerning crimes against children. Reference checks will be conducted to include the volunteer's previous six years of employment and three personal references. Criminal Record Checks and Arkansas Maltreatment Central Registry Checks shall be conducted in accordance with Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers and Head Start Performance Standards.

A copy of Arkansas Act 1208 of 1991, formerly known as Arkansas Code annotated 12-12-50-516 (1987), is maintained at the Head Start Central Office. The Family and Community Engagement Monitoring Manager assumes the overall responsibility for the Child Abuse and Neglect Component.

All Head Start employees have a responsibility to identify suspected child abuse or neglect. Calls made to report suspected child abuse and neglect may be done anonymously.

Each employee will sign a statement that they have read and understand the Minimum Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers and the reporting procedures of suspected child abuse and neglect.

During enrollment, parents will receive MCAEOC Head Start Notification of Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect. Additional opportunities regarding prevention, identification, and reporting procedures of suspected child abuse and neglect is offered at the parent meetings and/or during training.

The Statewide Child Abuse Hotline number (1-800-482-5964) is posted in all centers. The number is available 24 hours a day.

IMMUNITY

Any mandated reporter shall be immune to suit and liability, both civil and criminal when acting in good faith.

PENALTIES

Any mandated reporter willfully making false notification or who willfully fails to make notification shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and shall be civilly liable for damages.

Any person who willfully permits or encourages the release of data contained in the Central Registry to whom disclosure is not permitted shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

You cannot be arrested for making a good faith report or need "proof" for making a report. The law does not take into consideration any reason for not reporting. The State's first priority is to protect the child. Until the report is made, the child cannot be protected. Waiting for "proof" could result in serious injury or death to the child. Besides giving protection to the child, there is another reason for reporting, and that is self-protection. As daily caregivers, you are open to accusations of abuse that may have been committed elsewhere. Performing daily health checks in the presence of the parent and learning to recognize the signs of abuse are important facts of all childcare personnel. Knowing early warning signals may help prevent further harm to the child, as well as reducing the chance that charges may be brought against you.

The following procedure must be followed whenever you suspect a case of child abuse or neglect: In deciding what to report, the key criterion is seeing, hearing, or in any other way, discovering reasonable cause to suspect a child has been subjected to abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. The law specifies that

reports should be made immediately by telephone. Anytime you suspect a child has been abused or neglected, you must first report it to your Center Coordinator. Then, after contact with the Center Coordinator, the following procedures apply:

1. The person witnessing the suspected abuse will make an oral report by calling the Child Abuse Hot Line at 1-800-482-5964. The oral report consists of the following:
 - a. The identity and address of the child and his/her parents or guardians, and any caretakers.
 - b. The physical and behavior indicators.
 - c. Status of other children in the home.

- d. Any information related to the cause of the injury or the person responsible, if known.
 - e. Any call made to report suspected child abuse or neglect may be made anonymously.
2. The employee/individual witnessing the suspected child abuse will contact the Child Abuse Hotline. The employee making the report will immediately notify the Parent Family & Community Engagement Manager and the Program Director of the suspected abuse or neglect report.
 3. The staff making the report is responsible for following the oral report on the Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Form. This statement must be forwarded to the Parent Family & Community Engagement Manager in a sealed envelope marked confidential on the day the report is made.

Employees involved directly or indirectly with a case of suspected child abuse or neglect will cooperate fully and maintain confidentiality of all information related to the case.

Staff Placed Under Restricted Supervision

Minimum Licensing Requirements

If a complaint of child maltreatment is filed against any owner/operator, employee or other person in a child care center, the Child Care Licensing Specialist shall evaluate the risk to children and determine the suitability of the person(s) to supervise, be left alone with children, have disciplinary control over children or remain in the center during hours of care until the allegations have been determined true or unsubstantiated. (Pending the evaluation of risk to children by the Child Care Licensing Unit, the person(s) alleged shall not be left alone with children.)

If corrective action is appropriate, the facility shall require all employees who have had a founded report of child maltreatment to follow the corrective action plan specified by the Child Care Licensing Unit. Corrective action measures may vary from relevant training to reassignment or termination. Failure to comply with corrective action plans may constitute grounds for adverse action against the license. MCAEOC will work closely with the Arkansas Department of Health & Human Services Division of Child

Care and Early Childhood Education Child Care Licensing Unit in implementing the best care within all centers.

The responsibilities and duties of those who are under these restrictions will include but are not limited to:

Staff will not/are not allowed to:

1. Be alone with a child or children for any reason.
2. Hug or touch the child.
3. Guide or lead children by using their hands.
4. Take a child to the restroom, nurse, or any other place alone.

Staff will:

1. Be a part of the teacher-child ratio.
2. Assist the supervising teachers in preparing classroom for the day.
3. Assist with meals, laundry, instructional time, outside play, etc.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Written Communication to Parents or Guardians

The Program Director and Center Coordinator must approve all written communication to parents or guardians before being sent home.

When sending home cards, gifts, etc., from the children, please check to find out the family structure. Many children are from single-parent families, and it may not be appropriate for them to bring home things addressed to “Mom and Dad.” Some alternate salutations to use from the children are “To My Special Friend” or “To My Favorite Friend.”

Classroom Environment

Employees are responsible for keeping a neat and clean environment. Children’s work must be displayed as a regular part of the curriculum. There should be other bulletin boards, displays, materials, etc., that reflect themes and other activities that involve the children and make the room an inviting place.

Classroom Supervision

Children must be supervised at all times. In a classroom setting, it is the responsibility of the teacher and teacher assistant to make sure the classroom and children activities are in compliance with all health, safety, state, and local laws and regulations. Employees must be aware that classroom employees have been found liable for negligence due to improper supervision in the classroom; policy breaches will result in disciplinary measures.

Playground

Outside play is required by the Child Care Licensing Division (see Licensing Manual for specific information). It is a part of the classroom staff’s daily routine. Outside play should be met with the same enthusiasm and diligence as any other area of the center’s curriculum. Lesson plans should be followed and changed as the children develop.

Playground Rules

Prior to going onto the playground, children need to understand what is expected of them. Adequate discussion with the children is essential. Different rules will apply to different age levels. Staff are expected to use common sense in determining the rules. If there is a question regarding the playground rules, check with the Center Coordinator.

Safety

Every effort must be made to prevent accidents to children or staff. It is the responsibility of all staff to correct unsafe or messy conditions such as liquids, food, paper, clothing, or toys on the floor. Staff are to report any unsafe conditions or fire hazards to the Center Coordinator immediately if they are unable to correct them.

Staffing

Staffing is directly related to the number of children enrolled. If the enrollment decreases the number of hours worked by staff or the number of staff needed may be adjusted.

All staff must be willing to accept and expect variations in their schedules as required by the needs of the children and the program. The administrative staff will make every effort to ensure that the variations in schedules are fair and equitable.

Supervision of Children

All employees have the responsibility of supervising children when needed. They are not only responsible for children in their classroom, but wherever the children may be on center grounds. Such responsibility is not limited to time or areas of specific duty assignments. Under no circumstances are children left alone in a Head Start facility or activity for any reason, at any time. This standard of performance is the result of the cooperation of all staff in sharing the responsibility of child supervision.

Active Supervision

Active supervision promotes a safe environment and prevents injuries in young children. It requires focused attention and intentional observation at all times. Staff use active supervision strategies to make sure children of all ages explore their environments safely. Keeping children safe is a top priority for all Head Start programs ([45 CFR §1302.102](#)). The Head Start Program Performance Standards require that programs "ensure no child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care" ([45 CFR §1302.90](#)). Using active supervision, staff position themselves so that they can always observe all children — watching, counting, and listening. During transitions, they account for all children with name-to-face recognition by visually identifying each child. Staff also use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what they will do, then get involved and redirect them when necessary. This constant vigilance helps children learn safely.

All Head Start staff and volunteers are responsible for making sure no child is left unsupervised. Active supervision is a strategy that works. It can be used in classrooms, family child care settings, playgrounds, and on buses. It can also be shared with families as a tool to use at home. Below are the steps to take to implement active supervision.

Strategies to Put Active Supervision in Place

The following strategies allow children to explore their environments safely. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must be directly supervised at all times. This includes during daily routines such as sleeping, eating, and diapering or bathroom use.

a. Set Up the Environment

Staff should set up the environment so they can supervise children and always have access to them. Grouping activities together and making sure furniture is at waist height or shorter allows adults to see and hear children. Small spaces should be free of clutter, and big spaces should have clear play spaces for children that staff can observe.

b. Position Staff

Staff should carefully plan where they will position themselves to protect children from harm. This includes positioning themselves to see and hear all children in their care. Staff should make sure there are clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping, and eating. This allows staff to react quickly when necessary and stay close to children who may need additional support.

c. Scan and Count

Staff should always be able to account for the children in their care. They continuously scan the entire environment to know where everyone is and what they are doing. They also count the children frequently. This is especially important during transitions when children are moving from one location to another.

d. Listen

Specific sounds or the absence of them may be cause for concern. Staff who listen closely to children can quickly identify signs of potential danger. Programs that plan systemically are better able to implement additional strategies to safeguard children. For example, adding bells to doors help alert staff when a child leaves or enters the room.

e. Anticipate Children's Behavior

Staff should use what they know about each child's interests and skills to predict what the child will do next. They can create challenges that children are ready for and support them in succeeding. Staff should also be aware of changes in a child's mood and anticipate when a child may wander off, get upset, or take a dangerous risk. Information from the daily health check (e.g., illness, allergies, lack of sleep or food) can inform staff observations and help predict children's behavior. Staff who know what to expect are better able to protect children from harm.

f. Engage and Redirect

Staff should offer support by using what they know about each child's individual needs and development. Staff can encourage children to solve problems independently and help them develop solutions when needed. They can also offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each child's needs.

Sending Children Home

At times, it is necessary to send a child home because of illness or to prevent harm to others. If a child has a contagious disease or a fever, the parent must be notified and the child sent home. In the event there is a serious behavioral problem that disrupts the center activities, and behavioral modification does not prove effective, the Center Coordinator will contact the appropriate central office staff member prior to sending the child home.

Program Attendance

MCAEOC Head Start strives to operate a learning program where all children have the best opportunity to learn. The program encourages parents to have their children at school in a timely manner. This ensures the children of receiving the maximum benefit of learning. However, no child will be sent home for being late, regardless of the arrival time at school. Any child coming late after breakfast is served will be offered a snack. Snacks should include milk, juice and cereal, as required by the Performance Standards. These items should be kept on hand at each center in the event that a child is late. If the time is after 9:00 a.m., it will **not** be counted on the USDA roster for reimbursement.

Leaving Children Unattended

Children should never be left alone. If an emergency arises which causes you to leave your room or group, another staff member or supervisor must be notified so that someone will take your place.

Eating Practices

Classroom staff mealtimes are limited to eating and drinking during meal time or individual breaks. Eating is not permitted in the children's presence and will be confined to the designated area away from the children. Reasonable accommodation will be provided for employees with special dietary needs whenever possible. Classroom staff will be expected to eat lunch with the children. Mealtimes are teaching time, too. Children and staff are to serve lunch "Family Style," with everyone (this includes staff) seated at the tables, having every item placed on their plate, whether eaten or not.

Working with Children

Interaction with children is important. During indoor and outdoor activity time, you are required to involve yourself in the children's activities. Standing or sitting to one side is an unacceptable method of supervision. Inside and outside activities are important parts of a child's day and just as much of a teaching vehicle as structured classroom activities. Move about and encourage the children to be involved with one another. While outside, all children must be carefully supervised. Therefore, each Teacher and Teacher Assistant should be in a location where she/he can safely supervise the children. Social visits between staff is inappropriate during outdoor training time.

Rest Time

All children at the center will be provided with the opportunity to rest after lunch. A freshly sanitized cover for both the cot and child will be used during rest. Although children will not be forced to go to sleep during this period, they will be required to rest quietly. A one-hour rest period is sufficient for preschool children and infant/toddlers rest on demand. All preschool children must be assigned to a cot with an identification number.

Rest time for children is considered work time for staff. During this time, staff are to be reading stories, patting backs, working on lesson plans or other required documentation. This is not a time for staff to attend to personal business.

Field Trips

All classrooms are expected to regularly participate in field trips. Field trips must be documented on the Lesson Plan sheets. Teachers are responsible for having signed permission slips for field trips. Children must be prepared for field trips and field trips must reflect the Unit of Study. All field trips that require "out of area" travel must be a parent-planned activity and staff will accompany parents. Permission slips will be signed at least three days in advance. The Nutrition Service Coordinator must be notified seven working days prior to scheduled field trips to allow adequate time to make the necessary arrangements.

Request for all field trips will be made to the Center Coordinator and Transportation/Facilities Coordinator at least 15 workdays before it can be scheduled.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT & HEALTH SERVICES**Home Visits**

Each teacher will make at least two (2) Educational visits to the home of each child per year. The first visit should be made within nine weeks of the child's enrollment and the second visit should be made in February. Completed Home Visit Records must be kept in each child's folder. For safety purposes, the teacher and teacher assistants are expected to travel together on home visits.

Parent Newsletter

Mississippi County E.O.C. publishes a monthly Newsletter available for all staff and parents. Each center may submit information for the Newsletter at the end of each month with a monthly report. Center Coordinators are responsible for submitting center information for the Newsletter from each classroom in his/her center.

Lesson Plans

All teachers should have lesson plans prepared two weeks in advance and these should be available for inspection by the Center Coordinator. Current Lesson Plans should be posted at all times.

A Child Assessment must be completed within four (4) weeks of the enrollment of each child. The assessment should be used as a guide for preparing the Weekly Individualized Class Plans. Evidence that this plan is being followed will be documented on the Lesson Plan. Child assessments will be on going and should be reviewed with new observations noted at least once per month.

Daily schedules are posted and followed. Children should not be just sitting for periods longer than five minutes.

Children Accident and Safety Protocols

Accident Reporting:

- Accident Reports must be completed whenever an injury occurs, whether visible or not.
- Copies of the Accident Report should be distributed to the parent, Center Coordinator, and Health Service Manager. A copy must also remain in the child's file.

Emergency Preparedness:

- All staff must be familiar with the location of children's emergency telephone numbers.
- Each Teacher and Teacher Assistant is responsible for updating emergency records upon notification.

First Aid and Injury Response:

- All staff should be trained in First Aid and exercise caution when deciding to move an injured child.
- Accidents requiring first aid must be reported to the Center Coordinator.
- If an accident occurs at school and requires a doctor's attention, it must be reported to the Health Service Manager immediately.
- A staff member will transport the child to the doctor immediately following the accident.
- The parent or guardian will be notified at the time of the emergency or as soon as possible.

Staff Responsibilities:

- An employee must remain with the other children.
- A staff member shall be responsible for taking the child to the appropriate medical facility.
- The Central Office must be notified of all accidents.
- An accident report shall be filed on the day the accident occurs.

Workplace Safety:

- MCAEOC stresses the importance of safety in the workplace.
- Each employee is responsible for conducting all tasks in a safe and efficient manner, complying with all local, state, and federal safety and health regulations, programmatic standards, and any special safety concerns.
- Failure to comply with safety conduct or policies places everyone at risk and can lead to employee disciplinary action and/or termination.
- First aid and emergency procedures should be posted in each classroom.

Cleanliness and Safety at the Center

All staff members are responsible for making certain the area they are responsible for is clean and neat. It is the employee's responsibility to keep tabletops, chairs, and play areas clean. Floors will be mopped and swept. Bathrooms shall be cleaned at least once per day. Staff will also see that all supplies are returned to their proper place.

Health Checks

Health checks will be made by the teacher or teacher assistant each morning in the presence of the parent or adult as they sign in their child. If a child has a contagious or infectious disease, he/she cannot be admitted. Parents shall be notified immediately if a child is unable to participate due to illness or fever. The child shall remain as isolated as possible while remaining under supervision until the parent arrives.

All medicines are to be kept out of reach of children, including when dispensing and shall be stored in a locked area at all times. Medication shall be given to children only with signed parental permission that

includes date, type, drug name, time and dosage. It shall be in the original container, not have an expired date, and be labeled with the child's name. Staff shall not dispense medications in dosages that exceed the recommendations stated on the medication bottle.

Cleaning of Children's Cots

All cots should be cleaned and sanitized on a daily basis with the provided cleaning solution. Cots should not have children's names on them just an assigned number. Names and numbers should be recorded on the Classroom Cot Roster form.

Health Screenings

All staff and regular volunteers are required to have tuberculosis screening according to state and local laws and regulations as determined by the Health Advisory Committee to help employees and children remain free from communicable diseases. Failure to provide and maintain a current health screening could result in suspension without pay until a current document is provided.

Safety

Regular fire, tornado, flood, earthquake, and emergency drills will be held and each employee is responsible for knowing his/her role in case of an emergency. A fire evacuation plan will be posted in each classroom. Employees should report any unsafe conditions or equipment immediately to the Center Coordinator.

Discipline of Children

The use of discipline should not be humiliating, frightening, or physically harmful to children. Discipline is not, for any reason, to be associated with food, rest, toilet training, or unsupervised isolation. Labeling a child as "bad" or "naughty," etc., will be avoided. Inappropriate punishment, unnecessary restraint, scolding, shouting, harsh treatment, isolation without supervision, verbal abuse, sarcasm, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family or any type of physical punishment will not be tolerated. Any of the above actions will be grounds for immediate dismissal.

Safety Policy & Injury Prevention

It is the policy of Head Start to provide safe working conditions for all staff and to promote continuing, vital SAFETY AWARENESS at all levels. Safety awareness is the basis on which safety must be founded. Without proper practices, safety is seriously compromised. In the event of a national disaster, policies and procedures will be modified to reflect local, state, and national mandates. MCAEOC Head Start Program:

1. Recognizes its responsibility to furnish a place of employment that is safe for staff, visitors, volunteers, and children.
2. Will provide safety devices and mechanical safeguards, as necessary.
3. Will use methods and processes to protect the life health, safety, and welfare of staff, visitors, volunteers, and children.
4. Will maintain and enforce a program to fulfill all of the agency's responsibilities.
5. Will provide staff with information regarding Blood Borne Pathogens and precautions to avoid exposure. Disciplinary action leading up to and including termination, may be taken against staff

for failure to use safety precautions.

Therefore, it is each person's responsibility to assure their safety and develop a concern for all who work with them. While on Head Start property, employees will conduct themselves professionally and perform work in a safe manner consistent with existing safety rules. Employees, who take safety seriously by reporting potential danger, requesting reviews of conditions, etc., are held in the highest regard. Under no circumstances will staff be reprimanded, demoted, fired, or discriminated against for reporting safety issues.

Immunizations

Every effort will be made by staff to provide needed assistance to parents regarding their children's immunization status. Throughout the child's enrollment in Head Start, his/her immunizations must be kept current. The child's parent or guardian must be present when immunizations are given during an appointment with a health care provider. Children who are not current or up-to-date on their immunizations and where a physician's statement cannot be secured may be dropped from the program after contacts are made with the parents regarding their children's immunization status.

New Enrollees

Employees should make every effort to extend greetings to children and to acquaint themselves with every child. Children are to be reassured that the center is a friendly place and made to feel welcome.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

Program Assessment

An ongoing Program Assessment is necessary if we are to comply with Performance Standards and improve the program. We must comply with Performance Standards to receive Head Start Funds. MCAEOC uses several methods for Program Assessment such as Periodic Staff Evaluations, Annual Self-Assessment, Federal Review Instrument, Observation Checklists, On-Site Evaluations, and informal assessments of various committees.

The required annual self-assessment is an integral part of each program's management system. The self-assessment is a process for examining how well the program has maintained compliance with the Performance Standards. MCAEOC will utilize the federal review instrument. This instrument is the validating tool used in the self-assessment. The federal review instrument will show weaknesses and strengths of the program, and an improvement plan will be developed from this instrument. Information provided by the self-assessment is used to bring the program into compliance, to plan improvement, and to update the plan.

Volunteers are organized into teams to examine the plans and operations of each program area. Program staff or consultants provide training regarding the content of the Performance Standards and the process used to conduct the self-assessment. Confidentiality will be strictly enforced during the review. Activities, facilities, or plans that are out of compliance or in need of improvement are addressed in a self-assessment report.

Teams consisting of staff, parents, and community representatives who participate in a review of the program areas will be trained to use three assessment techniques: observation, interviews, and review of written records and documentation. Specific assessment responsibilities are assigned to team members

so that the work can be completed within the established time. Self-assessment team members also need to coordinate the findings with teams examining related program areas.

The Official Recorder's main purpose is to take the official minutes and maintain accurate account. The Team Leader's main objective is to keep focused and maintain a clear understanding of the regulations and give or delegate the oral report to the entire Self-Assessment Team.

Policy Council

The Policy Council assists the Governing Board and Program Director in the planning and evaluation of the program. A Policy Council member cannot have an immediate relative working for MCAEOC. A member of the MCAEOC Governing Board may serve as a liaison between the MCAEOC Early Childhood Program and the Governing Board.

A list of Policy Council members, along with their addresses, telephone numbers, year they are elected or appointed, and centers they represent is maintained in the Central Office. MCAEOC Early Childhood Program employees (or members of their families) are not eligible to serve on the Policy Council/Committee in a voting capacity. They may attend in a non-voting capacity, at the council's request.

The Policy Council serves as a link between public and private agencies, and between MCAEOC and the community it serves. It makes program suggestions, receives reports on action taken, plans, coordinates, and organizes agency-wide parent activities (with staff assistance), recruits volunteers, and mobilizes community resources. These suggestions are forwarded to the Governing Board.

Members are entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses in fulfilling their group responsibilities. Funds are provided through MCAEOC Head Start Program grant funds.

The following activities are allowable: Travel, lodging, and per diem expenses associated with program training, conference, and workshops and in accordance with agency policies for staff travel. The travel forms required must be completed by the member and prior approval granted by the Executive Director and Program Director.

Teaching Certificates

Employees who hold a valid State Teaching Certificate (degree in Early Childhood Education) are responsible for renewing the certificate prior to expiration. The Teaching Certificate should be valid for the state of Arkansas.

Absence from the Job

If you are ill, have an accident, or are otherwise unable to report for work at the designated time, you are expected to immediately notify your supervisor in accordance with personnel policies. This procedure is necessary so that arrangements can be made to provide sufficient coverage in every Head Start Center .

Substitute Staff Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the continuity of high-quality services, maintain required staff-to-child ratios, and safeguard the health, safety, and supervision of children when regularly assigned staff are absent. *MCAEOC Head Start Program will employ Education Support Staff (ESS) also known as substitute personnel to maintain teacher: child ratios and program operations, as needed. Other program*

staff may be placed as substitute staff when ESS are not available.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All substitute teachers
- Substitute assistant teachers
- Substitute family service staff (if applicable)
- Any temporary personnel providing coverage in classrooms or program operations

3. Policy Statement

The program shall maintain a pool of qualified Education Support Staff (ESS) to provide coverage for planned and unplanned staff absences. Substitute staff shall meet all applicable **Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)**, licensing regulations, and organizational requirements.

Education Support Staff shall:

- Be appropriately qualified for assigned roles
- Complete required background checks
- Receive orientation and training
- Adhere to all program policies and procedures

4. Education Support Staff Qualifications

ESS staff must meet minimum requirements consistent with:

- **HSPPS regulations**
- State licensing standards
- Program operational needs

4.1 Classroom Substitutes must:

- Meet minimum education requirements per HSPPS / state licensing
- Demonstrate the ability to support child development and supervision
- Possess age-appropriate classroom management skills

Preferred qualifications:

- Early childhood education coursework
- Experience working with young children
- Knowledge of Head Start philosophy

5. Background Checks & Clearances

Prior to working with children, ESS staff must complete:

- Fingerprinting for local and FBI Criminal background checks
- Child abuse/neglect registry checks
- Sex Offender Registry check
- Health screenings / TB tests (if required)
- No ESS may be assigned without full clearance

6. Orientation & Training

All substitute staff shall receive orientation covering:

- Program philosophy and expectations
- Child supervision and safety procedures
- Emergency protocols

- Confidentiality requirements
- Mandated reporting responsibilities
- Behavior guidance policies

Substitutes working frequently shall receive ongoing training consistent with staff development plans.

7. Staff-to-Child Ratios

Substitute staff assignments must ensure:

- Compliance with required ratios at all times
- Maintenance of active supervision practices
- Continuity of care for children

Substitutes shall never be used in a way that compromises supervision or safety.

8. Responsibilities

8.1 Substitute Staff Responsibilities

Substitutes must:

- Follow daily classroom schedules and routines
- Implement lesson plans as directed
- Maintain active supervision
- Follow health and safety procedures
- Maintain professional conduct
- Protect confidentiality

8.2 Supervising Staff Responsibilities

Assigned supervisors/center coordinators shall:

- Provide necessary classroom information
- Ensure substitutes understand expectations
- Monitor substitute performance
- Provide feedback as needed

9. Assignment & Scheduling

- Substitutes may be scheduled for planned absences or contacted for emergency coverage
- Assignments shall be based on qualifications and availability
- Program leadership retains discretion in placement decisions

10. Performance Expectations

Substitute staff are expected to:

- Demonstrate professionalism
- Maintain appropriate interactions with children and families
- Comply with all program policies
- Failure to meet expectations may result in removal from substitute placement

11. Confidentiality

Substitute staff must adhere to all confidentiality policies, including:

- Protection of child and family information
- Non-disclosure of program matters

12. Compliance

This policy supports compliance with:

- Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS)
- State licensing regulations
- Other funding sources' educational requirements
- Organizational policies

13. Continued Operations of Classrooms and Centers

MCAEOC Head Start Program will make every effort to keep classrooms open during assigned calendar days and operating hours. Classrooms, kitchens, and centers may **not** be closed during assigned calendar days and operating hours unless authorized by the Program Director, Executive Director, or Chief Fiscal Officer. The only exception is for medical necessities in which the Health Manager has authorization to close classrooms, centers, kitchens or any MCAEOC facility for illnesses, outbreaks, etc.

Center Coordinators may combine or rearrange classrooms following proper standards if necessary. **The safety and well-being of the children are the main priorities in determining substitute placements.**

Employees will be placed in the classroom or other settings to ensure full compliance with Head Start Performance Standards, state licensing regulations, and all applicable policies from other funding sources, as well as state requirements and agency policy manuals.

1. All Education Support Staff
2. Custodians
3. Family Service Staff
4. Center Coordinators
5. All Management Team Members
6. Assistant Head Start Director
7. Other employees who have completed the required substitute training
8. Classroom and other staff from any MCAEOC site
9. Bus Monitors

All employees who have completed the required agency training may be assigned to work as substitute staff. Employees requesting exemption from substitute placement should contact the HR Department immediately.

In the event a college campus or public-school housing MCAEOC Head Start classrooms are closed during normally scheduled calendar days or hours of operation, MCAEOC will make arrangements to remain open. The delegated employee will contact the public school superintendent or the college security officer to request permission for MCAEOC Head Start staff, children, and families to access the campus.

Inclement Weather Policy

MCAEOC recognizes that there will be occasions of inclement weather. When poor weather conditions dictate, the normal work schedule may be revised. Decisions will be made for each incident of bad weather or hazardous road conditions. In severe weather conditions or hazardous road conditions:

- The Executive Director will decide if the normal work schedule will be altered, permitting late arrivals or early departures for the staff. The Executive Director will determine if employees are on remote work status.

- The closing of the Head Start Centers will generally reflect the decision of the public school in each district where the center is located. The Director may, at her discretion, close all centers if there are other problems to be considered.
- Center Coordinators are responsible for building maintenance during inclement weather. The facilities coordinator and maintenance team will assist upon request.

Change of Personal Information

You should report any changes in your personal information to the Human Resource Department and/or Finance Office. Items such as name, address, telephone number, dependents, education, work location, and telephone extension are important to our ability to provide service and periodic information to you.

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings are one of the best avenues for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of information. It is important that all staff members attend scheduled meetings. Suggestions for change, improvements, etc., are always welcomed and interpreted as positive input.

All team leaders should conduct meetings on a regular basis. When Center Coordinators are absent, every effort should be made to arrange for an alternate to attend the staff meeting to ensure information is shared. Once the information has been shared and distributed, it is the responsibility of each person attending the meeting to share the information. Center staff meetings should be on a weekly basis in order to share information and plan the various activities of the center.

Training and Technical Assistance

MCAEOC Head Start provides employees with in-service training designed to improve and enhance their skills and competencies and to further the career growth of individuals during employment. Training activities are centered on enhancing the achievement of Head Start's mission, goals, and objectives, providing individual employees with increased levels of knowledge and experiences, leading to new or different employment opportunities that provide greater opportunities for increased earnings and self-actualization.

It shall be the policy of MCAEOC to obtain maximum utilization of all staff. In an effort to effectively and efficiently accomplish assigned tasks, a staff development program will be provided to enhance this goal. Components of the staff development program will include providing an orientation and pre-service training program, providing daily on-going supervision to ensure maximum performance, and providing in-service training programs designed to improve and enhance employee skills, competencies, and career development.

It is mandatory for all staff to participate in training. It is also required that each employee is knowledgeable of program area plans, minimum licensing requirements, personnel policies, performance standards, this publication, and other information relating to MCAEOC.

Mississippi County E.O.C. Training/Technical Assistance (T/TA) and Child Development Associate (CDA) programs' basic purpose is to increase knowledge and awareness among decision makers, teachers, parents, and partners in our Head Start service system. Proper training and experience play a vital role at MCAEOC. Staff will earn a twenty-five-dollar monthly increase upon completion of CDA. Each employee shall be responsible for maintaining a current CDA (which includes paying CDA fees and being assessed). Staff should begin the renewal process six (6) months prior to the current CDA's expiration date. If an employee fails to renew the CDA, the employee puts his/her job in jeopardy.

Employee College Tuition Assistance

When funding is available, Early Childhood employees pursuing a college degree may apply for college tuition assistance in a job-related field. Opportunities are available for staff members who are interested in pursuing an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or a related field in accordance with current Head Start guidelines. Guidelines are established to ensure funding is used to best meet the needs of the program. Full tuition will be paid to the college or university. The program is based on the availability of funds and operates on a first come, first served basis. Currently, there is no penalization for dropped or failed classes. However, each staff person that receives college assistance funds from the agency will sign a contract to maintain employment with MCAEOC or within the county for at least three years after receiving the funds. Salary increases are given with college degrees and certification based on current funding. The agency will provide tuition assistance after Pell Grant and other scholarship awards are deducted, excluding student loans. A major must be declared that is job-related. We are encouraging Family Service Workers to work toward a BS degree in social work. Employees interested in college tuition assistance should talk with their supervisor and the Human Resources staff to determine availability and eligibility.

Child Development Associate Credentialing Policy

A program must ensure all employees, consultants, and contractors engaged in the delivery of program services have sufficient knowledge, training, experience, and competencies to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their positions and to ensure high-quality service delivery in accordance with the program performance standards. A program must provide ongoing training and professional development to support staff in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

The Head Start Performance Standards mandate the following qualification for Early Head Start (Infant–Toddler) Teachers:

- A CDA (Child Development Associate) with an Infant–Toddler specialization, or
- A state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds CDA standards, or
- An associate's or bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or a related field *with coursework focused on infants and toddlers.*

A CDA *is required* unless the Infant/toddler Teacher has a higher, equivalent degree.

Head Start Teacher Assistants are required to have, at a minimum, a CDA credential or a State-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential, proof of enrollment in a program that will lead to an associate or baccalaureate degree, or be enrolled in a CDA credential program to be completed within two years of the time of hire.

Employees earning a certificate in a preschool setting only (not Birth to Five) must obtain approval from the Program Director in advance to be eligible for a salary increase. Head Start Teacher Assistants are encouraged to enroll in a degree program in Early Childhood, Child Development, or a related field.

Upon completion of a qualifying, approved CDA, MCAEOC classroom employees will receive an increase pending the availability of funds. Unless otherwise approved by the Program Director, employees earning a CDA through the MCAEOC Apprenticeship Program must enroll in the Birth to Five CDA setting. Salary increases will be given for Birth to Five CDA settings only, not add-on settings or separate Infant/toddler or Preschool CDA certificates.

CDA Certificates must be completed within 1 year of enrollment.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

An Emergency Preparedness Plan is implemented to provide guidance when staff encounter potential or actual workplace violence. It is the responsibility of all staff to immediately report threats, acts of violence occurring on the premises or while conducting Head Start business (i.e., field trips or home visits) to their supervisor.

Procedures:

When encountering a threatening incident, person, animal, etc., the following procedures must be implemented:

Staff in centers and offices will use a code or phrase to convey to co-workers the need to call 911. If you are not familiar with the code word/phrase, please see your Center Coordinator.

Ask uninvolved parties to leave the area if this can be done safely. If possible, use the prearranged code word/phrase to alert your supervisor or co-workers to call 911.

MCAEOC Head Start offices, centers and home-based facilities must have a designated safe signal.

The staff person most accessible to the phone should call 911.

If possible, close all doors to classrooms/offices and close blinds, if applicable, to minimize accessibility to other areas.

In an open classroom/office situation, try to keep the threatening incident as close to the nearest outside door as possible.

If the threatening incident is outside, go quickly into the building, lock the doors, close the blinds, if applicable, and take a head count.

Guidance:

Try to stay calm. Raising your voice may increase the anxiety of the potentially violent person.

Speak slowly, softly, and clearly to reduce the momentum of the incident.

Avoid challenging body language such as placing hands on hips, moving toward the person, or staring directly at them. Do not turn your back on the individual.

Listen empathetically by really paying attention to what the person is saying. Let the person know that you will help them within your ability to send for additional help.

Neither agree with distorted statements or attempt to argue-REMAIN CALM.

Ask the person to leave and come back at a time when a meeting can be arranged with your supervisor.

Never challenge, try to bargain, or make promises that you cannot keep.

Closure:

After the incident has been resolved, a meeting will be initiated to discuss the incident with staff, parents, or children, if applicable. This debriefing should be done as soon as possible, depending on the incident, with the spokesperson being someone who was not directly involved in the incident. The Head Start Program or their designee will name the spokesperson. Staff may not discuss the incident with the media.

Mental Health staff may assist in evaluating the incident and provide support to staff, parents, and children, if indicated.

Remember: This is a basic plan. Various incidents will call for the staff involved to make the best decision based on survival instincts. KEEP CALM AND THINK!

Licensing Compliance Record Procedure

When a Child Care Licensing Specialist comes to monitor the Head Start Center, she/he completes the following sections of the Licensing Compliance Record form: the standard review, discussion/observation, and compliance data. After the specialist completes this form and gives it to the Center Coordinator, the following steps need to be taken:

- 1) Center Coordinators will coordinate with the necessary corrections to be made (if any).
- 2) Center Coordinators should then enter the date that the corrections were made on the licensing compliance form.
- 3) The form should then be forwarded to the Central Office to the Mentoring Coaches. He/she will contact the Licensing Department and report the date and the corrections that were made.

In the event there is a need to report a potential licensing violation, please contact the Center Coordinator first. If the Center Coordinator is unavailable, staff should report in writing to the Program Operations Education Manager and/or Transportation/Facilities Coordinator. As a last resort contact the Program Director verbally or in writing through the Head Start secretaries.

Health Procedures for Early Childhood Education Employees

1. In compliance with the Head Start Performance Standard Health Procedures for Head Start staff the following practices have been established.

MCAEOC's utmost goal is to meet the federal regulations of initial health examination for staff and volunteers in order to avoid communicable diseases that pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others in the Early Head Start and Head Start Programs that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation.

- a. All candidates for employment must have an initial health examination and TB screening prior to hiring. The agency will be responsible for the expense of the initial TB screening of all new employees given by the agency's physician. The initial Health Examination will be performed by the agency's nurse, the employee's preferred physician, or the agency's physician (i.e. Department of Transportation physical).
- b. In light of the Arkansas Department of Health's decision to discontinue TB skin test requirements, staff will complete a Tuberculosis (TB) Risk Assessment Form. Staff with TB referrals must obtain a TB skin test card, at their own expense, as instructed on the

- questionnaire.
- c. The periodic health re-examination shall be every two years or as recommended by the employee's health care provider. Physicals will be completed by the agency nurse, contracted nurse, or the employee's personal physician.
 - d. TB screening questionnaires will be completed every two years by the Human Resources Department.
 - e. DOT initial health examinations can be used as the initial health examination as required by the Head Start Performance Standards.
 - f. Employee health data is entered in the database weekly and forwarded to supervisory/management staff monthly for distribution and as a means to inform employees of expiration dates. Entries include TB and health examination expiration dates.
 - g. Employees are responsible for maintaining required health and educational credentials (physicals, health screenings, etc.). Failure to comply will result in disciplinary actions.
 - h. Health data is filed separately from other employee personnel files in the central office.
 - i. The Human Resource Department will monitor employee health requirements.
 - j. The current health policy (see personnel policies) supersedes any previous policies.

The following health information is maintained in GoEngage as a means of tracking employee requirements:

- A. Date of hire
- B. Initial TB and physical (when applicable)
- C. Expiration dates for health screening
- D. TB Expiration Date
- E. Physical Expiration Date

Reports are generated monthly and forwarded to Supervisory/Management Staff for distribution, review, and as a means to inform employees of needed documents.

Intentional Violation of Program Eligibility Requirements

MCAEOC follows all local, state, and federal guidelines in accordance with 45CFR Part 1305 to ensure that the neediest children and families benefit from Head Start services. Employees who intentionally violate any local, state, or federal policy regarding program eligibility and intentionally enroll ineligible pregnant women and/or children will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination.

