

HEAD START



SCHOOL HANDBOOK 2025-2026



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****School Partnerships may follow their own policies and procedures****

*All Early Childhood Policies are available upon request.

-Supervision Policy (Classroom & Outdoor)
-Sick/Short Term Exclusion

-Health Emergency
-Attendance

If you have a complaint or grievance regarding our program, a Parent/Community Member Grievance form is available upon request.

Updated terminology:

- ⇒ Head Start: (HS) Includes ALL children birth to age 5.
- ⇒ Early Head Start: (EHS) Includes children birth to age 3.
- ⇒ Head Start Preschool: (HSP) Includes children ages 3-5.

My Rights as a Head Start Parent

- ⇒ To be recognized as their child's primary educator, to feel welcomed to the classroom, and to be treated with respect by all program staff.
- ⇒ To receive information about my child's progress and development and participate in discussions about my child's learning and goal setting.
- ⇒ To be informed about any community resources pertaining to health, education, employment, and family well-being.
- ⇒ To take part in decisions about classroom and program policies via parent committees and policy council meetings.
- ⇒ To review and request clarification on program policies, procedures and my child's records.

My Responsibilities as a Head Start Parent

- ⇒ To provide transportation that ensures regular, punctual attendance.
- ⇒ Follow all program rules and guidelines, including timely drop-off and pick-up procedures.
- ⇒ Actively participate in program activities such as Family Engagements, Positive Solutions Parenting Curriculum, Parent Committees and Policy Council.
- ⇒ To guide my child with positive discipline, and reinforce at home what the child learns at school.
- ⇒ To maintain a bedtime routine that ensures my child receives 10-12 hours of sleep.
- ⇒ To take part in Home Visits/Parent Teacher Conferences.
- ⇒ Respect confidentiality of other children and staff within the classroom and program setting.

ATTENDANCE:

Regular attendance is crucial for your child to receive the full benefits of the Head Start program and to develop strong early learning habits that contribute to future academic success. An 85% attendance level is required per Attendance Policy 07. **Contact your center in the event of any absence.**

- ♦ Doors will open 15 minutes prior to class start time. It is very important for students to be **dropped off and picked up on time**. Students will not be dismissed until the end of the day.
- ♦ Students will be supervised by their caregiver in the parking lot until they are in the classroom.
- ♦ Parents will be responsible for signing their child in and out based on the attendance procedure.
- ♦ Staff will not release a child to any unauthorized person. A person unknown to the staff will be asked to provide photo identification.

*Weather related closings will follow the local school districts. Please be aware of your center's method of communication for weather related closings.

PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT:

Home Visits & Parent/Teacher Conferences

Home Visits and Parent Teacher Conferences highlight the parent's role as their child's first and most important educator. They provide an opportunity for teachers/family service workers to share developmental screening results, discuss educational outcomes, family needs and review information. They will also include a review of the child's attendance percentage and provide an opportunity to address any questions or concerns you might have.

*These visits allow staff and parents to work together to create family and child goals, to share successes and concerns, and build lasting relationships.

*There will be 2 Home Visits and 2 Parent/Teacher Conferences throughout the year. The first Home Visit must be completed before a child can attend school.

Family Educational Opportunities—Positive Solutions for Families

Parents will be provided with many opportunities throughout the school year to participate in Family Engagements and Parent Curriculum Workshops. **Participation is highly encouraged.**

- **Family Engagements** are events that are planned by the Parent Committee with the assistance of the Family Service Worker (FSW).
- **Positive Solutions for Families** activities and workshops will be held throughout the program year. These are parenting workshops on a variety of topics related to your family's social-emotional well-being. Positive Solutions for Families is an evidence-based family workshop with seven parenting sessions. This workshop is geared towards families with children 2-5 years old.
- **Parent Committees and Policy Council** allows parents the opportunity to connect with other families and share their ideas to help shape our program decisions.

Fatherhood



Head Start values the vital role that fathers and father figures/role models play in the healthy development and success of young children. Fathers are encouraged to be active partners in their children's education and well-being, both at home and in our program. "Father" can include biological dads, stepfathers, grandfathers, male caregivers, foster fathers, and significant male role models in a child's life.

Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the Head Start program and enhancing the experiences of children and families. Whether you are a parent, extended family member, or community member, your time, skills and talents are valuable in many ways. You can assist in the classroom, help prepare meals/clean up, organize materials, serve as a translator, help with office tasks or assist with Family Engagements/Parenting Curriculum opportunities.



Let your Family Service Worker or Area Manager know if you are interested in volunteering.

CLASSROOM: Daily Activities

While all classrooms have a unique schedule that works best for their program, you will find that all Head Start Classrooms will likely have these components.

Arrival/Dismissal: Parents and Children will be greeted in a welcoming way. At the end of the day, children will recall concepts/events from their day to share with their family at home.

Free Choice Time (Centers): Research has shown that children learn best through play. At Early Head Start/Head Start we spend a generous amount of time learning through play. There are many areas of interest that the children may choose to play in: Blocks, Art, Dramatic Play, Science, Writing, Library, Manipulative, and Sand/Water are some common ones you may find in your child's classroom. Children choose an area to play in but are free to move about the classroom to new areas at their discretion.

Large/Small Group Time: Children may experience things like music & movement, reading books, gross motor, or specific activities related to a study they are exploring. Through small group activities, teachers are able to focus on specific preschool concepts.

Meal Time: Children are provided healthy options for breakfast, lunch and snack at specific times during their day. Meals are served family style and provide many opportunities for learning social skills with staff modeling mealtime manners.

Rest Time: Children will have the opportunity to rest/nap in a calm and quiet space. Children are not required to sleep during this time; however, it is an opportunity for them to calm their bodies. Full day programs will include a rest time.

Outdoor Play: Children will go outdoors most days. These activities promote large motor skills as well as coordination. Please dress your child according to the weather conditions. See more specific Outdoor Play information on page 9.

Transitions: Children will move from one activity to the next while learning a variety of concepts.

Individualization: Children are individuals with different rates and paths of growth and development. Activities will be modified or extended to meet children where they are and in a way that best promotes their development of specific skills and concepts.

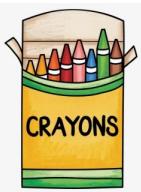


CLASSROOM:

Personal Belongings:

We ask that children bring a small blanket for rest time as well as an extra set of clothing in case of spills, toilet accidents, messy artwork, etc. These items will be left at school in a designated area. All items should be labeled with your child's name. If we have to change their clothes at school, we will fill out *A Change of Clothing Form*, this will inform you of what happened. Each child will have a cubby/coat locker where they may place coats/backpacks. All cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Any notes or items from the teacher will also be located in their cubby. **Please do not send toys, money, or food to school. The program is not responsible for any lost items.**

Be Sure to Check your Child's Cubby/Locker and Backpack Daily!!

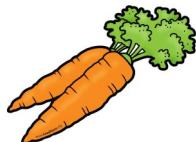


School Supplies:

All supplies such as crayons, paper, pencils, diapers/pull-ups, wipes and infant formula/meals will be provided for children enrolled at *no cost* to the family.

Walking Field Trips/Classroom Visitors

During your first Home Visit, Parent Consent is signed giving your permission for your child to participate in walking field trips. Throughout the year, staff will be sending home notes, weekly newsletters or monthly calendars informing you of upcoming classroom activities. Classroom visitors may be scheduled to attend your child's classroom. These opportunities provide educational enrichment and are usually based upon the study at that time. Please be sure to send your child to school in comfortable, closed toed shoes on days they have scheduled a walking field trip.



Meals:

Head Start programs provide nutritious meals and snacks daily to support children's healthy growth and learning. These meals are served family style. For the safety of all children, please do not send food or drinks from home. Special dietary needs will be accommodated with proper documentation. A menu will be sent home each month. Many of our center's contract lunch from outside caterers, it is important that you contact the staff as soon as possible if your child will be arriving late/not coming. We need to be sure the correct amount of food has been ordered for all the children on that day.

Food and Beverages will not be used as a reward, punishment, or as a bribe

CLASSROOM:

Birthdays:

Head Start recognizes that birthdays are special milestones in a child's life, but are not formally celebrated at school. If you would like to do something special to recognize your child's birthday, see examples listed below:

- ◆ Spend time at school with your child
- ◆ Join them for mealtime
- ◆ Read a favorite book to the class or share an activity with the class
- ◆ Donate a book, write your child's name on the inside cover with the date it was donated



All other activities must be pre-approved by staff/Area Managers.

Please remember, it is not necessary to send anything to the classroom.

Celebration Position Statement:

Head Start programs prioritize inclusive, developmentally appropriate celebrations that honor children's growth, achievements, and cultural diversity while respecting all family backgrounds and beliefs. Celebrations focus on common themes such as changing seasons, development milestones, learning projects, and children's individual and group accomplishments rather than emphasizing specific holidays or religious observances.

Celebrate Milestones: the first tooth, learning to whistle, printing a name, tying a shoelace, telling a story or making a friend, etc.

Celebrate Points of Learning: colors, numbers, shapes, a favorite story, etc.

Celebrate Children and Families: the birth of a sibling, family member visiting, moving to a new house, etc.

Celebrate Events in the World: (natural and unnatural) - a shuttle launch, the first snowflake, puddles, a thunderstorm, new president, etc.

Celebrate Time with Families: nutritional food experiences, creative activities, physical activities to promote wellness, health related activities, math/science projects, etc.

Drills:

Head Start programs regularly conduct safety drills to ensure all children, staff, and volunteers are prepared to respond calmly and effectively in the event of an emergency. These drills help everyone understand what to do in various situations and provide opportunities to practice important safety procedures. Each month, staff and students will practice a Fire Drill. A Tornado Drill will be practiced monthly between the months of March and October. Emergency Evacuation Drills will be practiced twice a year.

***In the event of an emergency, staff will implement their site specific Safety Emergency Procedures Plan. As a parent, it is important that you provide current contact information. Please communicate if changes need to be made. A copy of the Emergency Procedures Plan is available at each Center.**

CLASSROOM:

Outdoor Procedure:

Outdoor play is an essential part of the Head Start experience, promoting children's physical health, creativity, and social skills in a safe and nurturing environment. Children will go outside daily unless the temperature/wind chill is 20 degrees or below, or the heat index is 90 degrees or above. Approved sunscreen and insect repellent (no more than 30% DEET) will be applied on children two months of age and older, in the months of May-September. Spray sunscreen is NOT allowed. Bug spray must only be applied ONCE a day. When applying both, apply sunscreen first, then bug spray.

***These items will be provided for your child.**

Health experts agree on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in an indoor setting. If your child is well enough to be at school, they are well enough to go outside. If a parent provides a note from a physician that requires their child to stay inside, the note will be honored. **The note must specify the number of days and can not exceed two.** Special circumstances will be discussed on an individual basis.



Children should be dressed properly for indoor and outdoor play. Play clothes and tennis shoes are recommended for children in our programs. Water, dirt, paint, glue, food and other "messy" items are a regular part of our days. Close toed shoes allow all children to run, jump, and play safely without sliding or tripping on the floor.

Please provide a coat, hat/mittens, and boots for your child in the winter months. If you do not have these items, let staff know. Staff understand that sometimes things get lost, so we will try to keep extras on hand for those times when items are not available. Our program depends on children arriving with the appropriate clothing for a full, active day, both indoors and out.

Playground rules will be reviewed regularly with students, and staff conduct playground safety checklists daily.





HEALTH:

Health Screens and Assessments

Head Start programs are committed to ensuring every child's health and developmental needs are identified and addressed promptly through comprehensive screenings and assessments. All children enrolled in our program must receive the following screens. All screenings are valid for one calendar year, unless otherwise stated.

- **Dental Examination**
- **Growth Assessment**
- **Developmental Screens**
- **Physical Examination**
- **Lead Screening**
- **Hemoglobin Screening**
- **Vision Screening**
- **Hearing Screening**
- **Nutrition Assessment**
- **Blood Pressure Screening**

*If parents have a Refusal of Immunizations in place, the child can not attend school if there is an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, for the protection of all children. The Health Services Deputy Director will determine the length of exclusion.

Oral Health:

Oral health is a vital part of a child's overall well-being and readiness to learn. Head Start programs prioritize early, regular dental care and daily hygiene practices to promote healthy teeth and gums. Students and teaching staff will follow the *oral health toothbrushing procedure*.

Mental Health Services:

Head Start programs are committed to supporting the mental health and social-emotional well-being of children, families and staff. With permission from the parents, a mental health professional will observe the classroom as needed. Information received from professionals, parents, and teachers will help to determine if a further evaluation for individual services is needed. These services may assist children to build positive relationships, and work collaboratively with families and program staff to provide services to meet the child/family's need. All mental health services are kept confidential.

Disability Services for Children:

Our programs are committed to serving children who have specific health or developmental needs. Staff work together with schools to utilize all services offered. Staff will work daily with children to reach the goals listed on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). If a concern is observed, parents will be notified. Staff and parents will decide if further evaluation is needed. Referrals may be made at any point during the school year, please talk more with your child's teachers if you have concerns.

HEALTH:

Health Emergency for a Medical Condition (Medical Action Plan)

Head Start staff will make every effort to minimize triggers and prevent an attack or episode of the individual's medical condition.

Head Start staff at the school where the child will be attending will be trained to provide emergency treatment and/or medication to the child in accordance with the child's Medical Action Plan.

Child Abuse and Neglect Procedure:

All adults are mandatory reporters

In compliance with Nebraska Revised Statute 28-711 Reporting Law, when any person has reasonable cause to believe that a person is being subjected to conditions that would result in neglect or abuse, he/she is required by law to report such incidents to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-652-1999 or proper law enforcement agency (police/sheriff department). It is the primary goal of the program to provide and ensure a safe environment for all children. Child abuse exists in every level of society. There are four recognized and defined forms of child abuse:

- **Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental injury, which may include severe beatings, burns, strangulation, or human bites.
- **Neglect:** The failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life -- food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- **Sexual Molestation:** The exploitation of a child for the sexual gratification of an adult, as in rape, incest, fondling of genitals, or exhibitionism.
- **Emotional Abuse:** A behavior that places unreasonable demands on a child to perform above his or her capabilities and does so in an excessive or aggressive manner. Examples include constant teasing, belittling, verbal attacks, and a lack of love, support, or guidance.

**It is important that parents know that it is against Nebraska law and considered child neglect to leave a child, six years of age or younger, alone in a vehicle. Please let staff know if you require assistance with other siblings. Staff are required, by law to report to the authorities if children are not properly restrained in a car seat.*

***Staff can neither confirm or deny any child abuse or neglect cases reported by our program.**

In the event of a suicide threat made by a child, staff will first contact the Mental Health consultant; the parent will be notified and referred to the Nebraska Family Hotline (Available 24/7) 1-888-866-8660. Comprehensive background checks, including sex offender and criminal, are completed on staff upon hire as required by Head Start Performance Standards. Partnerships may perform background checks on parent volunteers per school policy. Parents and volunteers will never be left alone with children at any time. All information is confidential. If a parent, volunteer, or visitor appears on the Sex Offender Registry or as a perpetrator of sexual abuse against a child or vulnerable adult, schools will enforce their local city ordinance. For the safety of your child, the Nebraska Sex Offender Registry can be found on the website: www.nsp.state.ne.us

ILLNESS:

Please call your center if your child will not be at school due to illness

Sick-Short Term Exclusion Policy (Summary)

Policy ID: NENCAP HS-PO5

- ♦ The Daily Visual Health Check will be used by parents and staff as a resource to check for symptoms or illness. Children may be excluded for any condition spread through the intestinal tract, the respiratory system, direct contact, excessive drainage, etc.
- ♦ Any child showing symptoms from the Daily Visual Health Check may be excluded from the center at the discretion of the designated staff person.
- ♦ If a child is ill or in distress, they should remain at home until they are symptom free for 24 hours without symptom reducing medication.
- ♦ If a child is absent due to illness for 3 days or more, a doctor's note must be required before the child can return to class.



Daily Visual Health Check



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fever at or above 100.4 F (tympanic-ear) or 99F (axillary-armpit)• Respiratory: cough, sneezing, wheezing, runny nose, shortness of breath• Unusual skin color, spots or rashes• Swelling or bruises• Sores or cuts• Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stomachache• Urine problems• Eye drainage, eye pain• Mouth sores with drooling• Vomiting• Headache• Ear drainage, ear pain.
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Ecto-Parasites (Head Lice, Scabies, Fleas, Bed Bugs)

Please follow the guidelines below:

- Head Lice: The child must be nit free to return to class.
- Scabies: The child must receive medical treatment and have a doctor's note before returning to class.
- Fleas: The child must be flea free to return to class.
- Bed Bugs: The child must be bed bug free to return to class.

ILLNESS:

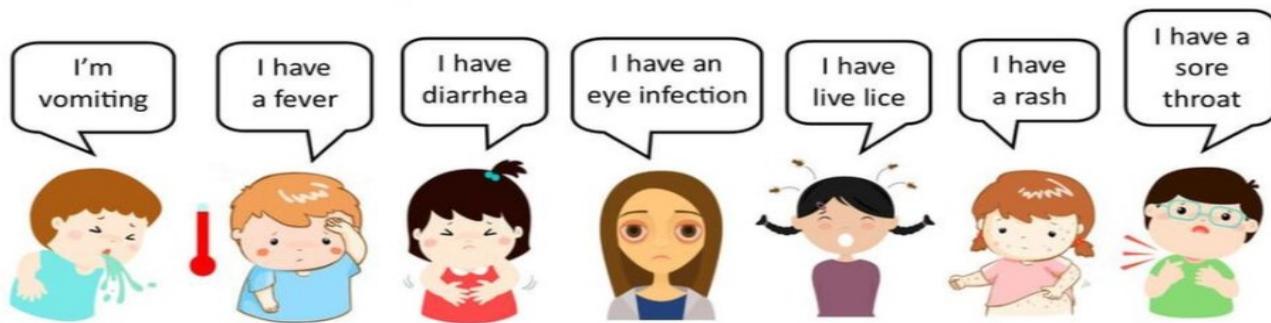
Communicable Diseases:

If a child has a suspected or physician confirmed communicable disease or in the event of a community outbreak, staff will fill out the Communicable Disease Form and notify our Health Specialist and Health Services/Deputy Director immediately. The Health Services/ Deputy Director may choose to close a center for a short time.

Communicable diseases that must be reported:

- ◆ Chickenpox (Varicella)
- ◆ Impetigo
- ◆ Coxsackie A
- ◆ Polio
- ◆ Bacterial & Viral Meningitis
- ◆ Scabies
- ◆ Strep Infection
- ◆ Head Lice
- ◆ Measles
- ◆ Rubella (German Measles)
- ◆ Tuberculosis
- ◆ MRSA
- ◆ Fleas
- ◆ Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease
- ◆ RSV
- ◆ Hepatitis A
- ◆ Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- ◆ Ringworm
- ◆ Pinworm
- ◆ Herpes Simplex Type 1
- ◆ Fifth Disease
- ◆ Giardiasis
- ◆ Diphtheria
- ◆ Mumps
- ◆ Pertussis (Whooping Cough)
- ◆ Influenza A
- ◆ Influenza B
- ◆ Bed Bugs
- ◆ Roto Virus
- ◆ Staph Infection (non-MRSA)
- ◆ COVID-19
- ◆ Suspected food or water-borne clusters or outbreaks.

Keep Me Home If...



It is required that your student remain home until he/she can tolerate a normal diet without vomiting for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

It is required that your student is fever free without medication for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

Two or more watery stools in 24 hours.

Redness, discharge or crusting of the eyes.

Please notify the school. Your child can return to school the day after treatment.

Body rash, especially with itching or a fever.

With fever or swollen glands.

It is a good idea to have a plan in place should your child become ill at school.
Be sure to update your contact information often so staff can reach you.

Civil Rights Information

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits.

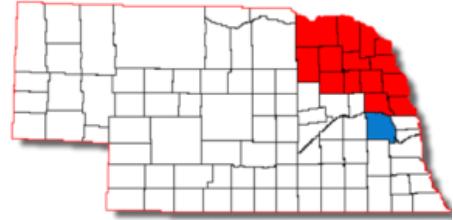
Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

As stated above, all protected bases do not apply to all programs, “the first six protected bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability and sex are the six protected bases for applicants and recipients of the Child Nutrition Programs.”



Early Head Start:

- *NENCAP EHS Headquist Center*
3309 Daniels Lane
South Sioux City, NE 68776
(402) 494-1282
- *Norfolk Early Head Start*
600 N 12th Street
Norfolk, NE 68701
(402) 992-8423

Head Start Centers:

- *Norfolk Head Start*
301 E. Omaha Avenue
Norfolk, NE 68702
(402) 371-8030
- *Wayne Head Start*
1210 E. 7th Street
Wayne, NE 68787
(402) 375-2913
- *South Sioux City Head Start*
2120 Dakota Avenue
South Sioux City, NE 68776
(402) 494-6755
- *NENCAP HSP Headquist Center*
3309 Daniels Lane
South Sioux City, NE 68776
(402) 494-1282

Head Start Partnerships:

- *Wisner-Pilger School*
801 18th Street
Wisner, NE 68791
(402) 529-6465
- *Niobrara Schools*
247 N Highway 12
Niobrara, NE 68760
(402) 857-3323
- *Norfolk – Little Panthers Preschool*
2500 W. Norfolk Avenue
Norfolk, NE 68701
(402) 371-8030

