

**ADDENDUM TO  
THE WEBB COUNTY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL  
TO INCLUDE**

**PERSONNEL POLICIES FOR THE HEAD START PROGRAM STAFF**

**PURSUANT TO THE FINAL RULE OF  
HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS  
PROMULGATED UNDER  
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (ACF) AND  
ADMINISTRATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (ACYF)  
*45 CFR Parts 1301 et al.***

**HONORABLE WEBB COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' COURT AND  
HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

**TANO TIJERINA, COUNTY JUDGE  
JESSE GONZALEZ, COMMISSIONER PRECINT I  
ROSAURA TIJERINA, COMMISSIOER PRECINT II  
JOHN GALO, COMMISSIONER PRECINT III  
CINDY LIENDO, COMMISSIONER PRECINT IV**

**WEBB COUNTY, TEXAS  
1000 HOUSTON  
LAREDO, TEXAS 78040**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Head Start / Early Head Start (EHS) is a comprehensive child development program for children birth to five years of age from eligible low-income families. The Webb County Head Start program is designed as a center-based / Home Base (EHS) model which provides each child with a developmentally appropriate learning environment and varied experiences which will help to develop each child socially, intellectually, physically, and emotionally. In addition to providing educational services to children and their parents, Webb County Head Start also provides health, dental and nutritional services, social services, mental health services, services for children with disabilities, family and community strengthening, and opportunities for parent involvement.

Therefore, Webb County, acting through the Commissioners' Court, which serves as the governing body for the Head Start Program, has established, approved, and implemented, written personnel policies for staff of the Head Start Program, pursuant to the rules and regulations promulgated under 45 CFR Part 1301.1, Section 1301.2(a) (b) (c), and 1302.90 (a), as authorized by 42 U.S.C. 9801 et seq., in order to continue to ensure that Head Start is a high quality program for the children and families that are served.

The policies in this addendum are applicable to, and are made available to, all Head Start / Early Head Start Program staff in written form and through staff trainings.

The policies in this addendum are to be enforced where applicable in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and Local laws. Violations of these written policies may subject the violator to disciplinary action, including termination. Any subsequent changes to these policies must be approved or disapproved by the Policy Council.

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**TANO E. TIJERINA**  
**WEBB COUNTY JUDGE**

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**DEBRA VASQUEZ**  
**POLICY COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON**

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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

The Webb County Head Start / Early Head Start Program is an equal opportunity employer. The Program shall not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, physical or mental disability, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

*Pursuant to Webb County Policies and Procedures 3.01*

### **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

#### **A. Head Start Executive Director Qualifications**

The Head Start Executive Director must demonstrate skills and abilities in a management capacity relevant to human services program management. The Director must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree and experience in supervision of staff, fiscal management, and administration.

Responsible areas include:

1. communication, including, but not limited to, interaction with the Webb County Commissioners' Court, Webb County Department Heads, program staff, the Policy Council, and Head Start Families;
2. program planning; day-to-day program management and operations, including personnel administration and supervision;
3. staff development and training, coaching, and mentoring;
4. maintenance of facilities, materials, and equipment;
5. fiscal administration;
6. assessment of program staff and operations; and
7. community relations and program advocacy.

#### **B. Qualifications of Content Area Coordinators and Consultants**

All content area services shall be coordinated by staff and supported by consultants with the following education, training, skill, and/or experience:

1. Education Coordinator as prescribed in section 648A (a)(2)(B)(i)<sup>25</sup> of the Act, must have a baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood education or equivalent coursework in early childhood education with early education teaching experience.
  - a. Early childhood educational practices
  - b. Theories and principles of child growth and development.
  - c. Family Systems

- d. Meet qualifications for classroom teachers as specified in section 648A (a) (2) (A) (i)(ii) of the Head Start Act and any subsequent amendments regarding the qualifications of Head Start teachers.
2. Specialized Services Coordinator, staff responsible for health services, and services to children with disabilities must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree, preferably related to one or more of the disciplines they oversee. Health procedures are performed only by a licensed or certified health professional, mental health consultants are licensed or certified mental health professionals, and consultants who support nutrition services are registered dietitians or nutritionists with appropriate qualifications.
  - a. Nursing
  - b. Public Health
  - c. Health education
  - d. Health administration
  - e. Maternal and child health
  - f. Licensed/certified health professional, as applicable
  - g. Social Work
  - h. Mental Health
  - g. Family Systems
  - h. Child Advocacy
  - i. Family Advocacy
  - j. Social and Human Services
  - k. Licensed/certified professional related to disability, as applicable
3. Nutrition Services
  - a. Nutrition education
  - b. Registered Dietitian
4. Family and Community Partnership Coordinator, staff responsible for management and oversight of family services must have, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree, preferably related to one or more of the disciplines they oversee.
  - a. Social Work
  - b. Human Service
  - c. Family Systems
  - d. Licensed/certified social service professional, as applicable
5. Parent Involvement Services
  - a. Child Advocacy
  - b. Family Advocacy
  - c. Family Systems
  - d. Social and Human Services
6. Fiscal Services Officer, services must be conducted by a certified public accountant, or has, at a minimum, a baccalaureate degree in accounting, business, fiscal management, or a related field.
  - a. Business education

- b. Accounting
- c. Licensed/certified fiscal professional, as applicable

C. Staffing Pattern

Head Start / Early Head Start Executive Director  
Assistant Head Start Director II and I  
Records Manager  
Head Start Accounts Payable Manager  
Administrative Secretary  
Office Clerk  
Office Clerk P/T  
Computer Specialist  
Education Director  
Education Assistants  
Education Aide  
Family and Community Partnership Coordinator  
Family Service Workers  
Specialized Services Director  
Specialized Services Coordinator  
Licensed Vocational Nurse  
Specialized Services Assistants  
Specialized Services Assistant P/T  
Parent Engagement Coordinator  
Nutrition Coordinator  
Head Cook  
Cooks  
Kitchen Aide  
Area Service Managers  
Teachers/BA and AA  
Teacher Assistants/AA and CDA  
Classroom Aides  
Classroom Aides P/T  
Substitute Teacher P/T  
Bus Driver Supervisor  
Bus Drivers  
Handy Man  
Maintenance Workers P/T  
EHS ASM  
EHS Family Service Worker  
EHS Home Visitors  
EHS Teachers  
EHS Teacher Floaters P/T  
EHS Classroom Aides P/T  
CCP ASM  
CCP FSWs  
CCP Teacher Floater P/T  
CCP Classroom Aides P/T

***Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.91(a-f)***

## STAFF RECRUITMENT, SELECTION PROCEDURES, AND TERMINATION

### A. General Requirements

The Head Start program will not refuse to hire or terminate otherwise qualified job applicants based solely or primarily on an arrest record unless the arrest record is relevant to the position sought by an applicant or position held by an employee.

Background Checks and Selection Procedures:

1. Before an employee is hired, Webb County Head Start shall conduct:
  - a. An interview with the applicant; and
  - b. A verification of employment references; and
  - c. A state or national criminal record check within 24 hours of hiring, as required by Texas State law, as well as, FBI criminal history records including, fingerprint clearance, and a sex offender registry check.
2. A program has 90 days after an employee is hired to complete the background check process by obtaining:
  - a. FBI criminal history records, including fingerprint checks.
3. A program must review the information found in each employment application and complete background check to assess the relevancy of any issue uncovered by the complete background check as described in 42 U.S.C. 9858f(c) (1) (D) and 42 U.S.C. 9858f(h) (1)<sup>24</sup> to determine whether the prospective employee can be hired or the current employee must be terminated.
4. A program must ensure a newly hired employee, consultant, or contractor does not have unsupervised access to children until the complete background check process is complete.
5. A program must conduct the complete background check for each employee, consultant, or contractor at least once every five years which must include each of the four checks listed in paragraph (b) (1) and (2) of this section, and review and make employment decisions based on the information as described in paragraph (b) (3) of this section, unless the program can demonstrate to the responsible HHS official that it has a more stringent system in place that will ensure child safety.
6. A program must consider current and former program parents for employment vacancies for which such parents apply and are qualified.
7. Employee declaration
  - a. Webb County requires that all current and prospective employees sign a declaration prior to employment. The declaration lists the following:
    - i. All pending and prior criminal arrests and charges related to child sexual abuse and their disposition; and
    - ii. Convictions related to other forms of child abuse and/or neglect; and
    - iii. All convictions of violent felonies.
  - b. Webb County shall review each application for employment on an individual basis in order to assess the relevancy of an arrest, a pending criminal charge, or a conviction.
  - c. The declaration required by Section (A)(2)(a) may exclude the following:
    - i. Traffic fines of \$200.00 or less;
    - ii. Any offense, other than an offense related to child abuse and/or child sexual abuse or violent felonies, committed before the prospective employee's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday which was adjudicated in a juvenile court or under a youth offender law;
    - iii. Any conviction the record of which has been expunged under Federal or State law; and

- iv. Any conviction set aside under the Federal Youth Corrections Act or similar State authority.

**B. Staff Recruitment**

1. The Head Start / Early Head Start Executive Director will notify the Records Manager of the vacant position and salary of said position.
2. The Records Manager will notify Webb County Human Resources of the vacant position.
3. The Head Start Director will request approval from the Commissioners' Court to fill said vacancy.
4. The Head Start Director/Records Manager will provide Webb County Human Resources with timelines for advertising / filling of the vacant position.
5. The Records Manager may recruit through ads in local / out of town newspapers, the forwarding of job announcements to private / educational institutions, placement services, World Wide Web sites, etc.
6. Applications are received online by the Webb County Human Resource Department via the internet.
7. All applications will be forwarded to the Head Start Records Manager.

***Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.90(b) (1-6)***

**C. Applicant Screening**

All screening and hiring procedures are conducted in a non-discriminatory manner as required by State and Federal law. The standards used by the Head Start program for screening job applicants shall be unrelated to a person's race, color, age, disability, religion, sex, or national origin. The standards used by the Head Start program are related to an applicant's ability to meet the job performance requirements.

**D. Applicant Interview**

1. The immediate supervisor with a vacant position is primarily responsible for selecting the applicants to be interviewed based on qualifications of applicants, and size of the applicant pool. The Head Start Director may or may not make this determination based on the priority of the vacant position.
2. The supervisor with the vacant position is primarily responsible for scheduling and conducting the interview. The Head Start Director may or may not be present during the interview based on the priority of the vacant position.
3. The interview panel may include, but is not limited to:
  - a. Head Start Director, and/or Assistant Director
  - b. Immediate supervisor and/or content area Coordinator
  - c. Area Service Manager
4. Prior to the interview, the Head Start Director and/or the immediate supervisor of the vacant position shall guide the panel regarding the confidentiality policy, appropriate interview questions, and required job duties.
5. The Records Manager will officially inform the candidate of the selection to begin the pre-employment process.

***Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.90(b)(1)***

E. Hiring Process

1. After the interview, the panel will recommend a top candidate, with alternate applicants.
2. The Records Manager will conduct reference checks on the recommended candidate.
3. The Records Manager will review the recommendations of the selection with the Interview Committee to present to Policy Council for approval to hire. A Memorandum is sent to the Policy Council with the recommended applicant(s).
4. After Policy Council approval, the Records Manager contacts the top candidate, offers the position, and proceeds with the hiring process upon acceptance of the candidate. The Records Manager informs the candidate that the decision to hire is not finalized until all pre-employment requirements have been appropriately met.
5. The candidate will obtain a TB test, a health appraisal, a criminal background check, Fingerprint clearance, and a food handlers' certificate if applicable.
6. The Records Manager informs the Webb County Human Resource Office of the new employee.
7. The immediate supervisor provides orientation and all required trainings.
8. The new employee will be employed on a probationary status for six months.

***Pursuant to Webb County Policies and Procedures 4.05***

F. Employee Termination

1. See the Webb County Policies and Procedures Manual
2. The Policy Council must approve or disapprove decisions to terminate any person who primarily works for the Head Start and Early Head Start Program.
3. The Policy Council must approve or disapprove the decision to terminate the Head Start / Early Head Start Director.

***Pursuant to 45 CFR 642 (c)(1) (E) (iv) (V) (cc) and 642 (c)(1)(E)(IX)[42U.S.C. 9837] of the Head Start Act***

**STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Head Start staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers shall abide by the program's Standards of Conduct. The Webb County Head Start program follows the Webb County policies and procedures, through the approval of the policy council as specified in section 642(c) (E) (X) of the Head Start Act, in addition to the following:

1. Staff will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
2. Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers will follow the program Confidentiality Policy concerning information about children, families, and other staff members about personally identifiable information, in accordance to subpart I of part 1302.90 (c) (1) (iv). The program has established clearly marked, locked, and confidential files for staff, children, and families. Children's folders have a log form where staff and other authorized persons will sign prior to reviewing the child's record. The confidentiality policy is provided to parents at the beginning of the school year to assure them that information will be provided

to authorized persons on a need to know basis and only to provide needed services. The policy is signed by the parent/guardian and kept on file.

3. Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers must respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.
4. No child will be left alone or unsupervised while in the Head Start program
5. Staff will follow the program Discipline and Guidance Policy. The Policy is signed by staff on an annual basis. A signed copy is kept in their personnel file, and the original is kept in the Licensing Binder at the center level. which includes at least the following:
  - a. Discipline must be:
    - i. Individualized and consistent for each child;
    - ii. Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and
    - iii. Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.
  - b. Staff must use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which includes at least the following:
    - i. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
    - ii. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
    - iii. Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and
    - iv. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.
  - c. The Policy will ensure that staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers do not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children. There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:
    - i. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
    - ii. Punishment associated with food, naps;
    - iii. Toilet training and/or denial of bathroom privileges, and using toilet training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
    - iv. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
    - v. Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;
    - vi. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth or tape a child's mouth;
    - vii. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
    - viii. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
    - ix. Use isolation to discipline a child-placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed;
    - x. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age; and
    - xi. Bind or tie a child to restrict movement/unnecessary restraint;
    - xii. Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
    - xiii. Physically abuse a child;

- xiv. Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family;
  - xv. Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward; or,
  - xvi. No child must be left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care.
6. All employees engaged in the award and administration of contracts or other financial awards shall sign a statement that they will not solicit or accept personal gratuities, favors, or anything of significant monetary value from contractors or potential contractors *Sec 642 (c) (1) (E) (iv) (X) (aa) [42 U.S.C. 9837] of the Head Start Act*. The penalties for violating the standard of conduct will result in disciplinary action and may be grounds for dismissal. Refer to the Webb County Policies and Procedures manual for additional information regarding employee conduct.

*Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.90(c)(1-2)*

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR WEBB COUNTY HEAD START GOVERNING BODIES:  
Webb County Commissioners' Court, Head Start Policy Council, and Parent Committee**

**POLICY**

The Webb County Commissioners' Court and Head Start Policy Council recognize that persons involved in governance activities (Policy Council and Board of Directors) at Webb County Head Start are leaders, models, and representatives of the organization. All members will be expected to conduct themselves such that their personal and professional conduct does not have a negative effect on services or reflect badly on Webb County Head Start's public image, reputation, or credibility.

**PROCEDURES**

- Acceptable standards of conduct will be established and periodically revised by the Webb County Head Start's Board of Directors for both Council and Board members.
- All Council and Board members will be informed of the established standards of conduct.
- The Board of Directors in its entirety will be responsible, with a simple majority vote of members present for a regularly scheduled or appropriately called special meeting, for reprimanding or removing any representative from the Council or Board due to conduct violations.

**CODE OF CONDUCT**

Head Start Policy Council and Webb County Commissioners' Court members:

- Will respect and promote the unique identity of each child, family, employee, Council and Board member and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
- Must uphold the agency's confidentiality guidelines stated as follows:
  - No information regarding children and families of children enrolled with Webb County Head Start is to be discussed outside of the work setting or Board/Council meetings;

- Information is to be discussed within the work setting and at Board/Council meetings only as is necessary and related to program operations/business or decision-making;
- No information learned at Board/Council meetings or while conducting Board/Council business may be discussed or used in any way outside of Board/Council activities.
- Will support and participate in a TEAMWORK approach to decision making.
- Will behave and interact respectfully while participating on Board/Council or representing the organization within the community.
- Must have an interest and concern for children and their families.
- May not accept gifts and/or gratuities as stated in the Webb County Head Start Personnel Policy Manual.
- Are prohibited from using their position on Board/Council for purposes which are, or give the appearance of being, motivated by a desire for private gain for themselves or others, such as those with family, business or other ties.
- Must not make public statements under the auspices of any agency title without the Board of Directors' approval.
- Will follow all Webb County Head Start general operating procedures.
- Will respect and uphold the legal authority of the Board of Directors to establish, review, or revise the standards of conduct for individuals participating on the Board/Council.

*Pursuant to 45 CFR - 642 (c)(1)(E)(iv)(X)(aa) (bb), and Section 642(c)(2)(C)[42U.S.C. 9801] of the Head Start Act*

## **TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT**

1. **Objective:** Webb County has a structured approach to training and professional development, providing academic credit when applicable, which is designed to do the following:
  - a. Build working relationships among staff.
  - b. Assist staff in maximizing knowledge and skills needed to fulfill their job requirements in accordance with 45 CFR 1302.91.
  - c. Provide ongoing opportunities for staff to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to appropriately comply with the Head Start Performance Standards.
  - d. Provide ongoing opportunities for staff and parents to advance academically, intellectually, and professionally.
  - e. Provide methods for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect which comply with State and local laws, using so far as possible, a helpful rather than punitive attitude.
  - f. Provide methods of planning for successful child and family transitions to and from the Head Start Program.
2. **Target Groups:** Head Start employees, Head Start families, Head Start Volunteers, Webb County Commissioners' Court, and the Head Start Policy Council.

3. **Methodology:** Webb County's training, development, and opportunities for advancement system is structured as follows:
- a. New employees, consultants, and volunteers receive an orientation that includes the goals and philosophy of Head Start detailing the manner in which they are implemented locally.
  - b. Ongoing training is provided regarding current up-to-date Local, State, and Federal rules and regulations.
  - c. Ongoing training regarding job requirements is provided to allow for advancement opportunities to staff and parents.
  - d. An annual (Pre-Service) training is provided during the month of August.
  - e. Annual training is provided to staff and parents on Program Governance, Child Abuse, Child Growth and Development, Safety Practices, First Aid and CPR, and many more topics as needed.
  - f. Additional Staff Development Days are strategically scheduled throughout the year (November through May) based on program planning and necessity.
  - g. For staff members who do not qualify for Federal financial assistance, the program offers to pay educational expenses for the advancement of staff members who are interested in obtaining a Child Development credential or a degree in Early Childhood.
  - h. The Program offers ongoing training opportunities for staff and parents regarding the implementation of the Head Start Performance Standards.
  - i. The Head Start Assistant Director I is responsible for offering ongoing training opportunities to staff and parents regarding the procedure for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
  - j. The Assistant Director II, the Family Service Workers and the Parent Engagement Coordinator with the help of the Transition Committee, which is comprised of personnel for the two local school districts, Head Start staff and parents, elementary teachers and community agencies, facilitates an annual Transition Parent Conference. The focus of this event is to assist Head Start families in their transition from the Head Start Program to the public schools. The conference sessions are conducted by school district personnel, Head Start staff, and community agency representatives.
  - k. The Head Start Director offers annual training in the month of September or October regarding Program Governance – Roles and Responsibilities. Training on Parliamentary Procedures is given during this annual training. A Webb County Commissioner or the Municipal Judge has typically conducted this portion of the training, which includes the oath of office given to all parents holding such a position either in the Policy Council or a Parent Committee.
  - l. The program offers orientation and ongoing training to the governing boards, staff, and parents regarding Governing and Management Responsibilities.

*Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.92 (b) (1-5)*

## **STAFF PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS**

**Definition:** A Performance Appraisal refers to the formal process used to measure how well an employee performs his/her assigned duties and responsibilities.

**Objective:** The Webb County Head Start Program conducts annual performance reviews of each Head Start employee. The results of these evaluations are used to identify staff training and professional development needs, modify staff performance agreements, and assist each staff member in improving his/her skills and professional competence.

Process: The Webb County Head Start Program has established the following schedule for conducting performance appraisals:

1. The center staff evaluation is conducted in December by the Area Service Managers. This evaluation focuses on identifying the need for strategic program changes related to staff development and employee performance needs. The Program has the remaining portion of the school year to focus on incorporating the necessary changes.
2. At the end of the program year, typically in May, all staff receives an evaluation.
3. Administration and Coordinators use the results of these evaluations to plan for meeting the program's needs during the summer months. Some of the strategies used are as follows:
  - a. Schedule one-on-one training.
  - b. Provide oral and written counseling to individual employees.
  - c. Severe and chronic unsatisfactory performance may require the Head Start Director to take the employee's case to Policy Council for consideration of continuing their employment or termination with the Head Start Program.

*Pursuant to Webb County Policies and Procedures 11.02*

## **EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Refer to the Webb County Policies and Procedures Manual

*Pursuant to Webb County Policies and Procedures 14.00*

## **FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES**

All parent fundraising activities must conform to government regulations and follow best practices. Parents are not required to participate in any fundraising activity. Staff members are not allowed to participate in any fundraising activities during working hours or on any county property.

## **OUTSIDE EMPLOYEMENT**

An employee who engages in employment outside the County must notify his/her Department Head. Such employees must also provide notification of any changes of outside job employment status. Outside employment is prohibited and is cause for disciplinary action if it:

- Is inconsistent or incompatible with employment with the County,

- Results in tardiness, absenteeism, or refusal to work overtime when deemed necessary by the Department Head,
- Adversely affect the employee's job performance,
- Conflicts with CACFP duties and responsibilities, or
- If it would create a conflict of interest.

*Pursuant to Webb County Policies and Procedures 5.05.51*

## **PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING A HEAD START EMPLOYEE OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Webb County, as a grantee agency for its Head Start Program, has developed a plan for responding to suspected or known child abuse or sexual abuse as defined in (45 CFR 1302.90(c) (1-2)). This procedure will be followed for any occurrence within and outside of the program setting.

As a precaution, at no time will a child be left in the supervision of less than two employees. Head Start staff shall report suspected child abuse to Child Care Licensing, the DFPS - Child Protective Services department or any state law enforcement agency within 48 hours after an employee first suspected abuse.

Head Start staff will cooperate fully with all law enforcement and Child Protective Services investigations. The Head Start program will preserve the confidentiality of all records pertaining to child abuse in accordance with the state law.

### **PROGRAM PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING ABUSE**

All Head Start and Early Head Start staff persons are “mandated reporters.” As mandated reporters, staff members working for Head Start and Early Head Start programs are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate state child protection agency (ACF-IM-HS-15-05).

Staff persons are required to report incidents where there is a reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred or there is a substantial risk that abuse or neglect may occur, either in the care of a Head Start agency or outside of the program. It is not the responsibility of the staff person or the program to investigate whether abuse or neglect actually occurred, but rather to report probable incidents. In fact, programs and individuals must not attempt to investigate; to do so can jeopardize the accuracy of the official investigation conducted by child protective services. Any employee who is the subject of a reported case of abuse or neglect must be removed from contact with children during the state investigation and until the charge is fully resolved (ACF-IM-HS-15-05).

Head Start employees are strongly reminded that staff, consultants, and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation of children at any time. (45 CFR 1302.90 (c) (1) (i-v)). Head Start children should feel safe in the program setting at all times. Disciplinary action towards children cannot involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs (45 CFR 1302.90 (c) (1) (ii) (A-I)).

Early Childhood development practices encourage staff to use prevention and redirection methods for disruptive behavior. In addition, Head Start Programs should determine the

root cause of the behavior to ultimately resolve the matter. All Head Start and Early Head Start programs must have mental consultants/ available who can assist them in identifying the causes of children's challenging behavior and implement appropriate strategies to ensure children and staff are safe.

If an employee is charged with child abuse or neglect the following are the procedures:

- 1) The Head Start/Early Head Start employee who received the report or charge against a set employee will immediately make a report:
  - To a law enforcement agency- The City of Laredo Police Department, at (956) 795-2800; or
  - CPS division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at (800) 252-5400 or on the web at [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org) .
- 2) Employee will be removed while the ongoing investigation is conducted, and placed at a location where children are not in attendance.
- 3) The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services will conduct a very thorough investigation.
- 4) The employee will continue to work at a designated place until notification is obtained whether employee has been cleared of any violation(s).
- 5) If cleared of all abuse allegations, the employee resumes his/her position.
- 6) If employee has been found to be in violation, the program will take steps to terminate employment.

### **Head Start Employee Policy For Child Abuse & Neglect Investigation**

#### **Evidence of Abuse & Neglect by a Head Start Employee(s) / Actions following the investigation of the report**

If a Head Start employee or any person has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be further adversely affected by abuse or neglect he/she must report immediately or within 48 hours, pursuant to Texas Family Code Section §261.109: Failure to Report Penalty. When an incident is identified, all precise & pertinent information regarding the case will be obtained by the employee who made the initial contact with the child and who has the information first-hand – the employee is therefore deemed the designated “mandated reporter.”

The Executive Head Start Director shall maintain records of allegations, investigations and reports that a child has been abused or neglected by a Head Start employee. Such records will be maintained at the Head Start Main Office. The records shall include any reports made to the Child Protective Services and/or the local Law Enforcement Agency; such Department(s) will have access to all such Webb County Head Start records.

An employee who has had a Child Protective Services (CPS) report filed against him/her will immediately be removed from contact with or control over all children by re-assignment to another position; if that is not possible, Policy Council will determine if the individual will be placed on administrative leave or leave without pay until clearance is established. If the employee is placed on administrative leave/leave without pay, they will be advised that they must be available at any time for contact by local law enforcement, Child Protective Services and/or the Executive Head Start Director.

The Executive Director may apply the following for individuals who have been placed on Administrative Leave or leave without pay due to a CPS Report (ninety days or more):

1. Probationary Employees - The Executive Head Start Director and the Policy Council may take action to terminate the employee during their probation period if the decision is considered in the best interest of the Head Start Program.
2. Non-Probationary Employees – The employee may be detailed, pending an investigation, to another position as long as the employee does not have contact with or control over children. Employee(s), who have an unresolved CPS Report and have been deemed a threat to children requiring prolonged administrative leave or leave without pay (ninety days or more), may be deferred to Policy Council for termination.

After an investigation has been completed, if the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS), based upon the results of such investigation, has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected by an employee who has been entrusted with the care of a child, and if employee is placed on the Department of Children and Families abuse and neglect registry because the employee poses a risk to the health, safety or welfare of children, TDFPS shall notify the Executive Head Start Director through a Child-Care Inspection Form # 2936 with such findings concerning such investigation.

### **Closing a CPS Report and Notification to Alleged Offender**

A closure report # 2936 will be issued to the Executive Head Start Director by DFPS with the results of the alleged employee whom an allegation of child abuse was raised. The Executive Director or an assigned representative will review the contents of the notification with the employee. The employee will sign a receipt page to document that he/she was informed of the closure of the CPS Report. The signature receipt along with a copy of the notification will be included in the official CPS Report file. This final action closes the CPS Report. If administrative or proactive action is proposed or corrective action is required that affects the employee, it is the responsibility of the Executive Director to ensure these action(s) are carried out.

The Executive Head Start Director shall provide to the Policy Council, during an executive meeting, any records maintained or kept in the employee's file for the purpose of an investigation by TDFPS of suspected child abuse or neglect. Any records maintained or kept in his/her files shall include, but not be limited to, supervisory records, reports of competence, personal character and efficiency maintained in such staff's personnel file with reference to evaluation of performance as a professional employee, and records of the personal misconduct of such teacher/employee.

### **Confidentiality**

All cases of child abuse allegations shall be treated within the guidelines of Federal laws protecting children, employees, and all parties involved. Confidentiality must be a priority throughout the process. The Mandated Reporter may remain anonymous, but in order to document that a Mandated Reporter did not fail to report child abuse in accordance with Federal law, and so that law enforcement and child protective services can contact the Mandated Reporter, a Report must be completed. The identity of all reported victims must always be protected and must not be disclosed to anyone who does not have a need to know.

**Disciplinary Action for Failure to Follow Policy**

Any employee who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy shall be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment.

**Staff Acknowledgement of receipt**

By signing this form, you confirm receipt of this policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Signature/Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Signature/Date

See Attachment for Discipline and Guidance Policies and Procedures



## **Webb County Head Start**

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### **Active Supervision Policy**

#### **Introduction:**

Active supervision includes six strategies that are essential for creating safe environments. Children need safe and secure environments to thrive in their life and learning. It also helps to protect children from hazards or harm that may arise from their play and daily routines.

Effective supervision allows educators to engage in meaningful interactions with children. Educators promote children's learning and development by creating physical and social environments that have a positive impact. It is necessary for educators to be alert and aware of risks and hazards and the potential for accidents and injury. To provide effective supervision, educators need to be conscious of the physical environment and be attuned to the needs of individual children.

#### **Six Strategies to supervise infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:**

- I. Set up the environment:** Classroom staff is responsible for setting up their classroom environment. The room must have low shelves to ensure visibility of all children. The furniture is set-up in a manner that will prevent children from running in the classroom, but free paths to have access to every child. The learning center will have ample space and material for the number of children participating in play activities, and will be kept clean and organized.
  
- II. Position Staff:** The staff will position themselves indoors and outdoors in a manner that will allow them to prevent any harm to children. They will be assigned to assist children during outside play and will maintain a focused attention at all times. Developmentally appropriate child-to-staff ratios should be met during all hours of operation, and safety precautions for specific areas and equipment should be followed. Where an infant or toddler is present, the ratio should always be one adult to four infants/toddlers with an emphasis of two teachers for not more than eight infants/toddlers.  
There will be clear paths for quick and immediate access to children while they're playing, sleeping, and eating. The staff will maintain intentional observations on children and assist children who require additional support by keeping them close. Staff will be placed in a position that will intensify their ability to be alert and sensitive to the children's sound and sight.
  
- III. Scan and Count:** Staff is required to scan and count children throughout the day. Some examples are:
  - While children are boarding/exiting the bus (bus trip);
  - While taking attendance;
  - While children are sitting for breakfast, lunch and snack;
  - While children are waiting to go outside to play and while children are waiting to return into the classroom from outside play;
  - When children are brushing their teeth, washing hands and drinking water;
  - When children prepare to go to the bathroom;

- Before getting into the bus to **leave** on a field trip and before getting into the bus to **return** from the field trip;
- Before getting into the bus to **leave** to a medical/therapy appointment and before getting into the bus to **return** from the appointment;
- Before taking children on a nature/neighborhood walk and before returning to the center from the walk; and
- Every fifteen minutes while children are taking a nap.

**IV. Listen:** Listening for specific sounds that signify signs of potential danger or the lack of sound could indicate a reason for concern. The centers have cameras or doors with chimes to alert staff of anyone entering or leaving the classroom/building. Caregivers/teachers directly supervise children under age 6 by sight and sound at all times. When children are sleeping, caregivers may supervise by sound with frequent visual checks.

**V. Anticipate children's behavior:** Staff will begin by learning how the children in their class will react or behave with what is taking place in their environment. Children's behavior can be stimulated by poor health, lack of sleep or food. The classroom staff conducts daily health checks such as: morning inspections to ensure that children are not ill, infant/toddler teachers log the food intake of each child and encourage children to take naps. They must learn to anticipate and predict what the reaction will be and how to prevent it. Some forms of supporting good behavior are:

- Focusing on praise and encouragement for good behavior rather than only upon unacceptable behavior.
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements; and
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements.

**VI. Engage and redirect:** The caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self esteem, self control and self direction. By understanding each child's individual needs and abilities, the teacher will be able to assist each child in getting involved in solving their own problems. The activities will be prepared or modified to meet individual developmentally appropriate levels. This will ensure that each child will have an opportunity to accomplish and succeed their goal.

## Careful Supervision

Teachers are faced with many responsibilities. Their supervisory role is one of the most important of these duties. Therefore, as a precaution, at no time will a child be left in the supervision of less than two employees. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must be directly supervised at all times. Children will be supervised during daily routines such as sleeping, eating, and diapering or bathroom use. Some tips for appropriate guidance are:

- The younger the child, the more the protective supervision must be;
- Rules never replace the need for careful adult supervision;
- Rules should be realistic for young children;
- The number of children a teacher can safely manage is also affected by the nature of the activity;

- Safety must be a continual concern;
- Extra precautions may be needed when children with special needs, chronic health problems, or behavior problems are present, and
- Responsibilities of caregivers-free of other activities. Staff must not use cell phones, iPads, or any other electronic equipment for personal use while in care/supervision of children.

### **Good Two-Way Communication**

Family is the single most important influence in a child's life. From their first moments of life, children depend on parents and family to protect them and provide for their needs. Parents and family form a child's first relationships. They are a child's first teacher and act as role models in how to act and how to experience the world around them. By nurturing and teaching children during their early years, families play an important role in making sure children are ready to learn when they enter school. Children thrive when parents are able to actively promote their positive growth and development. Every parent knows that it's sometimes difficult to do this important work without help, support, and additional resources.

Opportunities for two-way communication include:

- Parent conferences
- Parent-teacher organizations or center / policy council meetings
- Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for parent review and comment
- Providing information on accidents/incident reports
- Communication in reference to morning inspections
- Providing a copy of the parent handbook (hard copy or email copy) with the program's policies
- Bulletin boards with handouts with health alerts, required screenings, and any information coming from the program

Effective communication strategies involve:

- **Initiation:** Teachers will initiate contact as soon as they know which students will be in their classroom for the school year. Contact can occur by means of an introductory phone call or a message through Child Plus introducing themselves to the parents and establishing expectations.
- **Timeliness:** Teachers will make contact soon after a problem has been identified, so a timely solution can be found. Waiting too long will create new problems, possibly through the frustration of those involved.
- **Consistency and frequency:** Parents will have frequent, ongoing feedback about how their children are performing / behaving. Teachers will be consistent in their classroom routines and in their planning
- **Follow-through:** The teacher and child will develop a bond and trust by following through with their daily routines, being prepared with their lesson plans, and setting up their environment as they have written in their planning guide. Planned transitions, carefully planned environments, and a supportive nurturing environment will foster a strong connection between the teachers and the children, and support active supervision.
- **Clarity and usefulness of communication:** Parents and teachers should have the information they need to help students, in a form and language that makes sense to them.

## **Personnel Policies and Procedures**

- I. Background Checks and Selection Procedures
- II. Standards of Conduct
- III. Communication with Dual Language Learners and their Families

## **I. Background Check and Selection Procedures**

### **Purpose**

The Webb County Head Start Program has established a general requirement of written personnel policies and procedures in reference to a background check process. The program will take steps that support policies and procedures in order to maintain a safe and inclusive environment for students, faculty, staff and visitors. This policy will be approved by the governing body and policy council, and it will be available to all staff.

### **Policy Statement**

Webb County Head Start is solely authorized to conduct and oversee the Background Check process. All offers of employment for staff positions will be contingent upon successfully passing a background check. Background checks will be conducted using a contracted third party and/or appropriate law enforcement agencies.

### **Confidentiality**

Information will remain secured for the purpose of hiring or retaining employment and it will remain confidentially by the Record Manager's department. For the purpose of making decisions, portions of the content may be shared with appropriate individuals who have a legitimate business or on a need to know as determined by the Executive Head Start Director.

### **Background Check Scope**

All background checks will encompass:

1. Texas Central Registry
2. FBI Fingerprint based Criminal History
3. National Sex Offender Registry Check
4. In-State Sex Offender Registry Check
5. In-State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check

Please note that if a person has lived out of state in the past five years he/she must also comply with the following for each additional state where the individual has resided within five years:

1. Inter-State Criminal History Check
2. Inter-State Sex Offender Registry Check
3. Inter-State Child Abuse and Neglect Registry Check

### **General Provisions**

Only candidates that have advanced to the interview stage and the verification of references will be asked to complete the background check. Candidates who decline to undergo a background check will be disqualified from further consideration.

Head Start will consider convictions disclosed by the applicant or revealed via the process of the background check to determine if an employment offer should be

extended, maintained, or withdrawn. The presence of a conviction does not automatically preclude an individual from employment. However, the Head Start Program will support any recommendation(s) from the results of the background check that may preclude the individual from being present in our child care center/school. The confidential results/information will be provided to the employee by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Central Registry. The Central Background Check Unit (CBCU) will inform the Head Start Program if a person is *eligible* or *ineligible* to be at our operation. The Central Registry Results of *ineligible* will preclude a person from being present in a child care operation/school. The employee is responsible to clear any actions against him/her in order to be considered *eligible* to be at any of our operations. An Operation Action form must be filled out to confirm the removal of a person who has a violation of minimum standards that could result in remedial action against our operation, including revocation of our license permit or denial.

1. A background check will also be required for current employees every five years.
2. Webb County Head reserves the right to revoke the offer if the nature of or facts related to a conviction and/or the number or frequency of the convictions is inconsistent with employment at a Head Start Child Care Center/School seeking to provide a safe learning and working environment for its students and employees, or relates to the duties and responsibilities of the position.
3. The prospective employee has the following rights:
  - a. To know what the background check report says
  - b. To obtain a copy of the report
  - c. To challenge the accuracy and completeness of the information in the report
  - d. To know if the reason for not being hired is a result of the background check
  - e. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services will provide the subject of the background check with information found in his or her DPS and/or FBI fingerprint-based results.

### **Applicant Duty to Disclose**

With the exception of minor traffic violations (unless the position requires a motor vehicle record check), an applicant will be automatically disqualified from further consideration if they fail to accurately fully disclose a serious violation, and/or complete the Background Check within 90 days. Applicants eliminated due to a failure to disclose will not be eligible for reconsideration for another position.

### **Procedure**

1. Applicant fills out the Background Check Form immediately after the interview and reference check process.
2. Background checks must be completed as a condition of employment prior to the individual beginning work, in any capacity.
3. The Assistant Director will inform the Records Manager if the result of the background check is not satisfactory.
4. The Executive Director, will determine if the offer needs to be rescinded in cases where the results of the background check are not satisfactory.
5. The Records Manager will contact the prospective new employee if the offer is rescinded due to a failed background check.

6. The Records Manager keeps the result of the background check in a confidential file.

## **II. Standards of Conduct for Employees, Partners, Consultants, Volunteers, and Student Interns**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to guide staff, consultants, and parent or community volunteers in performing their duties in the Head Start program. All persons providing services in the Head Start program are to use this code to guide their actions when working with children, parents, other staff members, volunteers, consultants or members of the community. Any person working as a paid staff member, a volunteer, a practicum student, or a consultant must understand and sign this Code of Conduct.

**PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: As employees, partners, and volunteers of the Webb County Head Start program, we believe that:**

- Children enrolled in the Webb County Head Start program are our greatest asset. **Our priority is that children are protected and not harmed in any way.**
- Every individual has the right to maintain his or her own identity while acquiring the skills that will help them to succeed in a diverse society. We recognize that stereotypes and misinformation interfere with communication, growth, and respect. The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Webb County Head Start class will be acknowledged and appreciated.
- Differences such as disabilities, gender, age, education level, life style, personal values, and ways of thinking also need to be considered, understood and appreciated. All adult family members are invited and welcomed into Head Start classes and program activities.
- Head Start families have the right to expect that personal information about a child or the family held by the program remains secure. We are responsible for maintaining confidentiality, and respect each person's right to privacy. We refrain from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life.
- Policies ensure the use of positive, non-punitive methods of guidance and discipline. Teachers consistently (a) demonstrate, model and practice classroom procedures to reinforce limits for children, (b) use redirection, positive reinforcement and consistency in management of child behavior, (c) encourage children to put their emotions (positive and negative) and ideas into *words*, (d) use guided practice, modeling and repetition to help children learn to express themselves appropriately, and (e) model affection and care by respectful attentiveness, smiles, hugs, and by giving the child eye contact at their level while calmly speaking to them, (f) welcome, acknowledge and support all adults in the classroom.
- Ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.

*As an employee or volunteer of the Webb County Head Start program, I certify that while working with the program, I will abide by the Webb County Head Start Code of Conduct and demonstrate:*

### **1. Commitment to the safety and well being of all children in my care.**

- ❖ I will never leave a child alone or unattended.
- ❖ I will not allow practices that are disrespectful, degrading, intimidating, psychologically destructive or physically harmful to children.
- ❖ I will be familiar with the signs of child abuse and neglect and implement program and State procedures for dealing with abuse. (See Child Abuse policy)
- ❖ If I have evidence of abuse or neglect of a Head Start child, I will report to Child Protective Services.
- ❖ I will be aware of and follow program safety and emergency procedures.

### **2. Respect for the unique identity of each child and family.**

- ❖ I will refrain from stereotyping any child or family based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
- ❖ I will make the Head Start classroom a welcoming environment for all children and parents.
- ❖ I will provide both boys and girls equal opportunities to participate in all activities.
- ❖ I will use books, toys, music, activities and decorations that reflect diversity.

### **3. Use of Positive Guidance.**

- ❖ I will always use positive methods of child guidance.
- ❖ I will set clear and reasonable classroom rules and will apply them consistently. I will involve children in the rule-making process.
- ❖ I will give children opportunities to ask questions, make decisions, and solve their own problems, using their own words.
- ❖ I will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing extended ignoring, corrupting a child or any discipline that involves isolation or denial of a child's basic needs.
- ❖ I will not use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family.
- ❖ I will not use food as a reward or punishment. Children will not be kept away from outdoor play or any other activity as a punishment or reward.
- ❖ I will not bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth.
- ❖ I will not use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child.
- ❖ I will participate in training and mentoring to learn and refine appropriate disciplinary techniques. I will implement this training in the Head Start class.

### **4. Compliance with program confidentiality policies.**

- ❖ As a condition of employment, I agree to keep confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members in accordance with *subpart C of part 1303 of the Performance Standards* secure, even after I leave Head Start.
- ❖ I will respect all confidential information about any Head Start child, family, or staff member. Staff, family and child information is to be shared only with other paid staff that needs the information to perform their job.
- ❖ I will not disclose information on any Head Start child or family member outside the program without a signed release, except as noted in the Confidentiality policy.
- ❖ Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteer must comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information about children, families, and other staff members.



### **III. Communication with Dual Language Learners and their Families**

#### **Purpose**

The Webb County Head Start Program will support the standard that ensures that the program is able to communicate effectively with children and families that speak a language other than English. When the majority of the children speak the same language, it is essential that staff be able to provide the children with high-quality language experiences in that language. The program's approach to child development and education supports social and emotional development which enhances each child's strengths, respect of the home language, culture, and family composition in ways that sustain the child's health and well-being.

#### **School Readiness**

Our program applies an extensive attention to the importance of preschool attendance in preparing children for kindergarten. As Educators we agree that attendance in center-based preschool programs can be especially important for English language learners because it gives them a head start, both in learning English and in developing essential school readiness skills. Our program utilizes a bilingual, multicultural curriculum that can provide the essential skills needed. The materials, equipment, and activities reflect the diversity of children and families in our program.

#### **Teacher Preparedness**

The large number of English Learning students, in particular young Dual Language Learners (DLL), and the significant role teachers' play during the early academic years of a student exemplifies the need to prepare a highly qualified workforce that reflects a deep knowledge of the linguistic and cultural diversity of its students. The support that educators convey on children and their families plays a key role in fostering the learning environments necessary for young DLLs to develop the skills to succeed once they enter the K-12 school system.

#### **Communication with Dual Language Learners and their Families**

The Webb County Head Start program ensures staff, consultants, or contractors are familiar with the ethnic background and heritage of families in the program. They are able to serve and effectively communicate, either directly or through interpretation and translation, with children who are dual language learners and to the extent feasible, with families with limited English proficiency. Our program has not had a concern about the lack of qualified bilingual staff in our 0-5 year classrooms and home-based program, at least one class staff or home visitor must speak such language. If program staff, interpreters, or translators are not available or unable to speak the language of the family, other support methods will be utilized, such as interpretation services via phone or any other method "to the extent feasible."

***Pursuant to 45 CFR 1302.90 (a-d)***