

# Hidalgo County Head Start Program



## Parent Handbook

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# Welcome to Hidalgo County



## HEAD START



### Mission Statement

To break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy

### Vision Statement

We are dedicated to the economic and social well being of children and families and committed to their safety, education, and healthy development, with strong community support

# About the Program

## Program Information

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program (HCHSP) has a long tradition of delivering comprehensive and high quality services aimed at fostering healthy development of children and families. HCHSP services are designed to be responsive and appropriate to each child's and families developmental, ethnic, cultural and linguistic needs. HCHSP along with the local ISDs' offers free full-day comprehensive services in the areas of Early Childhood Development and Education, Health, Mental Health, Dental Health, Nutrition, Family Social Services, Special Services, and Transportation Services for qualifying families. These services are offered to all 3,200 children ages 3 to 5 enrolled in Head Start, Monday through Friday. All Children attending Head Start are also enrolled with their corresponding school district and develop skills ready to transition into Kindergarten classes once they meet their Head Start goals and objectives.

## Program Management

HCHSP has a dual governance structure which shares responsibilities and the decision making processes with the Hidalgo County Commissioner's Court (Grantee Board) and the Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council. This structure encourages participation in policy making decisions. All parents of currently enrolled children are eligible to participate in the Parent Committee meetings at their campus. The program operates 30 Head Start Campuses throughout Hidalgo County. Each of the 30 Head Start Campuses has a Parent Committee. All parents are members of the Parent Committee at the Head Start Campus where their child is enrolled.

All Parent Committees members will elect officers to assist in facilitating the meetings and coordinating parent engagement activities. Parent Committee Officers will undergo a Leadership Training to assist in developing skills to undertake their new roles. These committees play an important role in ensuring program decisions are made with parent input. ***Every parent's voice is important! (Talk to your Family Service Worker to learn more about participating in this process.)***

The Policy Council is a policy making group, whose membership includes five (5) community representatives that have been appointed by the Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court and six (6) current Head Start Parents that are elected officers from the Hidalgo County Head Start Campuses. The county is divided into six (6) demographic areas. Each area elects a parent representative from the parent committee officers, a 1st parent alternate and a 2nd parent alternate. The Hidalgo County Commissioners' Court and the newly elected Policy Council will undergo an extensive Governance Leadership Training to assist in developing leadership and advocacy skills to undertake their new roles.

## FOLLOW US on Social Media

For news, updates and information follow along on Facebook and @ hchsp.org

[www.hchsp.org](http://www.hchsp.org)



# Enrollment Information

## Program Enrollment

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition. Eligibility for the program is based on Federal Poverty Guidelines. Acceptance into the Head Start program is based on the child's age and the family income. Children must be three years of age on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> of the applicable program year and remains eligible until the child enters kindergarten.

Other factors considered for enrollment include if the family receives public assistance, are experiencing homelessness, or if the child is in foster care. Each family must meet the federal requirements for eligibility. This ensures that children and families with the greatest need benefit from our services. A child will not be denied enrollment into Head Start if he or she is not "potty trained."

## Enrollment of Children with Disabilities

Our team recruits and enrolls children with disabilities. Working with all school districts in Hidalgo County, our program is able to provide quality services to all special children in an inclusive environment. Children with disabilities are eligible for services on the date the child becomes three years of age.



# Program Policies and Information

## Confidentiality

HCHSP is committed to ensuring the security of child, and family information. Confidentiality requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Physical and electronic records/files are secured.
- Only authorized staff may access child and family information.
- Staff members only share child information on a need-to-know basis.
- **Written consent is required from parents/guardians prior to any release of individual child or family records.**
- Staff is trained on how to keep information confidential.
- Only information that is essential to provide services will be recorded and maintained.
- Our program follows HIPPA and Head Start privacy guidelines.

## Civil Rights and Grievance Procedure

Parents/guardians and community residents are encouraged to resolve complaints, problems, or concerns at the campus level by talking to a Teacher, Family Services Worker or Campus Director .

If attempts to resolve the concern/problem with the above staff are not successful, you may file a complaint (written or verbal) to the Head Start Executive Director at, 1901 West Highway 107, McAllen Texas 78504, or call 956-383-0706.

Hidalgo County Head Start Program ensures that everyone has equal access to its facilities and associated program activities, in accordance with the Head Start Act of 1965, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Program does not discriminate against any person because of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

## Reporting Child Maltreatment

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services  
[hhs.texas.gov](http://hhs.texas.gov)

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide.

2520 North Closner Blvd. Edinburg, 78539 Texas (956) 316-8275, [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us);  
[www.txchildcaresearch.org](http://www.txchildcaresearch.org)

Child Abuse Hotline Website: [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org)  
Make your report through our secure website and you will receive a response within 24 hours.

## Reporting Suspected Child Maltreatment

All Head Start staff, contractors, and volunteers are required by law to report to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) if they suspect a child has been the victim of abuse or neglect. This report must be made whether the suspected abuse or neglect happened at or away from the school/center. Staff will follow state regulations regarding timeframes, information to be reported, and the confidentiality of reported information. If a report is made, the child and family will continue receiving Head Start services. A report to TDFPS or a family's involvement with TDFPS or law enforcement will never affect the participation of any child in the program.

As a method of increasing parent awareness regarding *Child Maltreatment*, the Hidalgo County Head Start provides training to parents during the Parent Orientation Meetings. Parents must be notified immediately if there is an allegation that the child has been abused, neglected or exploited.

In order to help prevent child maltreatment, it is necessary to understand what it is. Maltreatment is defined as any mistreatment of a child that results in harm or injury. There are four basic types of child maltreatment, and children often experience more than one kind of abuse. They are:

- Physical Abuse - includes beating, burning, or punching a child;
- Emotional Abuse - involves criticizing, insulting, rejecting, or withholding love from a child;
- Sexual Abuse - includes rape, touching or fondling, or involving a child in pornography;
- Neglect - includes failure to provide for a child's basic physical, medical, emotional, or educational needs. It also includes lack of supervision/care for a child. Leaving a young child home alone or failing to provide needed medical care may also be considered neglect.

# Program Policies and Information

## Warning Signs of Child Maltreatment

Children who are abused might show physical signs or sudden changes in their behavior or school performance. These signs don't prove that children are being abused, but they could be a signal that the children or their families need help.

When children talk about being abused, take them seriously. Take steps to get help!

Abused children might seem:

- Nervous around adults or afraid of certain adults.
- Reluctant to go home (coming to school early or staying late, for example).
- Very passive and withdrawn or aggressive and disruptive.
- Tired a lot or they might complain of nightmares or not sleeping well.
- Fearful and anxious.

## Signs of Neglect

- Missing school a lot.
- Begging for food, stealing food, or stealing money for food.
- Lacking needed medical or dental care.
- Being frequently dirty.
- Using alcohol or other drugs.
- Saying there is no one at home to take care of them.

## Signs of Physical Abuse

- Unexplained burns, bruises, black eyes, or other injuries.
- Apparent fear of a parent or caretaker.
- Faded bruises or healing injuries after missing school.

## Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Difficulty walking or sitting, or other indications of injury in the genital area.
- Sexual knowledge or behavior beyond what is normal for the child's age.
- Running away from home.

## Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Acting overly mature or immature for the child's age.
- Extreme changes in behavior.
- Delays in physical or emotional development.
- Attempted suicide.
- Lack of emotional attachment to the parent.

## Standards of Conduct

In accordance with Head Program Standards, 45CFR, Subpart I – Human Resources Management, Section 1302.90 (c)(1)(2).

(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 maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children, including, at a minimum, that staff must not:
  - (A) Use corporal punishment;
  - (B) Use isolation to discipline a child;
  - (C) Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
  - (D) Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
  - (E) Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
  - (F) Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
  - (G) Physically abuse a child;
  - (H) Use any form of verbal abuse, including profanity, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family; or,
  - (I) Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) Require staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers to comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personal 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,
- (v) Ensure no child is left alone unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care.

(2) Personnel policies and procedures must include appropriate penalties for staff, consultants, contractors and volunteers.

# Program Policies and Information

## Discipline and Guidance

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will ensure all staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support children's well-being and prevent and address challenging behaviors so that children are not maltreated or have their health and safety endangered. **(Head Start Program Standard 1302.90 (c)(1)(i)(ii)(A-I); Minimum Standards 746.2803 and 746.2805)**

## Discipline

- Individualized and consistent for each child
- Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control
- A positive method of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction.
- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior
- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements
- 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. (This will only be used as a last resort after implementation of other positive behavior -strategies, including those in a Behavior Plan.)

## Prohibited Methods of Discipline

There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited (Minimum Standard 746.2805):

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Grabbing or pulling a child
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet
- Placing a child in a restrictive device for time out;
- Withholding active play or keeping a child inside as a consequence for behavior, unless the child is exhibiting behavior during active play that requires a brief supervised separation or time out that is consistent with §746.2803 (4) (D) of this subchapter (relating to what methods of discipline and guidance may a caregiver use); and
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.





# Program Policies and Information

## Prevention & Assistance

These factors can be overcome, and abuse and neglect can be prevented. When parents get help, there's hope for kids. Don't lash out when you are angry with your child –instead: Take a deep breath and call someone or ask a friend to watch your kids while you calm down. The Head Start Program has Parenting Classes “ Abriendo Puertas/ Opening Doors” you can attend; or we can refer you to a Parenting Class to help you handle the stresses of dealing with kids. The Head Start Program can refer you to a Program that can help you resolve any underlying issues, such as alcohol or drug abuse, or you can call one of the following phone numbers to find someone to talk to regarding:

### Parenting Skills

National Parent Hotline: (1-855-427-2736)

Texas Early Childhood Intervention: (1-800-628-5115)

### Emergency Food, Clothing, Housing, and Health Care

Salvation Army: (956-682-1468)

WIC: (956-380-0363 or 956-381-4646 or 1-800-628-5115)

Catholic Charities: (956-702-4088)

### Jobs and Careers

Texas Workforce Commission: (1-855-427-2736)

### Drugs and Alcohol

Alcoholic Anonymous®: (1-212-870-3400)

Alanon and Alateen: (1-888-425-2666)

### Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Counseling & Family Violence

Texas Youth and Parents Hotline: (1-888-580-4357)

Texas Suicide Prevention (1-800-273-8255)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (1-800-799-7233)

Mujeres Unidas/Women Together: (956-664-2826 or 956-630-4878)

## Reporting Child Maltreatment

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Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide.

2520 North Closser Blvd. Edinburg, 78539 Texas (956) 316-8275 [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us);

[www.txchildcaresearch.org](http://www.txchildcaresearch.org)

Child Abuse Hotline Website: [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org). –Make your report through our secure website and you will receive a response within 24 hours.



# Emergency Preparedness Plan

## Emergency PLAN Minimum Standards §746.5202-746.5205

HCHSP will always think of the safety of the children first. Below you will find our Emergency Plan to keep children and staff safe in the event of an emergency.

An emergency preparedness plan is designed to ensure the safety of children during an emergency by defining staff responsibility and facility readiness with respect to emergency evacuations and relocation. The plan addresses the types of emergencies most likely to occur in our area including but not limited to natural events such as tornadoes, floods, hurricanes; health events such as medical emergencies, communicable disease outbreaks; and human-caused events such as intruder with weapon, explosion, or chemical spill.

Hidalgo County Head Start Program has procedures in place that are reviewed and shared with all staff. These procedures are discussed during New Employee Orientation and reviewed yearly during the annual Pre-Service training with all other employees. Parents are informed of the emergency procedures during the enrollment process when they receive a copy of the Parent Handbook. This emergency preparedness plan will also be discussed during the parent orientation meetings that are held at the beginning of each school year at each respective center. A copy of the Emergency Preparedness Plan is included in the Parent Handbook together with all the Operational Policies and Procedures. A copy of the Parent Handbook will be available any time in the Campus Director's office and a copy will be posted at all times in every Parent Area.

The procedures are as follows:

### **Campus Directors:**

During an emergency, the first responsibility of all staff is to move the children to a designated safe area or alternate shelter known to all employees, caregivers, and volunteers;

- A. Staff must make sure to exit the facility in a safe and timely manner with all the children. Proper procedures will be followed to evacuate children who have limited mobility, or who otherwise may need assistance in an emergency, such as children who have mental, visual, or hearing impairments by always having designated equipment readily available such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc. Children with disabilities will be accompanied by a designated person at all times. This process is to be introduced to all children at the beginning of the school year so children are aware of what is happening when an evacuation is being done. All staff must be aware of the designated area or shelter listed on the emergency evacuation and relocation diagram. Children will be relocated by walking to the designated safe area or alternate shelter in the event of a fire, explosion, or chemical spill. A designated location should be chosen that allows the children to get at least 50 feet away from the building. This designated area or shelter is located at:

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

- B. In the event of a health or medical emergency or a communicable disease outbreak, parents will receive a written notice notifying them of the proper steps that they are to take based on the medical emergency or outbreak. Refer to the Health Procedures Manual for detailed procedures.
- C. In the event of severe weather such as tornadoes, floods or hurricanes the children will be evacuated to a gathering area inside the center designated on the Fire Safety Form and the Emergency Evacuation and Relocation Diagram. If further evacuation from the center needs to take place, program buses will be used to pick up the children and transport them to a safer location.
- D. In the event of any human-caused events such as an intruder with a weapon, the center will be placed on lock down and children will be instructed to remain silent and the lights will be turned off until further notice.

# Emergency Preparedness Plan

- E. An Emergency Evacuation and Relocation Diagram will be posted in each room. It will show the floor plan of the campus; two exit paths from each room, unless a room opens directly to the outdoors at ground level; the designated location outside of the campus where all caregivers and children meet to ensure everyone has exited the campus safely; and the designated location inside the campus where all caregivers and children take shelter from threatening weather. We must post an emergency evacuation plan in each room the children use. We must post the plan in a prominent place near the entrance and/or exit of the room. During the time of enrollment a diagram of the campus will be reviewed with every parent/guardian.
- F. The name and address of the alternate shelter away from the campus will be listed on the Fire Safety Form and Diagram posted in every room. Children will be accounted for at the designated safe area or alternate shelter by the child's teacher thru the sign in & out form. The teacher will be assigned to take the sign in & out form with them as they evacuate the classroom.
- G. Children will be accounted for at the designated safe area or alternate shelter by the child's teacher thru the sign in & out form. The teacher will be assigned to take the sign in & out form with them as they evacuate the classroom.

## **Communication**

During an emergency the Campus Director will communicate with local authorities, parents and the local child care licensing office. We must have in our possession all emergency telephone numbers on file with us at time of exit. The Campus Director will be assigned to evacuate with these essential documents which will include:

- A. Parent and Emergency Contact information for each child
- B. Authorization for emergency care for each child
- C. The child tracking system information for children in care.
- D. All of the above items will be taken by the Campus Director or designated staff member in a three ring binder labeled "Emergency Preparedness Plan" located in the Campus Director's Office.
- E. The Campus Director will be expected to take a cell phone with them at time of evacuation, relocation or sheltering lock-down. This will be their source of communication with the Head Start Administrative Office, the local Child Care Office, the local authorities and parents.

## **Implementation**

The Campus Director is responsible for implementing the Emergency Preparedness Plan. The Campus Director may also designate additional employees to be in charge during an emergency evacuation and relocation that occurs when he/she is not at the designated center.

## **Practice**

The following components of the Campus Emergency Preparedness Plan must be practiced as specified below:

- A. The campus will practice a fire drill every month. The children must be able to safely exit the building within three minutes. A designated person will be responsible to document the necessary information on all fire safety forms posted throughout the campus.
- B. The campus will practice a severe weather drill at least four times a calendar year.
- C. The campus will practice a lock-down drill at least four times a calendar year.
- D. The campus will document these drills, including the date of the drill, time of the drill, and length of time for the evacuation, relocation to take place and or lock-down.

# Gang Free Zones

## **For Child Care Centers**

As a result of House Bill 2086 that passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resource Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed child care campus.

## **This Center Is Located In A Gang-Free Zone**

### **What does this mean for my campus?**

A child care campus must inform parents or guardians of children attending the campus about the gang-free zone designation. This means parents or guardians need to be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of your campus is a violation of this law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

*For further information please contact your licensing representative or your local licensing office.*



# Program Policies and Information

## §1302.17 Suspension and Expulsion. As quoted by Head Start Performance Standards

### (a) Limitations on Suspensions

- (1) A program must prohibit or severely limit the use of suspension due to a child's behavior. Such suspensions may only be temporary in nature and must be approved by the Executive Director or designee.

### (b) Prohibition on Expulsion

- (1) A program cannot expel or withdraw a child from Head Start because of a child's behavior.
- (2) When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, a program must explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such problems, and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. Such steps must include, at a minimum, engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and support under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. 705 (9) (b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher and:
  - (i) If the child has an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP), the program must consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services; or,
  - (ii) If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, the program must collaborate, with parental consent with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.
  - (iii) If, after a program has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described in paragraph (b) (2) of this section, a program, in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, the program must work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.



# Nutrition Information

## Nutrition and Meal Service

All children receive a nutrition assessment during application process each new program year. Staff and families work together to identify nutritional needs for each child. Parents are also provided information concerning diet and general nutrition. Special dietary needs, with documentation from the child's doctor, are considered when providing meals to children. When appropriate, a registered dietitian or nutritionist will provide nutrition consultations. Please communicate with staff if your child has any food allergies or intolerances, cultural/ personal preferences, or any nutrition related health problems and feeding requirements throughout the year.

Head Start follows USDA standards. Foods served are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. All children are provided a nourishing breakfast, lunch, and snack. Staff and children eat together and use mealtime to engage in conversation and social interaction. Regardless of the time of arrival, children will be offered a nourishing breakfast. Food is never used as punishment or reward. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste their food during meals and snack time.

For the health and safety of all children, only meals and snacks prepared at school will be served to children during the school day, including field trips. Children are not allowed to bring food, candy or gum to the center. For birthday and holiday celebrations, please talk with your child's teacher about the best way to celebrate these events. If you have any questions about snacks and meals, please talk with your child's teacher, Family Services Worker or Campus Director.

## Following is a description of services provided and additional information:

- **Breakfast:** As assigned by Campus Principal **Lunch:** As assigned by Campus Principal **P.M. Snack:** As assigned by Campus Principal
- All meals will be provided family style by our staff and handed over to our children at their designated station for consumption.
- Safe drinking water will be made available at all times and is offered to children with every meal, after all physical activities, and as requested.
- Children allergic to any food and require a modified diet will be provided with a substitute. An original physician's order must be submitted to the Child Nutrition Services Department **prior** to child receiving Head Start services.
- Children will learn the nutritional value of a variety of foods that will be introduced throughout the school year.
- Children will participate in nutrition education activities monthly. Parent participation is encouraged.
- Head Start will conduct parent workshops in basic food preparation, budgeting and proper nutrition practices with the collaboration of the Texas A&M Expanded Nutrition Program, Hidalgo County WIC Program, and the UTRGV- Dietetic Department.
- **No outside food is permitted, no exceptions.**
- *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. Please follow the Civil Rights Policy & Civil Right Grievance Procedures.*

# Health Information

## Health Services

### Health Information for Parents

The Health Services Department's commitment to wellness embraces a comprehensive approach to proper health for children and their families. Our objective is to ensure that through collaboration among families, staff, and health professionals, all child's health developmental concerns are identified and addressed. Children and families are linked to an ongoing source of continuous, accessible care to meet their basic health needs.

Each child enrolled will provide a complete physical exam and dental exam prior to or immediately after enrollment. Follow-up treatments will be recommended if needed. The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will seek all possible resources to help pay for these services only when the child does not have a source of insurance coverage.

The following assessments are also required:

- Vision, Hearing, and Blood Pressure Screen (once a year)
- Hematocrit/Hemoglobin Levels (once a year)
- Lead Levels (one-time test or questionnaire)
- TB (one-time test or questionnaire)
- Height & Weight (once a year and during physical)

Fresh air and exercise significantly enhance the health and growth of a child. Parents/guardians who feel their child is too ill to participate in outdoor activity should keep the child at home an extra day to ensure a complete recovery. The parent/legal guardian will be notified immediately if the staff has a concern regarding their child's condition or suspect the child is ill. If unavailable, the persons listed in the emergency contact form will be called.

### Exclusion Guidelines-Sick Children

To ensure the health and safety of children and staff, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program has established health practices that include a policy of inclusion and exclusion when children are ill.

*Ref: HSPS Communicable Disease and Illness 1302.47 (b) (7) (iii).*

1. All Communicable/Infectious diseases (children) must be reported to the Health Services Department and to Human Resources Department within **24 hours**.
2. The parent/legal guardian or emergency contacts will be notified to pick up the child if they appear to have communicable disease symptoms or becomes ill at school (see Caring for a Sick Child). The child will be sent home and cannot return to the classroom until:
  - The Head Start staff receives a medical excuse from a **Health Care Provider** that indicates the name of the disease, the treatment prescribed, and the date of safe school return.
3. Staff will send out informational alerts if there are **two (2)** or more **diagnosed** cases of the same disease in the same classroom (must be in writing from a medical doctor), to the parents/ guardians of all the children in the classroom within twenty-four (24) hours after the disease in question has been verified by a Health Care Provider or, with urgent reports, verified over the phone by the Health Services Department.
3. Staff will utilize the child exclusion guidelines on the Communicable Disease website for information and guidance on when to send a child home.

### Medical Insurance and Medical/Dental Home

Upon enrollment, the parent/legal guardian will inform staff if the family has medical/dental insurance and a medical/dental home (Primary Care Physician [PCP]/Dentist) and has continuous and accessible services. If the family does not have a PCP/dentist, the parent/legal guardian will be referred to a pediatric clinic in our community. This action will be done within 30 days of the first day of class.

### Immunizations and TB Skin Test Questionnaire

The Head Start staff will inform the new enrollee's parent/legal guardian of their responsibility to ensure that their child has an up-to-date immunization card appropriate for their age and the TB skin test (with the result) or TB questionnaire ready **BEFORE** the first day of classroom instruction.

# Health Information

## Health Services

Children needing immunizations throughout the year must comply with vaccinations immediately and will not be allowed to attend school until requirements are met. All children returning for a second or third year will provide a new TB QUESTIONNAIRE when the yearly physical exam is due **(NO EXCEPTIONS)**. Ref: 1302.15 €

## Medical Emergencies

The Head Start staff responds rapidly to children's medical emergencies by adhering to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program procedures as follows:

- The staff tends to the injured child;
- First aid is provided as needed depending on the injury of the child;
- Emergency Medical Services – EMS (911) will be called if required;
- The child's parent/legal guardian and all responsible parties will be notified;
- A detailed Emergency Procedure is posted in every classroom.

## Medication Administration

The Head Start staff will administer medication to the children at the campus if needed. Parents must fill out the required consent forms to authorize the staff to administer the medication. **All medications must be prescribed by a physician licensed in the United States.** No medication will be administered without a doctor's written order, (this also applies to ointments, insect repellants, and sunscreen). The doctor's written orders must match the medication label. For further consultation, contact the Health Services Department.

## Children's Daily Health Check Policy

Following Performance Standards 1302.42 (c) (2) and 1302.92 (b) (2), the Hidalgo County Head Start Program conducts a daily health check assessment on each child. This assessment identifies health concerns such as scratches, bruises, and sores, to name a few. The health check also includes checking the head for the presence of lice. The classroom staff will conduct these assessments.

## Vaccine Preventable Disease Policy

Minimum Standards §746.501(27), §746.3609, §746.3611; Senate Bill 64 of the 83rd Legislature Law

## What is a vaccine-preventable disease?

A vaccine-preventable disease is a disease that is included in the most current recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect the health and safety of the Hidalgo County Head Start Program children, employees, employee's family members, and the community as a whole from vaccine preventable diseases and to comply with all standards and state laws.

## Policy Procedure and Implementation:

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program will ensure that this policy protects children from vaccine-preventable diseases by including the following procedures: (MS 746.3611).

## Annual Review and Distribution

The program's policies regarding vaccine preventable disease shall be distributed to all parents at the beginning of each school year or at time of enrollment. The HCHSP Health Advisory Committee and Policy Council shall also review the policies annually.



# Mental Health and Special Services Information

## Mental Health Services

**The Mental Health Services Department** is an integral part of the Head Start Program with four primary objectives: Prevention, Identification, Referral, and Treatment.

**The DEVEREUX Early Childhood Assessment (DECA P2)** is an electronic tool focused on three protective factors: attachment, initiative, and self-control as well as challenging behaviors.

**Observations by Mental Health Professionals** - certified school and Mental Health Counselors conduct Observations to help identify any potential problems in the classroom.

**Positive Behavior Support—Strategies** given to teachers and parents to address challenging behaviors.

**Employee Wellness Program** — To educate, support, and empower Head Start employees and parents to improve and maintain their overall health and wellbeing.

## Special Services

The special services department's overall purpose is to ensure that children with disabilities receive comprehensive services and participate in the full range of activities and services. Hidalgo County Head Start program must ensure that at least ten percent of its total enrollment is filled by children eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In an attempt to provide collaborative services, the Hidalgo County Head Start Program has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Early Childhood Intervention Programs (ECI), Child Find, and other Community Resource Agencies.



# Education Information

## Education Services

### School Readiness Plan & Goals

Hidalgo County Head Start Education Program (HCHSP) performs under the philosophy that each child is unique and deserves every opportunity to develop their uniqueness through developmentally appropriate experiences in the areas of Approaches to Learning, Social & Emotional development, Language & Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor, Physical development; all of which are essential for children getting ready for school.

HCHSP defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. The program provides a comprehensive service that ensures children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning and schools are ready to receive the children.

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) defines a developmentally and linguistically appropriate comprehensive program using a research-based curriculum, assessment tools, and effective teaching strategies. It provides opportunities for all children including Dual Language Learners and children with disabilities.

### Curriculum

Hidalgo County Head Start Program implements a researched based curriculum. The curriculum addresses the five central domains and Family Connections which provides resources for welcoming families to become active participants on their child's learning team. Research shows that involving families in their children's education, results in positive improvements in academic performance, cognitive development, self-esteem, motivation, and self-discipline. The program, the family, and the child form an important learning team. The suggested letters, notes, activities, and take-home books in this guide will help build a bridge between home and school. The curriculum meets the needs of children with disabilities and Dual Language Learners.

Hidalgo County Head Start Program School Readiness Goals are based on the five essential domains in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (HSELOF) and are as follows:

<b>Approaches to Learning</b>
- Child will become more independent in behavior, actions, and play while exploring and investigating their surroundings.
<b>Social &amp; Emotional Development</b>
- Child will develop social and emotional skills that support on-going positive relationships with self and others.
<b>Language &amp; Literacy</b>
- Child will develop skills in listening and understanding and using words/actions to respond to others.
- Child will understand and demonstrate the use of print, signs, and pictures.
- Child will develop knowledge of how sounds, letters, and words relate to one another and spoken language.
<b>Cognition</b>
- Child will develop skills for reasoning, memory, and problem solving.
- Child will use critical thinking to understand and organize their world.
<b>Perceptual, Motor, &amp; Physical Development</b>
- Child will demonstrate increasing independence in motor skills, self-care, and safety
- Child will use their senses to understand, organize, and explore their world.

# Education / Compliance Information

## Education Services

### Screenings and Assessments

All children receive a research-based developmental and social/emotional screening within 45 days of entry into the program. The following areas are screened: gross and fine motor skills, cognitive, language, self-help, and social and emotional development. If further evaluation is needed, parents/guardians are notified and involved in the process to help their child achieve specific goals.

### Home Visits

The Teacher is required to conduct two home visits a year for every child in their classroom. The first home visit must be completed within 90 days of enrollment. This allows for the teacher to become acquainted with the family and the child's home environment and secure input from the parents to plan appropriately for the children's individual needs. The second home visit is due by the end of April. This visit gives the teachers the opportunity to help parents of graduating children to transition into the public school and to provide parents with recommended activities to do with their children at home during the summer months.

### Individualization

HCHSP utilizes a research-based Progress Monitoring Tools that provides ongoing information that assesses the progress of the children. The Progress Monitoring Tools provides the teaching staff a grouping tools to provide individualize instruction to all the children. This process of individualization ensures that children continue to make progress towards school readiness.

### Parent/Teacher Conference

A parent-teacher conference is required after each assessment (3 times a year.) The purpose of these conferences is to communicate to the parents the results of the assessment and to get their input in developing their Child's Individual Plan (CIP). The child's Individual Plan (CIP) tracks a child's progression through a scope and sequence of skills that are aligned with both the Head Start Framework and the states Pre-kindergarten Guidelines Each conference is signed by the parent and teachers and kept in the child's file. A copy is given to the parents for their records.

## Minimum Standard 746.2207

Screen time must not exceed one hour per day, must not be used during meal time, snack time, nap or rest. Screen devices must be off when not in use. The content must be age appropriate.

### 746.501 #18 (A) through (G)

Preschoolers need plenty of time to play and explore outdoor spaces. Six out of ten preschoolers will continue to be overweight or obese at age 12 (NICHD,2006. The situation is so severe that this generation of children's lifespan is predicted to be shorter than that of their parents. Physical Activity and Outdoor play boosts children's health and wellness and supports their learning and development across the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) domains. Hidalgo County Head Start Program embeds Outdoor/Indoor play in the daily schedule for 90 minutes to ensure that we are promoting healthy bodies and minds. Structured and unstructured Outdoor/Indoor play lessons/activities are written in the lesson plans in accordance with the scientifically researched Pre-k curriculum. These lessons/activities identify objectives aligned with Head Start Early Learning Outcomes and the 2023 Texas Pre-K Guidelines. These lessons/activities will take place in the designated outdoor/indoor play area, school gymnasium, and classrooms. Parents will be informed about the use of recommended clothing and footwear for outdoor play that will let the children participate without any limits or obstacles during outdoor/indoor play. For the most part the lesson/activities will be conducted outdoors but when there is extreme climate weather conditions, such as 90 Degree weather and above, raining, high wind advisory in place by Hidalgo County, children's activities will be held in the classroom or school gymnasium. Children will be provided with bean tosses, hula-hoop (if available), and music for exercise.

# Parent Engagement

## **Policy Council & Parent Committees**

The Hidalgo County Head Start Policy Council is a governing body that includes Head Start program parents and community members. Six parent Representatives are elected by Head Start parents. It is the responsibility of Policy Council members to remain informed on issues facing the Head Start Program and share the information with other Head Start parents. Policy Council members regularly attend meetings and trainings and advocate for the best interest of the entire program.

## **Parent, Family & Community Engagement (PFCE)**

Parent engagement is an interactive process where staff, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. Parent engagement is a shared responsibility of families and staff. It requires mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. Head Start supports opportunities that increase achievement of seven family outcomes:

- Family Well-being
- Positive Parent-Child Relationships
- Families as Lifelong Educators
- Families as Learners
- Family Engagement in Transitions
- Family Connections to Peers and Community
- Families as Advocates and Leader

Parent engagement opportunities are offered throughout the year at various times and locations. You will be notified ahead of time. Parent/guardians are also encouraged to volunteer. Presently volunteers may not participate at the centers because of COVID-19. Volunteering in Head Start provides parents/guardians the opportunity to build new skills that encourage the development of nurturing relationships with both their children and teachers. Research shows that parent participation in a child's preschool program positively impacts children socially, emotionally and academically.

## **Parent Training**

The Head Start program offers a series of trainings and learning opportunities for parents/guardians. Workshops, trainings and seminars are offered throughout the year at various locations and are based on the interests and needs of parents.

## **Family Partnership Agreement/ Goal Setting**

When parents/guardians think about what they would like to achieve for their child and family in one year, two years, or even five years, they are thinking about family goals. Staff can help families set goals and work towards making those goals a reality. HCHSP works collaboratively with each family to create a "Family Partnership Agreement" (FPA). The FPA identifies strengths and challenges, set goals for the future, and make plans to meet those goals. Goals may include reading with children every day, finding better housing, learning computer skills, creating a household spending plan, or cooking more nutritious meals at home. Head Start staff will support families to make plans to meet their goals and will check in with families throughout the year as they make progress toward completing their goals.

## **Support and Community Referrals**

Raising a family with young children is challenging. HCHSP wants to help families grow and find the support and resources they need. Staff members build caring and respectful partnerships so every child has the best chance for success in school and life. The following are examples of referrals/resources that Head Start staff can provide:

- Housing assistance
- Homelessness prevention, intervention
- Utility assistance
- Alcohol or substance abuse services
- Domestic violence services
- Food and clothing assistance
- Parenting assistance
- Mental Wellness assistance
- Resources for grandparents raising grandchildren

# Transition/Safety & Transportation Information

The Hidalgo County Head Start Program provides safety Education information to all Head Start Parents/Guardians

## **Community Partnerships and Transition Services**

### **§1302.71**

The program maintains formal and informal networks with a wide range of community organizations and develops community partnerships in order to provide the highest level of services to children and families of all cultures. The program provides each family with a Community Resource Directory that identifies local, state and federal agencies that can assist families with additional resources.

The objective of Transition services is to communicate and coordinate with the local public schools (LEA's - Local Education Agencies) through virtual and zoom meetings to plan appropriately for transition services. Procedures will facilitate the transition process for children in the program and parent participation in the process will be encouraged. When these transitions are successful, children and families are more likely to experience better long term school success.

## **Pedestrian Safety Information**

- ◆ Children should always be escorted by an adult when crossing the street, in a parking lot and entering a Head Start facility.
- ◆ Children should hold hands with the adult and walk beside, not in front of or behind, the adult.
- ◆ When escorting children to school, position yourself between the traffic and the child.
- ◆ Teach children to look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the street to identify approaching vehicles.
- ◆ Always stop at the curb before crossing the street.
- ◆ Walk, don't run, across the street.
- ◆ Whenever possible, cross at corners with traffic signals and crosswalks.
- ◆ Walk facing traffic.
- ◆ Make sure that drivers see you by communicating with them verbally or through body language before crossing in front of them.
- ◆ Minimize loose clothing items, such as long drawstrings, that may become tangled or cause a child to trip.
- ◆ Wear reflectors or white clothing when walking during times of limited visibility, such as early in the morning or late in the afternoon or when rain or fog is in the forecast.
- ◆ Reinforce the meaning of the red, green and yellow colors indicated on the traffic light.
- ◆ When picking-up or dropping-off your child, please park in designated areas or drive thru as instructed.
- ◆ Children should never be left unattended in vehicles.
- ◆ Always be alert and cautious when traveling near a school campus or child care center. Avoid rushing. Look out for motorists who may be rushed or distracted.



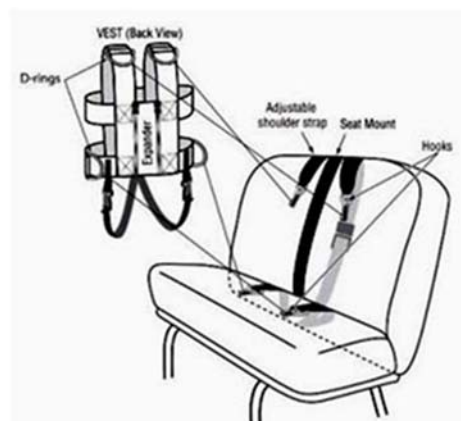
# Safety and Transportation Information

## School Bus Safety

- Escort children to and from the bus stop. This is an important transition from home to the program
- Teach children to look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the street
- Ensure loose clothing items such as long draw-strings do not get tangled
- Stand back at least 10 feet from where the bus stops
- The bus should stop to the right of traffic lane when loading and unloading, about two feet from the road's edge
- Stand still until the bus driver opens the door
- Remind children to hold onto the handrail and walk one step at a time
- The bus monitor or other adult needs to accompany preschool children while crossing the street
- Reinforce the meaning of the red, green and yellow colors indicated on the traffic light
- Talk to children about the danger zones around the bus Use the diagram to the right
- Board the bus in single file
- Wait your turn to board
- Use the handrail so you don't trip
- Don't push anyone
- Gather your things before the bus reaches your stop
- Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before getting up from your seat
- Hold on to the handrail when stepping down so you don't trip
- If you leave something on the bus, ask the driver to help you don't go back for it on your own. The driver may not see you and start to drive away.

## Child Safety Restraint (CSR) – Installation

Unbuckle safety release, lift bench seat and insert buckle end between seat cushion and backrest, leaving hooks on seat. Lay release end over top of backrest with upper hooks to front side of backrest. Place harness on passenger with zipper side on back. Attach upper and lower D-rings to hooks (see illustration below), securing passenger in seat. Pull adjusting strap on seat back snug and affix excess strap end with hook and loop stitched on strap.



# Parents Want To Know

## How do I DROP OFF & PICK UP my child?

Parents will assume full responsibility for the safe arrival of the child to the classroom or other designated areas. Parents or other authorized persons must SIGN IN the child on the Drop-off & Pick-up Signature Report every morning. Children must be picked up by **parents or authorized persons only. These persons must be 18 years or older.** If an authorized person is picking up a child for the first time, he or she will be required to show proof of identity. Parents or other authorized persons must **SIGN OUT** the child on the Drop-off & Pick-up Signature Report every afternoon.

## Daily Attire

Children's attire should be clean and comfortable, and it is strongly recommended that all children wear closed shoes (preferably tennis shoes).

## Can my child go on a field trip?

Yes, field trips are planned by the campus staff and approved by administration. Only children and campus personnel may accompany the children on the bus.

## How do I visit the campus?

For the safety of those within the Campus and to avoid disruption of instruction, all visitors must first report to the Campus Director's Office to SIGN-IN when arriving and SIGN-OUT when leaving. Parents may visit the campus anytime during the day without prior permission. However, parents choosing to remain longer than normal visits or visit frequently must register as a volunteer.

## What if I move or my family changes?

Parents are responsible to report all changes of status to the Head Start teacher as they occur. Changes such as residence, employment, emergency contacts or authorized persons to pick-up children must be reported immediately.

