

# SETA Head Start/Early Head Start



## Parent Handbook



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# WELCOME

*" SETA Head Start/Early Head Start and State funded program's mission is to improve the lives of low-income children by providing comprehensive child development services that are family focused, including education, health, nutrition and mental health. Our mission is accomplished by involving parents in the total operation and administration of the program and supporting the growth of children, families and staff through encouragement, nurturing and empowerment."*

I am pleased that you have chosen our program to be an important part of your child's growth and development. Our goal is that we will work together in a partnership with your child's well being as our mutual goal.

This handbook will answer some of the questions you may have concerning our policies and program. Please take time to read this handbook and keep it in a convenient location for reference. If at any time you have questions, concerns or suggestions, please feel free to share them with me.

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Site Supervisor

Date

Site Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Who We Are**

Head Start is a federally funded child development and social services program for children 3- to 5-year-olds and their families. Children receive comprehensive services at the Head Start Early Learning Centers or in their homes. Special intervention services are coordinated with the school districts and other community agencies. Family support services and employment and training opportunities are provided to lead the family to self-sufficiency.

Early Head Start promotes healthy outcomes for pregnant women and families with infants and toddler (zero to three years) by providing comprehensive child development and family support services. Families are assigned a home visitor who also coordinates special services to the family when needed. We also provide center based care at selected early learning sites.

Head Start and Early Head Start also receive funds from the California Department of Education, Child Development Division and Nutrition Services. We offer State preschool and general child care through collaboration with the State Department of Education, Child Development Division. Families must be income eligible, and in the case of general child care, must show a need for full day care. To qualify for a classroom option that runs longer than the four hour program, a parent must prove a need for that option; i.e., parents are either working or attending educational training, or seeking employment, or parental incapacity, verified by a licensed professional. The number of hours a child receives care will be determined by daily school/work schedules.

## **Program Options**

### **Center-based Program**

Head Start services and State preschool and general child care services are delivered at various centers located throughout Sacramento County. Services are delivered either half-day or full-day. Teachers, family services workers (FSW's), social workers, and special education field technicians at the sites are the primary providers of services. Early Head Start has selected centers where services are delivered.

### **Home-based Program**

This delivery service option is available to children and families enrolled in both Head Start and Early Head Start. Children and families receive weekly home visits with a Head Start home visitor who provides comprehensive services. Children in this program also get together two times a month for a socialization gathering.

## **Program Philosophy**

SETA Head Start/Early Head Start and State collaborative classes are designed to meet the individual and developmental needs of children. Programs provide experiences that support and enrich each child's cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, physical and creative abilities. Our curriculum is based on developmentally appropriate practices, multicultural and anti-bias principles, and research on brain development in children, Head Start Performance Standards, and our many years of experience working with young children. We have adapted the Creative Curriculum and integrated portions of the project approach, and added Houghten/Mifflin as a supplement to our literacy curriculum. We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children and experts on their child's development. Parents and teachers work together in a partnership to address the needs and holistic growth of each child so that learning will be supported in the home, as well as at school.

According to Head Start Performance Standards, each child will receive a variety of screenings within 45 calendar days of their entry into the program.

These services include:

- vision screen
- hearing screen
- height and weight every 6 months
- developmental screen
- speech screen
- social-emotional screen
- 4 year olds will have their blood pressure taken
- an Individualized Education Plan

Most screenings are done annually. Teachers and FSW's will provide each parent a copy of the screening results. Also by enrolling into the Head Start/Early Head Start Program, your family will be receiving two home visits per year, and two parent conferences per year. Teachers and FSW's will make an appointment to meet you at your home to gain your input about what you want for your child, and to complete the Family Partnership Agreement. Children will receive an on-going assessment (DRDP) within the first 60 calendar days of enrollment, then two more times throughout the year.

Our core philosophy is that parents are the experts in their child's life and through home visits and parent conferences, partnerships with parents are built. You may ask to meet with your child's teacher or your FSW at any time. Our goal is to provide quality services to the entire family. If for some reason you do not receive one these services or follow-ups, please talk with your site supervisor for further information.

A large part of the Head Start mission is to ensure that parents are involved in the total operation and administration of the program. Each Early Learning Center elects a parent representative to sit on the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). Parent representatives are also chosen from Early Head Start and the Home-based option. This gives each site and program option a voice in the decision-making process of Head Start. From the PAC, representatives are chosen to sit on the official decision-making board, the Policy Council (PC). The Policy Council is established at the grantee level and is composed of Head Start/Early Head Start parents who are elected from each delegate agency Policy Committee and the SETA-operated program, the Parent Advisory Committee. The PC membership is also inclusive of community representatives appointed by a community-based agency.

The Policy Council meets once a month to receive and discuss pertinent program information and to engage in decision-making issues related to

program operations. Members are responsible for assisting in planning, general administration, personnel and grant application process and evaluations. Representatives are also responsible for serving as a liaison between Head Start site parents and staff by sharing information discussed at the monthly Policy Council meeting.

PC and PAC representatives are also provided an opportunity to attend conferences, locally and nationally, to learn about Head Start/Early Head Start program operations. Representatives are also given the opportunity to attend the SETA-operated Annual Leadership Retreat, focusing on personal development skills. Members will have a great opportunity to contribute to the various aspects of the Head Start/Early Head Start program and to learn and enhance their skills on a personal and professional level.

## **Enrollment and Attendance**

### **Hours**

Your child care hours are specified in your registration agreement. Classroom options and hours vary within the program. Classes are operated five days per week, from four hours up to eleven hours per day.

### **Enrollment Process/Confidentiality/Custody Arrangements**

It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent or legal guardian to accurately complete and sign all enrollment forms and keep information updated as needed. By signing the enrollment forms, the enrolling parent or legal guardian is also certifying that they have legal authority for the child. California law is clear that parents who have joint legal custody have equal access to all information regarding the child, including enrolling the child and making changes to the enrollment information. Court orders are required to prevent a parent or legal guardian from certain activities, such as picking up the child or visiting the child at the center. We reserve the right, however, to prohibit individuals from being at the center if the health and safety of any child is threatened or compromised.

Agency procedures do not allow staff to make copies of forms and other documents or provide testimony, verbally or in writing, about any child, unless subpoenaed by court order. It is not in the best interest of any

child for center staff to act with partially to one parent or the other. Information must be requested in writing to the ERSEA Coordinator.

If you should have any questions, please see your site supervisor.

### **Sign In and Out**

It is a Licensing requirement that each child must be signed in and out by a parent or authorized representative every day on the Electronic Sign In and Out sheets located in the classrooms. The State requires a full signature written on the Sign In and Out sheets. An authorized representative must accompany the child to the classroom, sign the child in, and make sure that teachers in the room know the child is there.

Children will only be released to those authorized persons designated on the child's Emergency Card. Identification will be required. It is the parent's responsibility to notify center personnel of any changes on the Emergency Card.

### **Child Safety**

At SETA Head Start, we take the safety of all children seriously. Part of the curriculum that children learn in the classroom is that only teachers and parents open doors and gates. Your role in this process is to ensure that these rules are followed when you are at the site. Keep your child in sight and sound at all times. Do not allow them to run ahead of you and enter classrooms, and do not allow them to run out of the classroom when they see you arriving. Please make sure that you make contact with a teacher in the classroom upon drop off, and pick up. You will learn even more safety techniques during the school year. It is all of our responsibility to ensure that children are safe.

### **Attendance and Absences**

Only illness of a child, illness of a parent, family emergency and court-ordered visitations will be considered excused absences. The specific reason for absences must be written on the Sign In/Out sheet. The parent/guardian must call and notify staff when the child will not be in attendance, regardless of the reason. Frequent absences without proper verification may result in the child being dropped from the program. Staff has the right to determine when an excused absence becomes an unexcused absence, based on an individual situation.

For those children enrolled in classes with Head Start/Early Head Start and State funds, each family will be allotted ten (10) days per certification year called "best interest days." This includes family requested vacations, child spending time with family members or friends, parent/guardian off from school/work, any activity that is clearly in the best interest of the child.

### **Withdrawal from the Program**

If you plan to withdraw from the program, please give the site supervisor or the FSW notice as soon as you know when your child will be exiting our program. This allows us to give that space to a waiting family.

### **Late Pick up of a Child**

In cases of the late pick up of your child/ren from the site, SETA Head Start will follow this procedure:

#### **First time:**

A verbal reminder of our procedures will be given to parents.

#### **Second time:**

A conference will be held with the parent and the teacher.

#### **Third time:**

A written letter stating the procedure will be given, along with a *final reminder*.

#### **Fourth time:**

A recommendation for termination of your child from the program will be made to the Deputy Director of SETA Head Start.

At each point, a parent will be asked to sign the late agreement, stating they understand that they were late picking up their child. Failure to sign the document does not preclude the **Late Policy** procedure from continuing.

### **Physical Exams**

Proof of a physical examination, signed by a doctor, along with a TB test for your child and the parent is required upon enrollment. Each year a

new physical and TB test will be required of each child and parent. An up-to-date immunization record must be completed before the child will be admitted to the center.

### **Health Policy**

Children must be well and healthy in order to fully participate in and benefit from an active child development program. Upon arriving at the early learning center, children will receive a visual inspection to detect any signs of illness. Special attention will be made when a child has been out ill. If the teacher detects any sign of illness, the child will not be able to attend school that day. When children have symptoms of illness, which include, but are not limited to fever, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, pain, discolored discharge from nose, eyes, ears or throat/chest, listlessness, etc., they must be kept at home. Home rest prevents the spread of illness to other children and adults and helps children regain their health.

The parent/guardian will be contacted to pick-up children who become ill while in the program. Centers are not licensed to provide appropriate services for ill children. When children become ill, they will be temporarily isolated until the parent/guardian or authorized other adult arrives to take them home. Your child must be picked up from the site within 30 minutes. Failure to do so will result in a late notice being issued. A medical provider may need to be consulted and a written release may be necessary to readmit children after a highly communicable or serious illness.

In the case of fever, vomiting or diarrhea, children must be symptom free for 24 hours in order to return.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the center when a child has a contagious illness or disease. Other participants will be notified in writing of any occurrence of communicable or serious illness. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times when notifying parents of occurrence of an illness.

### **Medication**

All medications administered must be in the original container, with your child's name, dosage, and how often to administer printed on the label. You must also get a medication release form from the FSW/EHS educator or the site supervisor to have your physician fill out in full with a signature

and instructions before any medication can be dispensed. **DO NOT SEND ANY MEDICATION IN YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK!** Over the counter medications administered at Head Start sites have the same requirements as prescription medications, i.e., pharmacy label must be on medication to be given, and a medication release form must be completed by both the child's parent and physician.

### **Incident/Injuries**

If your child has an incident or injury at the center, a Minor Injury Report will be completed and you will receive a copy. The staff will administer the appropriate first aid. If it is determined that a physician's care is needed, the parent will be notified immediately and Emergency Card instructions will be followed. If the parents or other designated parties listed on the Emergency Card are unavailable, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital for care. It is important that parents sign a Consent for Medical Treatment Form so that their child can be treated at a hospital or by a physician in an emergency situation.

### **Meals**

We are proud to be a part of the USDA child care food program. Meals and snacks contain food components and quantities established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines. Foods purchased and prepared at the center promote healthy choices, such as the reduction of salt, sugar, and fats, and increase of grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Family-style meal service is an integral part of our food program at our centers. This style of meal service promotes healthy eating habits and positive attitudes toward food and eating. Family-style meal service allows your child to identify and be introduced to new foods and new skills. Children are encouraged to serve themselves and try all new foods, but are never forced to eat. Active involvement in table set up and clean up allows your child to be included in all aspects of mealtime.

A nutritionist created the menus. Copies are posted in all Early Learning Centers for parents to review. Food substitutions may occur, depending on the season and availability. Substitutions will be noted on the menu.

Parents, whose children have food allergies or special nutrition needs, should notify the site supervisor or the FSW either at the time of enrollment or when the allergy becomes known. A Special Diet Form,

signed by a physician, is required for all special diets. After the Special Diet Form is completed and signed, it is forwarded to the main office for approval from the Registered Dietitian. After the approval process, the Special Diet Form is forwarded to the main kitchen and substitutions will be provided by the center.

In case of religious preference, a FSW, EHS educator or site supervisor will complete the Special Diet Form and forward it to the main office, where it will be forwarded to the kitchen for appropriate substitutions. This should be done at the time of enrollment.

The A.M. half-day class will receive breakfast and lunch.

The P.M. half-day class will receive lunch and an afternoon snack.

The full-day class will receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack.

Food brought from home is prohibited in our Early Learning Centers. No food will be sent home with children. If your child is in the middle of eating when you arrive, please feel free to sit with them until they are finished.

All of our Early Learning Centers are operated in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, which prohibits discriminations on the basis of race, color, sex, age, disability, religion, or national origin. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any USDA-related activity should write to: Administrator, Food and Nutrition Services, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.

### **Inspection Authority**

**(State of California, Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division)**

Title 22, Manuel of Policies and Procedures for Child Care Center's states:

- Any duly authorized officer, employee or agent of the department, upon presentation of proper identification, may enter and inspect any place providing personal; care, supervision, and services with or without advanced notice, to secure compliance with, or to prevent violation of this act, or the regulations adopted by the department.

## **Open Door Policy**

All of our Early Learning Centers follow an open door policy. Each enrolled parent/guardian has access to their child(ren) at all times.

## **Child Abuse Reporting Obligations**

In accordance with California State law, school staff is obligated, under penalty of fine and jail to report the reasonable suspicion of physical abuse, emotional abuse, and emotional deprivation, physical neglect, inadequate supervision, sexual abuse, and exploitation to the authorities. The clear intent of the law, based on the seriousness of the crimes listed above, is to mandate that a report of reasonable suspicion of abuse be made. Staff will make such reports in the best interest of the affected child and do not, once reasonable suspicion is established, have any legal alternative except to make the report to the proper authorities for their investigation and review.

## **Clothing and Footwear Policy**

Clothing and footwear should be appropriate for inside and outside play throughout the year. We feel that dirt, water, paint, or a combination of these things is an important part of the learning process. The children leave school with the evidence of a good day! Please send your child(ren) in clothing that is comfortable and practical. Children are required to have an extra set of clothing just in case there is a need to change clothes.

Many activities involve climbing, kicking balls, riding bikes and running. Please protect your child's feet with rubber-soled shoes to avoid slipping on the equipment. Athletic shoes are great for this purpose. Sandals with back straps are acceptable during the hot weather. Slip-on shoes, thongs, and jellies are not allowed at the site for safety reasons.

Be sure to write your child's name on all of his/her belongings.

## **Cubbies**

Each child has his/her own cubby to keep their belongings in. Please check their cubby or their file folder for loose items, notes or other items that may need to go home.

## **Discipline**

Constructive methods will always be employed for maintaining group discipline and handling individual behaviors. Corporal punishment and other humiliating or frightening techniques will not be used.

We strive to help students continue to develop in self-control and self-regulation. We define the established limits so that our students know what is expected of them. Rules are lovingly, consistently and firmly enforced. As much as possible we allow logical consequences to determine the course of discipline. For example, if a child is playing in the block area and throws blocks, he/she will be removed from the block area. A student whose behavior is considered to be out of control may be separated from the rest of the students until self-control has been reestablished.

We use the following methods during the learning process:

1. Remind the child of the limits.
2. Redirect the child before he/she crosses the acceptable limits.
3. Reinforce positive behavior.
4. A parent conference may occur in case of extreme or recurrent misbehavior.

Children are continually encouraged to problem-solve between themselves with as little interference as possible from teachers.

## **Annual and Monthly Calendar**

Families will receive a calendar each September detailing the days that the site is closed and which days are minimum days. Changes to the calendar will be announced in writing. Each site also generates a site specific calendar with field trips, school events, parent meetings and any other information. Please check the parent's file for all of these announcements. It is your responsibility to check your box each day for announcements.

## **Lesson Plans**

All lesson plans are posted in each classroom by the Sign In sheet or on the parent bulletin board for parent review and input. Daily schedules are posted in each classroom for parent review.

## **Notices**

All notices are sent home or posted on the door or next to the Sign In sheet. It is your responsibility to check your child's cubby daily or your parent file daily.

## **Holidays and Celebrations**

Holiday celebrations in the classroom will be used as a way to honor different value systems. They will be used to learn about and come to respect differences, as well as commonalities. No child shall, at any time, be forced to participate in a celebration. For those families and children who, because of their value system, do not wish to participate in a celebration, an alternative activity will be planned and provided.

Because we are a federally funded program, at no time will religious instruction be part of the curriculum. All families' beliefs shall be respected. Within the first 45 days of the school year, staff will survey patens/guardians to poll what holidays their families celebrate. A holiday celebration Committee of staff and parents should be formed to develop activities appropriate for young child that reflect the surveyed information.

## **Parent Meetings**

Parent meetings are held monthly at your site. Times and days will be voted on each October in order to ensure the best possible attendance. It is our hope that you will take the opportunity to attend these meetings. Valuable training and information will be announced. In order to attend parent meetings, you must have an updated TB test in your child's file. A parent meeting binder will be kept in the parent area, with minutes of the parent meetings and the PAC and PC meetings for parents who are unable to attend. If you need a translator, please let your FSW or site supervisor know ahead of time.

## **Parent Support**

All families need support systems at various times in life. For example: you may be having trouble with health issues because health care costs so much; or maybe you are unemployed and are having difficulty paying your utility bills; or maybe you are just afraid that you can't handle any more pressure. Head Start provides resources that may be able to assist you through these and other difficult times. See your FSW for resource referral.

When you enroll in SETA Head Start, you are not just enrolling your child into a child development program; we also offer services to parents. Our program philosophy for parent involvement states:

*Parents are the foundation and cornerstone for the growth and success of themselves and their children. Parents shape and influence the design, implementation and direction of the program.*

*Parents are people with individual strengths, abilities and knowledge, all of which must be respected and accepted.*

We offer various opportunities and resources for parents:

1. **Male Involvement Program**-we invite men who are participating in the program with either a child who is currently enrolled or past parents to become involved in our CAMP (Committee Advocating Male Participation) program. This group focuses on male empowerment and fatherhood. There are countywide events that take place like Fishing in the City, movie nights, prisoner reentry, mental wellness activities and health fairs dedicated to those issues concerning men.
2. **One-Stop Career Center Collaborations**-parents are linked with One-Stop Career Centers that will assist them in their training and employment needs. Employment and training specialists will provide training and assistance in resume writing, completing job applications, conducting job search activities and evaluating skills and educational needs.
3. **Food Service Training Program**-we offer a job skills apprenticeship program that allows parents to learn hands-on job skills in food service.
4. **Parent Aide**-this position allows a parent to work to perform food prep activities for the site. This position is eligible for a monthly stipend.
5. **Career Incentive**-parents who need help in paying for college or a work training program are eligible for up to \$300 per year. Parents must first try to become eligible for financial aid.
6. **Grandparent/Foster Parent Support group**-we offer a monthly support group for grandparents raising grandchildren, and for foster parents. An annual conference is also held and opened to all parents.

Please see your FSW or site supervisor if you have any questions about any of the services offered, or would like to become more involved.

**Resolution of Problems and Disputes Policy  
(For families enrolled in State Funded Programs only)**

It is the intent of the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency Children and Family Services Child Development Program to fully comply with all applicable laws and regulations. Individuals, agencies, organizations, students and interested third parties have the right to file a complaint regarding the SETA Children and Family Services Child Development Program's alleged violation of a statute or regulation that the California Department of Education is authorized to enforce. This includes allegations of unlawful discrimination (*Education Code*, sections 200 and 220 and *Government Code*, Section 11135) in any program or activity funded directly by the state or receiving federal or state financial assistance.

Complaints must be signed and filed in writing with the California Department of Education:

California Department of Education  
Child Development Division  
Complaint Coordinator  
1430 N Street, Suite 3410  
Sacramento, CA 95814

If the complainant is not satisfied with the final written decision of the California Department of Education, remedies may be available in federal or state court. In this event, the complainant should seek the advice of an attorney of his/her choosing.

A complainant filing a written complaint alleging violations of prohibited discrimination may also pursue civil law remedies, including, but not limited to injunctions, restraining orders, or other remedies or orders.

**Appeal Information for Notice of Action Complaints in State Funded Programs**

Step 1

If you do not agree with the agency's action as stated in the Notice of Action, parents may appeal the intended action. To protect your appeal rights, parents must follow the instructions described in each step listed

below, also stated on the back of the Notice of Action. Parents/Guardians must complete the back of their Notice of Action fully.

Step 2

Mail or deliver your local hearing request within 14 days of receipt of your Notice of Action to:

SETA Head Start  
925 Del Paso Blvd, Ste 100  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
Contact: Karen Gonzales  
Phone: (916) 263-3804

Step 3

Within ten (10) calendar days following the agency's receipt of your appeal request, the agency will notify you of the time and place of the hearing. You or your authorized representative is required to attend the hearing. If you or your representative does not attend the hearing, you abandon your rights to an appeal, and the action of the agency will be implemented.

Step 4

Within ten (10) calendar days following the hearing the agency shall mail or deliver to you a written decision.

Step 5

If you disagree with the written decision of the agency, you have 19 days from the date of the written decision to file an appeal with the California Department of Education (CDE). Your appeal must include the following information (1) a written statement specifying the reasons you believe the agency's decision was incorrect, (2) a copy of the agency's decision letter, and (3) a copy of both sides of this Notice Of Action. Mail your appeal to the following address:

California Department of Education  
Child Development Division  
1430 N Street, Ste. 3410  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Attn: Appeals Coordinator

Step 6

Within 30 calendar days after the receipt of your appeal, CDE will issue a written decision to you and the agency. If your appeal is denied, the

agency will stop providing child care and development services immediately upon receipt of CDE's decision letter.

### **Resolution of Problems and Disputes Procedure for Non Notice of Action Issues (For all families enrolled in Head Start)**

#### First Step-Site Supervisor

Parent/Guardian should schedule an appointment to meet with the site supervisor to discuss the issue or problem. There will be an investigation and an attempt will be made to resolve the issue or problem. The parent/guardian will receive follow-up within 15 days of the appointment with the site supervisor. If the issue or complaint is with the site supervisor, the parent/guardian may instead to elect to call the educational program officer for that site.

#### Second Step-Manager

If the parent/guardian does not receive a satisfactory answer or resolution, upon the receipt of the supervisor's decision, he/she may appeal to the Manager. Within 5 days of the receipt of supervisor's decision, the manager will schedule an appointment with the parent/guardian. There will be an investigation, including review of the supervisor's decision. The parent/guardian will receive a written response from the manager within 15 days of their meeting.

#### Third Step-Deputy Director

If the parent/guardian does not receive a satisfactory answer or resolution, upon receipt of the manager's decision, he/she may appeal to the Deputy Director or, in his/her absence, an appointed representative. Within 5 days of the receipt of the parent/guardian's statement of dissatisfaction, the Deputy Director will schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian. There will be an investigation, including a review of the manager's decision and supervisor's decision. The parent/guardian will receive a response within 15 days of meeting with the Deputy Director.

### **Suggestions or Concerns**

Your questions, concerns and suggestions are always welcome. We want to know how you and your child feel about our program and how we might better meet your needs. Do not hesitate to come to the site supervisor with any comments or concerns.

Acknowledgment Receipt of Parent Handbook  
(To be placed in child's file)

I have been given a copy of the parent handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to understand what is written in the parent handbook. I also understand that if I have any questions about the parent handbook, I should talk to my site supervisor.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_



