

## **WELCOME**

The mission of Cullman City Head Start is to offer eligible children and their families the quality guidance and services they need to reach their highest potential of social competence that allows them to be successful in school and in life.

## **ENROLLMENT**

Head Start enrollment is open to children who are three or four years old on or before September 2. Head Start registration is conducted throughout the year by appointment with Family Services.

Eligibility for services is determined by a variety of criteria. If a child is eligible and there is no vacancy, the child will be placed on a waiting list. Parents will be notified if a vacancy occurs.

Parents of enrolled Head Start students must notify the Head Start Family Services Manager at 775-0234 Ext. 23 if they choose to withdraw their child from the program.

## **ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL**

### **Arrival**

Head Start hours are 7:45 a.m. until 1:05 p.m. Head Start children should arrive between 7:45 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. Parents who work may drop off children between 7:30 a.m. and 7:45 a.m.

**Head Start children MUST be dropped off at the MAIN ENTRANCE of the building.** Staff will assist children from cars and direct them to their classrooms. Head Start children and parents will **not** be permitted to enter the building through the **rear entrances.**

### **Tardy Arrival**

Any child who arrives after the last bus has unloaded must be signed in at the front office and escorted by the parent or guardian to his/her classroom. Children need to be in school on time every day that they attend. Children who are late miss many learning activities that occur before breakfast. Parents of children with excessive unexcused tardiness will be contacted to discuss corrective measures. Failure to correct excessive unexcused tardiness may result in a child's removal from the program.

## **Dismissal**

**Parents should wait in the brick breezeway for car riders until the bell rings at 1:05 p.m. for dismissal.** After the bell rings, parents may go to the classrooms to get their children. For safety reasons, photo I.D. will be required when picking up children. Buses will leave at 1:15 p.m.

Parents are asked NOT to check their child out of school **unless there is an emergency**. If you must check your child out prior to 1:05 p.m., please sign him/her out in the main office before going to the classroom. You must also obtain a yellow visitor's pass to go to the classroom if you check your child out before 1:05 p.m.

## **Late Pickup**

You must sign the Late Pickup Log located in the Family Services office each time you arrive late to pick up your child. If you cannot pick your child up on time every day, it is recommended that you sign him/her up for after school care.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Bus transportation is available to students within the city limits. Transportation forms should be filled out at the first home visit. If your transportation needs change, please contact the Family Services/Transportation Manager at 775-0234 Ext. 23. A minimum of 24 hours' notice is required for route changes. Changes for only one day will not be permitted.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is necessary for your child's success in school. Whenever a child must be absent due to illness or emergency, please call the office at 775-0234 Ext. 23 to inform us. A written excuse must be sent to the teacher the next day with the reason for the absence so that we may include it in your child's file. The parent of any child who is absent due to illness for three consecutive days should submit a doctor's excuse upon the child's return. If a child is absent for ten consecutive days without a valid reason, the program reserves the right to withdraw your child from the program and replace him or her with a child from the waiting list.

## **CLOSURE DUE TO BAD WEATHER**

During bad weather, Cullman City Head Start will be closed if Cullman City Schools are closed. If Cullman City Schools close during the school day due to bad weather, Cullman City Head Start will close, also. Please tune in to local television and radio broadcasts during bad weather to determine whether to send your child or pick him/her up from Head Start or to determine whether the buses will transport children early. If school closes early due to bad weather, there will be no extended day services that day.

## **CHANGE OF STATUS**

Please turn in any change of status (change in employment, phone number, address, child release information, transportation information, or change in childcare) to your child's teacher or your Family Partner immediately.

## **STUDENT DRESS**

Students should be dressed appropriately for school activities. Clothes should be comfortable, suitable for classroom activities and appropriate for the weather. Caps and hats may not be worn during class time except for medical reasons or special class activities. Comfortable shoes or sandals with secure straps (not "flip flops") should be worn at all times for safety and health reasons. Tennis shoes should be worn on all fieldtrips. Coats, jackets, sweaters and mittens should be labeled with your child's name. Please provide the teacher with a second set of clothes (pants, shirt, underpants, socks) in case your child's clothes become wet or dirty. Please make sure you update your child's change of clothes so that it is appropriate for the season (not shorts during the winter, for example).

## **ITEMS NOT ALLOWED ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Federal and State laws prohibit dangerous weapons on school property. Weapons, including toy weapons, may not be brought onto school property. Cullman City Schools does not permit tobacco, matches or other dangerous objects on school grounds. **NO SMOKING ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.** Also, no animals of any kind are permitted.

## STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Medical Requirements

All children enrolled in Head Start must have a complete physical exam, dental exam, and a current immunization record in order to attend class.

### Illness

Children who do not feel well will not do well in school. Children with severe colds or undetermined rashes should not attend school. **Your child should be free of stomach upset (vomiting or diarrhea) and fever for a minimum of 24 hours before he/she returns to school. If your child is sent home from school with a fever or vomiting, he or she may not return until 24 hours have passed without a recurrence.** We ask that you please inform your Head Start Family Partner of changes in emergency telephone numbers should the school need to get in touch with you if your child becomes ill.

### Head Lice

Head Start's policy concerning your child and head lice is as follows: Within the Head Start program, head lice is treated as any other communicable disease. **A child with lice will not be able to return to class or ride the bus until he or she is checked by the nurse and found nit free.**

### Medication

The Head Start staff does not routinely administer medication. We encourage all medications to be administered at home unless the medication is necessary for the student's well-being and ability to function in school. Usually when a prescription states that a medication should be administered 2 times a day, it means every 12 hours; 3 times a day means every 8 hours (unless specified with meals); and 4 times a day means every 6 hours; therefore, most medications can be administered before or after school.

If it is absolutely necessary that the medicine be given at school, you must have your child's doctor fill out a medication form available from the Head Start Health Manager, and you must sign permission for the medication to be administered. No medicine will be given without this form. Also, you must bring the medication in its original bottle. Ask your pharmacist to separate your medication into two bottles if necessary. **Medications should never be placed in a child's backpack.**

**Accidents**

If your child has a minor accident such as a bruise or scrape, the Head Start staff will send home an accident report for you to review. If your child is involved in a more serious accident, you will be notified by telephone. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that a current list of adults is provided to your Family Partner to contact in case of an emergency.

**NUTRITION**

Breakfast and lunch are provided for your child daily by the Head Start program. Menus are sent home monthly with the children and are posted in every classroom. No outside food, i.e. fast food or sack lunches, is permitted.

Children are encouraged to eat or taste their food, but children are never forced to eat. Children who finish all of their food may request additional food if it is available. Food is not used as a reward or punishment.

If your child is on a special diet or has food allergies, please send a written physician's statement to the Head Start Health Manager so that your child's needs may be accommodated.

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT****Discipline**

Children learn best in an environment where teachers and students mutually respect one another. It is the teacher's responsibility to assist children in recognizing the importance of self-discipline, in developing a sense of responsibility toward self and others, and in making decisions that have a positive impact on their lives. A positive approach to child discipline will be used in accordance with Head Start guidelines.

### **Home Visits**

Head Start teachers will make at least two home visits each year. The first visit will be made prior to the child's first day. A second one will be made at the end of the school year. Teachers will make an appointment with the parent or guardian to schedule each visit. Additional home visits by the teacher or Family Partner may be scheduled as necessary.

### **Conferences**

Parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled in the fall and winter. Parents are strongly encouraged to meet with teachers. If an additional conference is needed, your child's teacher will be happy to schedule one for you.

### **Screenings**

Developmental screenings and health screenings will be given to each child. These screenings are necessary in order for the teacher to develop an individual education program for each child.

### **Birthdays and Special Occasions**

Birthdays are an exciting time for children and we do our best to make your child feel special on his/her "big day;" however, in keeping with Head Start policies and federal nutrition guidelines, we ask that **no birthday treats**, i.e. cupcakes, cookies, popsicles, etc., be sent.

Head Start will provide snacks for special occasions such as holiday celebrations. **Again, we request that no treats or party favors be sent. The Head Start performance standards stress the importance of good nutrition, so please do not send candy canes or candy Valentines, either.** Items sent from home will be returned, **no exceptions.**

## **Fieldtrips**

Children will participate in many fieldtrips throughout the year. Transportation on school buses will be provided for children. A permission slip for fieldtrips is provided in the enrollment packet for parents to sign. Parents will be notified through the weekly Parent Bulletin prior to any fieldtrip.

We encourage parents to participate in fieldtrips. We ask that each parent adhere to the following policies:

1. If parents would like to order a volunteer lunch for a fieldtrip, parents must send a written note to their child's teacher two weeks prior to the fieldtrip.
2. Parents must sign in as a volunteer and wear a green nametag during the fieldtrip.
3. Each child must travel to the fieldtrip on the bus provided by Head Start.
4. Parents and other volunteers may follow behind the last Head Start bus to the fieldtrip destination in their personal vehicles.
5. All Head Start and school rules, including the "No Tobacco Policy" and the "No Corporal Punishment Policy" must be adhered to during the fieldtrip.
6. Only currently enrolled children may participate in fieldtrips. No one under the age of 16 may attend.
7. Parents should not purchase or bring additional items, including drinks, for their own children during the fieldtrip so that all children receive equal treatment.
8. When the fieldtrip activities have been completed and the classes are preparing to leave, parents who wish to take their child home must sign the Sign Out Sheet provided by the teacher.
9. Failure by a parent to adhere to these policies will result in restriction from participation in all remaining fieldtrips.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

### **Parent Input**

Parents of children enrolled in Head Start are invited to make suggestions for improvement of services. Suggestions should be submitted in writing to the Assistant Director. While not all suggestions will be possible to implement, each suggestion will be given consideration.

Parents are also encouraged to make suggestions about what their child will learn in Head Start. Lesson plans are posted in each classroom the Friday in advance of the week in which the lessons will be taught. Also, at enrollment and conferences parents will be asked what they hope their child will learn in Head Start.

## **Board of Education Meetings**

The Cullman City Board of Education Board policy calls for the regular Board meetings to be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month at 6 p.m. If the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month falls on a school holiday, the Board usually changes the date. Meeting times and places will be announced on the Head Start website and on the parent bulletin board beside the Parent Room.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are a vital part of our Head Start program. We expect and encourage you to contribute your time and talents to enhance the learning environment. You will also be able to see firsthand what your child is learning.

## **Signing In and Out**

When you come into the building, you **must** go to the front office to fill out your own individual volunteer sheet that you will use for that month. Your sheet will be filed behind your child's teacher's name in the big VOLUNTEER BOOK on the counter.

We ask you to sign in and out for two reasons: First, it is for the **safety** of your children that we know who is in the building and why they are here. Second, your volunteer time is very valuable to our program. For each hour that you are signed in, Head Start receives matching funds (in-kind). Remember to sign out when you leave!

## **Ages of Volunteers**

**NO** children under the age of 16 are allowed in Head Start classrooms or on fieldtrips.

## **Nametags**

You will need to get a GREEN nametag when you sign in to volunteer and WEAR IT as your identification.

## **Volunteer Meals**

When you volunteer for two hours in Head Start, your choice of lunch or breakfast is provided for you. When you volunteer for four hours, both lunch and breakfast will be provided for you. You must sign the LUNCH LIST in the lunchroom **before 8:30** each morning. "Second helpings" and refills of beverages are at your own expense.

If you would like to join your child for lunch but cannot volunteer, you must pay the lunchroom cashier \$3.00. You must call by 8:30 a.m. to order lunch if you eat with your child. The lunchroom number is 775-0478.

**Head Start policy requires that volunteers and visitors who eat with Head Start children must eat and drink the same foods and beverages that are provided for the children. No soft drinks, salad bar items, baked potatoes, etc.**

### **Assignments**

If you are assigned to a classroom, please let the teacher know your interests and talents so that he/she can assign things for you to do that will make you happy. If you like to work outside the classroom, we have a PARENT ROOM where you can do other work.

If you are unable to volunteer in the classroom, we have other opportunities for you to volunteer, such as cutting out materials, coloring, sending items for crafts, washing rest towels, buying detergent, making phone calls for the staff, etc. You may do these activities at home and the program can count your volunteer time.

Teachers also send PACT (Parent and Child Together) activities home with the children. Please complete and return these activities so that we may count your volunteer time. Your help is vital to the success of our program.

### **Adult Education**

The Parent Involvement Manager will gladly assist you if you need information about how to enroll in GED and reading courses. Please call 775-0234 Ext. 13.

### **Parent Activities/Parent Meetings**

Throughout the year, there will be numerous training workshops and parent activities provided for Head Start adults. These workshop topics and activities are mostly based on your interests. Check the weekly Parent Bulletin in your child's BACKPACK for information regarding upcoming parent activities.

### **Policy Council**

Parents are encouraged to participate in monthly Policy Council meetings. Each classroom will have an elected Policy Council member who has voting privileges; however, **ALL parents are welcome to attend meetings**. Watch the weekly Parent Bulletin for reminders of all meetings and activities.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

### **Calendars/Weekly Parent Bulletins**

There is a PARENT ACTIVITY CALENDAR in the front hall outside the Parent Room where you can find the dates and times for all adult activities. Also, remember to check your child's backpack for information about dates and times, also. Teachers send home monthly newsletters, too. Please check these newsletters for classroom happenings.

Your child will receive a weekly Parent Bulletin in his/her backpack every Monday. Please check the Parent Bulletin for parent meetings, and Head Start and community activities.

### **INKIND DONATIONS**

Parents are not required to supply educational materials for their children to use at Head Start; however, classrooms may accept donations of items used for educational purposes, such as art supplies or prepackaged ingredients for cooking projects. Please ensure that the items you send adhere to the guidelines that are listed below.

#### **Foods**

If a classroom teacher plans a class activity that requires nutritious ingredients (pre-approved by the Head Start Nutrition Manager using the federal performance standards), parents may provide some of these foods if they would like, for example, canned vegetables for making soup or canned biscuits to improve fine motor skills. No one is required to donate foods. All foods must be prepackaged. Nothing may be prepared at home. The Head Start federal performance standards prohibit the donation of gum, candy cookies, cupcakes, or other "junk foods." Please do not send candy on Halloween, at Christmas, or with Valentine cards. Items that are not approved will be returned.

#### **Other Items**

The program will gladly accept donations of pre-approved items in quantities of 160 (one for every child). Please request permission from the Assistant Director or Parent Involvement Coordinator before purchasing items to distribute to the children. Small pumpkins for fall holidays, or visors and bubbles for field day are examples of acceptable donations. The program may never accept balloons because balloons present a choking hazard.

If you have an idea for a craft item that you would like to make for the children, please inform the Parent Involvement Manager. The program can usually buy the necessary materials and have volunteers make the item for every child.

**Classroom Donations**

Each classroom teacher has a budgeted amount to buy items for classroom use. We cannot ask for nor can we accept donations to one classroom only, such as party favors or toys. These items will be returned to the parent if sent to Head Start. Teachers may ask for recyclable, free items for classroom lessons, such as paper towel rollers, empty food boxes, and cans.

“Treasure chests” for good behavior run counter to the Cullman City Head Start program’s curriculum; therefore, teachers may not request or accept items for a classroom “treasure chest.”

**Money**

The program gladly accepts monetary donations that go into a fund to benefit every child in the program.

**MANDATORY REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

The staff of Cullman City Head Start are trained in the detection of child physical and sexual abuse and neglect and are considered mandated reporters. If a staff member suspects a child has been physically or sexually abused or neglected, he/she is required by law to report these suspicions to the proper authorities.