



Head Start + Early Head Start

parent handbook



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cleveland, oh 44114
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stepforwardtoday.org

Dear Step Forward Families,

It is my pleasure to welcome you and your child to our wonderful Head Start / Early Head Start family. Our Administrative and service team provides our program with the support needed to deliver a quality experience to our students and families.

Through our efforts, you and your child have access to an excellent teaching staff, a family service worker and various academic, emotional, health, and medical screenings. These services help provide us with information that guides lesson and goal planning to shape each child's individual learning experiences.

Our goal is to prepare each student to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. In addition, we intend to support parents in their decision making as new opportunities and challenges emerge. We are here for you! Our centers provide a secure, developmentally appropriate environment. Rest assured that we not only care about your child's development, but also their safety.

Thank you for trusting us with your most precious gift.

Once again, welcome.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Thea Wilson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Thea Wilson
Vice President of Children and Families

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MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to propel educational attainment and economic self-sufficiency for multiple generations throughout Cuyahoga County.

We invest in people, we nurture success, we transform lives

LOCATIONS/OPERATIONS

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start

Early Learning Centers Locations / Days & Hours of Operation

Security Statement

All Step Forward Head Start and Early Head Start Early Learning Centers limit access to Parents / Guardians of children enrolled, Child Care Staff Members, Step Forward support staff, contracted services staff, and vetted volunteers and/or visitors with an appointment with a Child Care Staff Member.

Carl B. Stokes Early Learning Center

1883 Torbenson Drive

Cleveland, OH 44112

Phone: (216) 692-4010 Fax: (216) 516-0092

Site Administrator: Ve'Ella Mays

Email: VMays@stepforwardtoday.org

Days of Operation: Monday – Friday

Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Program Option(s): Head Start Preschool (3-5 years)

Friendly Inn Early Learning Center

2386 Unwin Road

Cleveland, OH 44104

Phone: (216) 476-3201 Fax: (216) 516-0097

Site Administrator: Maryrose Molnar

Email: MMolnar@stepforwardtoday.org

Days of Operation: Monday – Friday

Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Program Option(s): Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

George Forbes Early Learning Center

14209 Euclid Avenue

East Cleveland, OH 44112

Phone: (216) 541-7878 Fax: (216) 516-0096

Site Administrator: Margo Wong-Strowder

Email: MStrowder@stepforwardtoday.org
Days of Operation: Monday – Friday
Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Program Option(s): Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

Louis Stokes Early Learning Center

4075 East 173rd Street
Cleveland, OH 44128
Phone: (216) 295-2700 Fax: (216) 516-0086
Site Administrator: Gregory Jones
Email: GJones@stepforwardtoday.org
Days of Operation: Monday – Friday
Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Program Option(s): Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

Memphis Early Learning Center

10991 Memphis Avenue
Brooklyn, OH 44144
Phone: (216) 651-5154 Fax: (216) 516-0098
Site Administrator: Gloria Chambers
Email: GChambers@stepforwardtoday.org
Days of Operation: Monday – Friday
Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Program Option(s): Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

Miles Early Learning Center

23340 Miles Rd
Bedford Hts., Ohio 44128
Phone: 216-716-1011 Fax: 216-516-0103
Site Administrator: Lela Houston
Email: LHHouston@stepforwardtoday.org
Days of Operation: Monday – Friday
Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Program Options: Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

Scholar House Early Learning Center

2543 Community College Blvd
Cleveland, OH 44115
Phone: (216) 310-1994 Fax: (216) 516-0105
Site Administrator: Laurie Sironen-Kroft

Email: LSironen-Kroft@stepforwardtoday.org
Days of Operation: Monday – Friday
Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Program Option(s): Early Head Start (6 weeks – 3 years)

William Patrick Day Early Learning Center

2421 Community College Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Phone: (216) 736-2934 Fax: (216) 516-0107

Site Administrator: Sonya Dean

Email: SDean@stepforwardtoday.org

Days of Operation: Monday – Friday

Hours of Service: 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Program Option(s): Early Head Start & Head Start Preschool (6 weeks – 5 years)

STEP FORWARD Transportation Department

1883 Torbenson Drive
Cleveland, OH 44112

Phone: (216) 692-2136

Fax: (216) 692-2236

Facilities and Transportation Manager:

Byron Williams

Email:

BWilliams@stepforwardtoday.org

Days of Operation:

Monday – Friday

Hours of Availability:

8:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Hours of Operation

Early Head Start, ages birth – three (3) years of age is 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday – Friday and will be in session August – July.

Head Start Preschool, ages three (3) – five (5) years of age, is 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday – Friday and will be in session from September – June.

Calendar of School Closings

See Parent Calendar

COMMUNICATIONS

Family Communication

ChildPlus is the approved family communication tool used across Step Forward’s Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programs. It allows classroom staff and Family Service Workers to send secure, timely messages to parents and caregivers through the ChildPlus Family App. This tool supports stronger communication and family engagement by:

- Sharing daily or weekly updates on a child’s learning and progress
- Providing reminders about upcoming events or paperwork
- Offering a secure space for brief, one-on-one messaging between staff and families

The ChildPlus Family App is free and works on any iOS or Android device. Parents and caregivers can access messages in their preferred language if they have translation settings enabled on their device.

Accessing the Parent Handbook

The Step Forward Parent Handbook is available on our website at www.stepforwardtoday.org through the Early Childhood page in the Quick Links. Upon receiving the access information, a family member must sign the resource page to confirm they have been given access to the handbook. If any updates are made, families will be notified and must initial and date the resource page to acknowledge receipt of the updated information.

Agency Closing and Email Alerts

Step Forward uses local news outlets and ChildPlus to send messages to families regarding school closings. Parents / Guardians are able to choose how to receive these messages (i.e. text or email) during the enrollment process, and may be changed at the Parent / Guardian’s request.

DAILY SCHEDULES

The children’s daily schedules are flexible and will be adapted to meet the needs of individual children. We want children to view school as a safe and comfortable place. We also want children to know what to expect and when to expect it.

Head Start Preschool Classroom Daily Schedule

Head Start Preschool – Classes are in session Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Arrival / Preparation / Choice Activities	8:00-8:20
Clean-up / Prepare for Breakfast	8:20-8:30
Breakfast / Toothbrushing	8:30-9:00
Group Meeting	9:00-9:20
Choice Time	9:20-10:20
Small Group	10:30-10:50
Outdoor Choice Time	11:00-11:40

Read-Aloud	11:45-12:00
Lunch / Toothbrushing	12:00-1:00
Rest Time	1:00-3:00
Snack	3:00-3:30
Choice Activities / Small Group / Read-Aloud / Departure	3:30-4:00

Early Head Start Classroom Daily Activities & Individualized Schedule

Early Head Start (Birth – three) Classes are in session Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

The Early Head Start Locations are: Friendly Inn Early Learning Center, George Forbes Early Learning Center, Louis Stokes Early Learning Center, Memphis Early Learning Center, Miles Early Learning Center, Scholar House Early Learning Center*, and William Patrick Day Early Learning Center.

Infants will receive an individualized daily schedule. The individualized daily schedule will include, but not be limited to; developmentally appropriate activities and on demand feeding and diapering. Minimally, diapers will be checked, and changed if soiled. Each diaper check / change will be documented every two (2) hours starting at arrival.

8:00 – 8:30

Planning/preparation time: Review the plans for the day. Conduct health and safety checks. Refill bathroom and diaper changing supplies. Set out materials for children to use as they arrive. Think about individual children and any special needs.

Hellos and good-byes: As children transition from home to school, greet each child and help them say good-bye to each other.

Dressings: Help children take off and store their outerwear.

Diapering and toileting: Check diapers and change as necessary. Take older children to the toilet as needed.

Eating and mealtimes: Help children wash hands and eat breakfast. Sit with children and enjoy breakfast together. Wash hands and brush teeth

8:30-10:15

Indoor play: Guide children in selecting what they want to play with and how. Observe and interact with children to extend play and learning. Read to children individually or in a very small group.

Diapering and toileting: Check diapers and change as necessary. Take older children to the toilet as needed.

Sleeping and naptime: Allow tired children to sleep according to their needs, even if they usually sleep at the same time as the rest of the group.

Dressings: Change children's wet or soiled clothing as necessary.

Cleanup: Help children put materials away.

10:15-11:30

Dressings: Help children put on outerwear before going outside.

Outdoor play: Supervise and interact with children as they explore the playground environment and equipment. Roll balls back and forth, blow bubbles, paint with water, and make natural discoveries, and so on.

Dressing: Help children take off and store their outerwear.

11:30-12:30

Diapering and toileting: Check diapers and change as necessary. Take older children to the toilet as needed.

Eating and mealtimes: Help children wash hands and eat lunch. Sit with children and encourage conversation about the day's events, the meal itself, and other things of interest to the children. Wash hands and faces; brush teeth.

12:30-2:30

Sleeping and naptime: Help children relax so they can fall asleep. Supervise napping children. Provide quiet activities for children who do not sleep. Adjust length of nap time to suit the group pattern and the needs of the individual children.

2:30-3:00

Diapering and toileting: Check diapers and change as necessary. Take older children to the toilet as needed.

Eating and mealtimes: Set up snack so children can eat snack when they wake up.

3:00-4:00

Indoor play: Guide children in selecting what they want to play with and how. Observe and interact with children to extend play and learning. Read and sing with children individually or in a very small group.

Dressing: Send home wet or soiled clothing.

Hellos and good-byes: Help children and families reconnect at the end of the day. Greet each parent and share something special about their child's day.

RATIOS AND GROUP SIZES

Step Forward Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool Classrooms maintain staff child ratios with Head Start Federal Regulations. These regulations exceed the requirement of DCY, and are as follows:

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Max Class Size</u>
1:4	6 weeks – 18 months	9 children
1:4	18 months – 30 months	9 children
1:4	30 months – 36 months	9 children
1:10	3-5 years old	20 children

In order to maintain this ratio, each classroom will have at least two Education staff present during all hours of operation. Per DCY regulations, all children will be supervised entirely throughout the day. If necessary to meet Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start requirements, appropriate Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start staff will be assigned to the classroom.

STEP FORWARD HEAD START PRESCHOOL PROGRAM PARTNERSHIPS

The Step Forward Head Start Preschool program partners with area childcare providers to provide services to children and families within Cuyahoga County.

Area childcare centers, school systems and non-profit organizations that serve children ages three- five partner with Step Forward Head Start Preschool so that Head Start enrichment services can be provided in the areas of education, disabilities, nutrition, health, mental health, social services, and family engagement. Staff from the Step Forward Head Start Preschool program meet with those in the Step Forward Head Start Preschool partner network on a regular basis to provide training and support to ensure that Head Start Performance Standards are met.

Additional information regarding the organizations that partner with the Step Forward Head Start Preschool program may be obtained via the Step Forward website www.stepforwardtoday.org

ADMISSION POLICY/ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A Family Service Worker or other designated staff will meet with each parent / guardian before their child is admitted to the program. During this meeting, families will receive the necessary enrollment documents and information about required records, including the child's birth certificate, proof of income, Social Security card and Current child care voucher if applicable.

Immunization records must be submitted before the child's first day of attendance. A complete physical examination form must be provided within 30 days of enrollment. If a parent or guardian chooses not to immunize their child, a completed immunization exemption form must be submitted.

There are no fees for Head Start Program services or program participation in OPP (Ohio Preschool Program).

To be eligible for the Early Head Start program, children must be at least six weeks of age.

The Early Head Start program works with families with children aged six weeks through age three. To be eligible for Step Forward Early Head Start services, families must meet Federal poverty income guidelines.

To be eligible for Head Start Preschool services, the following criteria must be met:

- Child must be 3 — 5 years old
- Family income must not exceed the Federal Guidelines
- Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start is permitted to enroll 10% over income families. Over income families must not have a family income that exceeds 300% of the Federal guidelines.
- Verification of age must be kept on file by the site or in ChildPlus. A birth certificate, baptismal, church certificate, or hospital record showing the birthdate is needed for age verification.

Automatic eligibility in Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start regardless of income for the following:

- Family receives public assistance (SNAP, TANF, SSI)
- Child is a foster child
- Homeless families and children

To document income-eligibility for Head Start Programs, verification may include the examination of any of the following documents: Individual Income Tax, Form 1040, W-2 Forms, pay stubs, written statements from employers or documentation showing current status as recipients of public assistance. Staff will meet with those families identified to have "no income" to complete documentation and inquire further into the living situation of the family.

The date of a medical examination will be within the past twelve months prior to admission to the program. It will be on file by the child's thirtieth (30th) day of attendance. An updated examination is required each year of the child's enrollment in the program. The State Licensing Rules allow thirteen months between the initial examination and the following year's examination. A completed Physical Exam / Assessment form will verify that the child has been examined and is in suitable condition to participate in group care. There will be a statement from Physician, PA, APRN, or CNP that the child has been immunized or is in the process of being immunized. The signature, business address, and telephone number of the health provider will be noted on the form.

A dental form signed by a dentist is required for all children enrolled in the Head Start program. The dental form must verify the date of exam within the past twelve months. If a dental exam has not taken place prior to enrollment, Head Start staff will assist parent / caregiver in obtaining an exam within the first 90 days of a child's entry into the program.

Additional Requirements for Early Head Start Admission

For children enrolled in Early Head Start, well-child visits will be documented following the EPSDT and American Academy of Pediatric guidelines. The visit will occur at a minimum of the following time: 0-1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months and annually thereafter as entrance into Head Start. The visits will contain a review of health history, an undressed examination, assessment of physical growth, an observation of vision and hearing, developmental and behavioral assessment.

For children enrolled in Early Head Start, an oral examination is a part of every well child visit. Children can have a dental examination by a dental professional within six months after the first tooth has erupted or by one year of age.

Termination/Withdrawal Policy

Parents may withdraw their children from the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program at any time. Step Forward Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool encourages all parents to give the Family Service Worker(s) at least one week notice when withdrawing a child. Parents will receive information on all program options before a child is withdrawn from the program.

Child Enrollment and Health Information

All Step Forward Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool parents/guardians must complete a Child Enrollment and Health Information (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025) form prior to entry in the program. The information must include: date of birth, address, telephone number, two (2) emergency contacts, emergency transportation authorization, and the child's general health information that includes the immunization record with parent/guardian's signature. Contact information for other parents and guardians with children attending the Head Start center may be requested via the Site Administrator. **No sections or spaces may be left blank on this form.**

Changes in address and / or telephone numbers must be submitted to the Family Service Worker and / or Site Administrator.

OHIO ELECTRONIC CHILDCARE SYSTEM (Ohio ECC)

The Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY formerly ODJFS) implemented a system for families that are eligible to receive child care assistance. The Ohio Electronic Child Care System (Ohio ECC) requires families to use swipe cards to track the hours of child care a family receives and utilizes.

Families receiving Ohio ECC services are required to adhere to the following:

The Step Forward Head Start program is only able to provide services to children and families in this program option with the required documentation of eligibility provided by the Department of Children and Youth (DCY). A Child Care Notice must be on file for all children participating in this program option.

- Families must use the TAP Tablet to register each time their child is dropped off and picked up from our Head Start sites. Swipes must occur on a daily basis.

- The Step Forward Head Start program is required to adhere to all DCY requirements pertaining to the Ohio ECC system. Head Start families that do not swipe their child in and out on a daily basis may be at risk of having their child removed for this program option.
- In the event that your child is shown to be not eligible for services in the TAP portal system, it is the responsibility of the parent to contact their DCY worker immediately to rectify the situation as quickly as possible.
- The Ohio ECC system is set up to allow parents to make "back punches" into the system for days and times when swipes may not have registered within a three-week period of time. This process can only be used when there are problems with the portal or the tablet. This process does not take the place of the daily sign-ins which must occur.
- All Ohio ECC child care co-payments will need to be paid weekly in the form of a money order. Co-payments must be received at your child's Head Start site each Monday by the close of the business day. Failure to provide a co-payment in the full amount each week may result in your child being moved to a part-day Head Start program option if space is available.
- A co-payment must be collected if a child attends their Head Start site for one or more days during the period of a week.
- After 3 weeks of non-payment of co-payments, Step Forward can contact DCY to report the failure of the parent/guardian in submitting their assigned co-payment to the Step Forward Head Start program.
- The Step Forward Head Start Preschool program is only able to provide services based on the number of hours specified on the Child Care Notice provided to each family by DCY.
- DCY will make all determinations pertaining to Ohio ECC and co-payment eligibility. Parents with questions or concerns about their child's participation in the Ohio ECC program need to contact their Employment & Family Services worker.
- Head Start services will be offered to children receiving subsidized child care from the hours of 8:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Monday through Friday. The remaining daily hours of service will be charged to subsidized child care which begins at 11:31 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m.

Failure of any family to adhere to the policies of the Ohio ECC program may result in the termination of your child's enrollment in this program option.

The Step Forward Head Start tax ID number is available upon request.

GUIDANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Behavior Management Techniques

The guidance and management policy applies to all staff and parents while they are in any of the Step Forward Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool centers. Our goal for your children is that they are able to accept responsibility for their own behavior and to be able to function with self-control. Teachers facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and setting clear limits.

Adults listen and respond to children with appropriate timing. Children's ideas and suggestions are valued. Teaching staff maintains developmentally appropriate consistent expectations of children. Children are not forced to answer questions. They offer children choices and do not force them to participate in activities that are not of interest to them. Teaching staff model expression of feelings and learning from mistakes. Classroom rules developed with children's input are represented pictorially.

Adults deal with problems effectively by reacting calmly and evaluating each situation including the effects of the environment on the children's behavior. Changes are made to prevent problems in the future. Inappropriate behaviors that do not pose potential harm may be temporarily ignored. In the event a child's behavior poses harm to themselves or others, emergency removal may be necessary with a plan to return the child to school. Children are encouraged to negotiate and solve problems themselves. Teachers support children in expressing their emotions appropriately.

Staff will use a process of observing, anticipating, and redirecting. If conflicts arise between children, staff will use the following six steps:

- Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions or language.
- Acknowledge feelings.
- Gather information from them.
- Restate the problem.
- Ask for ideas for the solutions and choose one together.
- Give follow up support as needed

STEP FORWARD HEAD START PROGRAM DISCIPLINE POLICY

Step Forward staff, as a condition of employment, are required to sign a Discipline Policy. This policy states as follows:

To discipline at Step Forward Head Start Programs means to teach. Our goal is to help children develop their self-control and self-respect. We encourage children to use words to express their feelings and identify solutions to problems. When a child's behavior is inappropriate, the teacher evaluates the situation, helps the child to choose alternatives, and redirects when appropriate. If the behavior continues, there will be supervised time away from the group where staff will assist the child in identifying solutions. A conference will be arranged with the parent(s) to identify a consistent approach in working with the child when necessary.

Suspension Policy

When there is a serious safety threat to a child or a staff member that cannot be reduced or eliminated by reasonable modifications, the program reserves the right to implement a temporary suspension and exclude the child from the classroom, for a length of time deemed appropriate. The Suspension policy and procedure must be used only as a last resort when a child becomes physically aggressive and / or safely unable to participate in classroom activities.

If all attempted strategies and interventions to meet the child's needs are exhausted, and / or written plans and recommendations from Professionals are not followed through by Parent / Guardian, Step Forward reserves the right to assist the family in finding an alternative placement in another Child Care agency or waitlist the family while Parent / Caregiver get proper documentation of recommended services by Professionals.

During pick-up, Parent / Guardian will receive a technical assistance report that will include; the nature of the incident, scheduled meeting date, observation notes of incident(s), incident report (if applicable) and a copy of the Policy and Procedure 1302:17 Suspension and Expulsion – Re-entry.

The Site Administrator, Family Service Worker, or Teacher must inform the Parent / Guardian of the incident(s) and request that the child be picked up from the Early Learning Center. Staff will inform the Parent / Guardian that a re-entry meeting will need to occur before the child can return to the classroom.

Staff members witnessing the incident must complete the DCY Incident Report (DCY 01299) for any child or adult that was injured. The incident must also be documented on an appropriate observation form (e.g. Technical Assistance and Child Action Form).

Children with Special Needs

By law, 10% of the children enrolled in the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program must be children with disabilities. Parents / Guardians of children with diagnosed or suspected disabilities, developmental, social and / or emotional delays, etc., should confer with the Family Service Worker at the center. The Family Service Worker will notify the Early Childhood Intervention Coordinator(s). The Head Start Coordinated Team will meet with the family, and a plan is developed specifically for the child to ensure a smooth transition into the EHS / HSP classroom or into kindergarten.

Step Forward must retain a copy of the IEP or IFSP for any child enrolled in Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start for the time the child is in the program, consistent with the IDEA requirements in 34 CFR parts 300 and 303.

Children in Early Head Start (EI-ILS) birth – 3 years

When a referral is sent to Bright Beginnings (formerly Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County), a full evaluation is conducted. If a child qualifies for services, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed to assist the child and the family work towards goals to increase the child's skills and abilities.

Children in Head Start Preschool 3 – 5 years

When a referral is sent to the Local Education Agency (school district of the child's residence), and a full evaluation is conducted. If a child qualifies for services, an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is developed to help the child achieve goals to his / her educational needs.

Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool embraces a vision of mental wellness for the children and families served. Step Forward ensures that a mental health coordinator / professional conducts ongoing site visits and provides consultation services to staff and parents on mental health issues, as needed. With parental consent, assistance is provided for children who show signs of atypical development, unhealthy attachment, and / or social / emotional limitations. In the event that Parents / Guardians wish to speak with the mental health professional, the Mental Health provider's monthly schedule is posted at each site for the Parent / Guardian and staff's convenience.

You have the right to:

- Be notified that your child has been recommended for a preschool evaluation
- Be informed regarding the reason for and the nature of the evaluation
- Give signed consent for an evaluation (or) refuse to give signed consent for an evaluation
- Be informed regarding the results of the evaluation
- Give signed consent for special services (e.g. speech therapy, counseling, etc.)
- Observe therapy, consult with therapists, receive and review all reports regarding your child
- Review your child's Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start record at any time
- Give signed consent that your child is no longer in need of special services
- Participate in planning for the transition of your child to the next education placement

Confidentiality: All records and professional information regarding your child will be kept in strict confidence and can only be made available to designated Early Head Start Preschool / Head Start personnel and providers. Further, your child's records can neither be copied nor released to anyone without Parent / Guardian informed consent to release all or part of the records.

Due Process: If you have questions or concerns regarding the services Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool is providing for your child, first contact the child's teacher or Site Administrator. If satisfaction is not reached, contact the Early Childhood Intervention Coordinator and then the Early Childhood Education Services Manager. Every attempt will be made to provide reasonable accommodations for your child or to assist you in finding the least restrictive alternative placement for your child.

Child's Rights:

- A child with a diagnosed disability has the right to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment
- All rights of the Parent / Guardian shall pass to the child upon reaching the age of majority except in cases where the child is legally determined under State Statute to be incompetent
- When your child reaches the age of compulsory school attendance, ask the school to furnish you with a copy of the Due Process procedures of that state. Know your rights of your child

CONFIDENTIALITY

Access to records is limited to authorized staff and contracted providers. Official records will be kept confidential in locked file cabinets at the center. Should Parents / Guardians wish to review their child's record, the request must be made in writing in advance to Family Service Workers.

Attendance

If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the center within one hour of program start time the Parent / Guardian must be contacted to ensure the child's well-being. If the Parent / Guardian cannot be contacted by telephone and the child has been absent for two consecutive days, the Family Service Worker is expected to make a home visit. If the family cannot be reached through a home visit, a letter will be sent in the mail to the family pertaining to the child's continued enrollment in the program. Children who are absent and late excessively may be moved to another program option to fit the family's needs.

Child Drop Off/Pick-Up Policy

Children are expected to arrive alert, awake, and ready to start their day at the center at the designated time the session begins and are to be picked up at the designated time the session ends. Full day children should arrive at the center no later than 8:10 a.m. It is important for children to arrive on time so they can benefit from the entire Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool curriculum.

Breakfast / lunch is part of the daily routine. Parents / Guardians bringing children into the site after breakfast / lunch time is over will be asked to stay with their child while the child eats breakfast.

Each child must be signed in and out by the Parent / Guardian. A staff person must check each child upon arrival before the Parent / Guardian leaves the site. Parents / Guardians must give all special messages, authorized medication, pick up notes, etc. to the teaching staff during this time. If the child was sick during the night, the teaching staff should be made aware of the illness.

Dropping children off in the hallway, parking lot, or playground is not permitted. Staff are not responsible for children not properly signed in and out. If a child is scheduled to arrive from another program or activity and does not arrive by the designated time, a staff person will contact the family and the reason documented in child's case notes located in ChildPlus.

Upon enrollment in the Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool program, staff will explain the Child Pick—Up/Departure policy. Parents must complete the Child Emergency Information form and Child Health and Enrollment Information form (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025). These forms identify persons authorized to pick up the child. All forms are inputted in ChildPlus during the intake process by the center assigned Family Service Worker. **No sections or spaces may be left blank on these forms.**

All children must be picked up from their Head Start center on time. The pick-up schedule for Early Head Start/ Head Start children is as follows:

Children enrolled in Early Head Start / Head Start must be picked up by 4:00 p.m.

If a child is not picked up at the designated time and no contact has been made by the Parent / Guardian, the staff will do the following:

- Attempt to contact the Parent(s) Caregiver(s) and/or designee(s).
- Attempt to contact persons identified on the Child Pick-Up Slip or the Child Health and Enrollment Information Form.
- Attempt to contact individuals listed as Emergency Contacts.

If no contact has been made with the center by the Parents / Guardians by 4:15 p.m. Staff will contact the local police department. If the police do not respond to pick up the child, a call to 696-KIDS will be made. A note will be posted at the center informing the parent of the child's location. This is a very undesirable and

unfortunate situation. Parents / Guardians must make arrangements to ensure that their children are picked up on time.

Release of a Child

The children's safety is Step Forward's priority. Staff will release children only to the person(s) on the Child Pick-Up Slip or the Child Health Enrollment Information form (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025). Any person picking up a child must be at least 16 years of age and must have a valid driver's license or other valid picture ID with date of birth.

In case of an emergency, a Parent / Guardian must provide written or verbal (in person) permission to the appropriate site staff to have the child released to anyone who is not listed on the Child Pick-Up Slip or Child Health Enrollment Information Form (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025). A photocopy of the driver's license or other valid photo ID will be made of any person who is not listed on the Child Emergency Information form or Child Health and Enrollment Information form (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025) but has been granted verbal (in person) or written permission by the Parent / Guardian to pick up the child.

Staff will not release children to anyone including Parents / Guardians who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Emergency contacts will be called and asked to pick up the child. The local police department will be notified if necessary.

Custody Agreements

If there are custody issues involving a child enrolled in one of the Step Forward Early Learning Centers, the Parent / Guardian must provide the Center with court documents indicating who has permission to pick up the child. The center may not deny a parent's access to their child without proper documentation.

Child Abuse Reporting

According to Ohio Revised Code Section 2151.421, Step Forward staff are mandated to report any suspected child abuse and neglect cases or observed cases of child abuse and neglect. A report must be called into Child Protective Services 696-KIDS (5437). Immediate supervisor must be notified of all suspected child abuse and neglect cases.

Reporting Procedure: The observing staff member will immediately contact the Site Supervisor or Administrator within one hour after the call is made to notify, report and discuss the incident. If the on-site supervisor or administrator is unavailable, a Head Start Manager or designee will be contacted. The DCY Incident / Injury Report Form (DCY 01299) will be completed and submitted to DCY within 24 hours. A verbal contact with DCY will also occur within 24 hours.

Confidentiality: Due to the strict nature of this subject matter, confidentiality must and will be observed.

DIGITAL MEDIA RELEASE FORM

During the time of enrollment into the Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool program, Parents will be asked to read and sign a Digital Media Release Form. This form will permit Step Forward to use photos and / or digital

images of the parent or child in a multitude of media, including, but not limited to newsletters, annual reports, websites, flyers, etc. Questions regarding the Digital Media Release Form should be directed to the Site Administrator or Family Service Worker at the Early Learning Center.

CHILD ADVOCATE

In the Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool programs, Parents / Guardians are strongly encouraged to become the primary advocates for their children. Staff assist Parents / Guardians with issues related to children's rights and safety. As a whole, the Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start programs ensures that all children's rights and their safety are protected during their time spent in the program(s).

The Early Learning Center will maintain enrollment, health, attendance, child history, and parent / teacher conference information on each child. Records are confidential and are in a locked file.

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMUNICATION

The center will maintain enrollment, health, attendance, child history, and Parent / Teacher conference information on each child. In the event a child(ren) contracts a reportable illness (see Communicable Disease Chart in your Early Learning Center for further details), the child's enrollment, attendance and reportable diagnosed illness will be shared with the Cuyahoga County Board of Public Health. All records are confidential and are in a locked file, but upon written request are available for Parents / Guardians to review.

Each Early Learning Center Location will have a Written Security Plan for the emergency preparedness and response plan (EPRP) requirement that includes steps to take in the event of the following: medical, dental, or emergency transportation; weather emergencies and natural disasters; emergency outdoor or indoor lockdown; emergency evacuation and relocation procedures; outbreaks, epidemics, or other infectious disease emergencies; loss of power, water or heat; other threatening situation that may arise. All Early Learning Center staff will receive training on the Center's Written Security Plan annually. This plan will be updated annually and available for review upon request.

If at any time Parents / Guardians have questions, they are encouraged to share their concerns with the Teaching staff, the Family Service Worker(s), or the Site Administrator.

SECURITY CAMERAS IN DIRECTLY OPERATED EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

To help protect the safety and security of children, staff and visitors, Step Forward uses security cameras in all areas licensed for children's use at its directly operated Early Learning Centers. Cameras may be located in classrooms, hallways, common areas, and playgrounds. Cameras are not installed in bathrooms, changing areas, or private staff areas.

Cameras operate continuously and record activity on the premises. Recordings may be reviewed by authorized Step Forward personnel to address safety or security concerns, investigate suspected incidents, and support staff observation and feedback. Recordings are stored securely in accordance with Step Forward's Security

Surveillance System Policy 10009 and may be retained when needed for an investigation or other administrative purpose.

All recorded footage is confidential. Access is limited to authorized personnel, and parents and guardians are not permitted to view or obtain recordings. Parents and guardians are notified of camera use upon enrollment and annually thereafter. Signs are also posted at each Early Learning Center.

NO TOLERANCE STATEMENT

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Parents and Visitors are expected to conduct themselves as responsible individuals, consistent with the philosophy and visions of Step Forward. Disorderly conduct, physical or verbal abuse, profanity, or violence in any form will not be tolerated and may result in a restriction of Parent / Visitor involvement within the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program. (Also see Standards of Conduct Policy and Rights and Responsibilities of Head Start Parents in the Parent Participation section of this handbook). *Additionally, Step Forward will not tolerate any staff member to engage in inappropriate language, media use, or behavior at any Step Forward Early Learning Center in the presence of children.*

To respect the children and families it is against Step Forward policy to video tape, take pictures and record audio conversations of children, families, and staff members and is prohibited.

EDUCATION, CURRICULUM, SCREENING & ASSESSMENT

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start recognizes the value of active learning experiences and developmentally appropriate activities to help children achieve their full potential. The Creative Curriculum best exemplifies this philosophy and is implemented in all Step Forward Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool classrooms. The schedule and activity plans are posted in the classroom for Parents / Guardians to view.

In all Head Start Programs, family traditions and seasonal activities replace the celebration of traditional holidays.

Step Forward direct operated sites use the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum. Child Care Partner locations use a research-based curriculum, and all Step Forward Programs use Teaching Strategies Smart Teach (GOLD) for the ongoing assessment tool agency wide.

Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is the cognitive screening, and The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) or Ages and Stages Questionnaire SE (Social/Emotional) are the social and emotional screening tools that are completed for each child. Both screenings, Cognitive and Social/Emotional, are completed within 45 days of enrollment and are completed by both parents and education staff. If there are any concerns, follow-up screenings are completed within 60 days from the initial screening date. The post screening of DECA is then completed in the spring.

Child level screening and / or assessment DATA will be made available to DCY upon request.

The Head Start Path to School Readiness

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start uses the Creative Curriculum to guide instruction and provide a structure and methods for classroom implementation leading children toward school readiness. The goals for children's learning incorporate 38 Objectives for Development and Learning, which are aligned with the Ohio Early Learning Developmental Standards and Head Start's Early Learning Outcomes Framework to provide meaningful early childhood experiences.

Home Visits

The Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start staff will make two home visits per program year. Home visits are opportunities to get acquainted with the family on an individual basis. Parents / Guardians have an opportunity to discuss their child's development, express any concerns, and set educational goals for the child using the Family Goal Setting Sheet.

Parent and Teacher Conferences

Parent / Teacher Conferences are conducted twice a program year or more, as needed, using Teaching Strategies GOLD / Smart Teach, which is the ongoing assessment tool. Parents and Staff will also review the child's education goals to be established, revise existing goals, or develop new ones. This is an opportunity for parents to enhance their understanding and knowledge of their child's educational development, and progress towards school readiness goals. Parents / Guardians will become familiar with their child's classroom experiences and academic milestones.

Parents / Guardians are an essential part of the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start experience and are welcome to participate in all aspects of the program. Step Forward recognizes that Parents / Guardians are their child's first teachers, is committed to helping Parents / Guardians with the important job of parenting and becoming self-sufficient to provide for their family. Our Staff are trained to assist families — our goal is to help identify needs, set goals and take steps to meet those goals, which will be documented in Parent Teacher Conference Education Event in ChildPlus. Parents / Guardians are encouraged to ask staff about health / disability concerns, job training, education goals, etc.

Supervision of Children

The Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Staff has a major responsibility to ensure the health and safety of each child in their care. Staff are attentive to the needs of the children. Staff take appropriate precautionary and preventive measures to ensure that children are safe.

At no time will a child be left unattended. Attendance is documented at all times throughout the day and throughout the building.

Supervision means the staff members have knowledge of a child's needs and accountability for his or her care at all times. Supervision includes awareness of and responsibility for the activity of each child and being near enough to respond and reach immediately, including responding to each child's basic needs and protecting them from harm. Staff must be in sight and hearing of children at all times.

Supervision of Infants & Toddlers — Early Head Start Program

The Early Head Start Program assigns one Child Care Staff Member to have primary responsibility for each group of four infants or toddlers in care to assure continuity of care. Parents / Guardians are informed of the Primary Caregiver assigned to their child. Any necessary information regarding their child's care is exchanged between the Primary Caregiver and Parent / Guardian. Information is recorded on a daily basis for Parents / Guardians about their child's activity throughout the day.

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Parent's & Child's Rights

The following rights are assured to you as a Parent / Guardian when an evaluation of your child's abilities is to be conducted by appropriate professionals. It is necessary to have professionals evaluate and document your child's abilities to see if your child needs special services and / or materials so that he / she will have a successful Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool experience.

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Transitioning

In Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start, children will encounter many different transitions. Transitions happen from home to Child Care, from Infant / Toddler classes to preschool, from preschool to kindergarten and many times in between. Any of these transitions can be challenging and exciting for children, staff and families. The Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program is dedicated to assisting families through these transitions in a variety of ways.

Transition into the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Program

- Families will receive two home visits a year. The first visit will take place within 30 days of enrollment or when school begins in the Fall for returning children. The second visit happens in the Spring.
- A group orientation will be held for families to learn more details about the program, visit the classroom, and talk with teachers. They will learn how the Creative Curriculum prepares children for school, screening and assessments, an overview of service areas (health, dental, social service, nutrition and mental health / disabilities).
- Families will be provided with activities from Teachers they can complete at home to provide a smooth transition into care.
- During the intake process, the Family Service Worker explains the Phase-In period and process to the Parent(s). The process is discussed again at the Parent Orientation Meeting at which time any questions of concerns Parents still have are addressed.
- The Teaching Staff and the assigned Family Service Worker in conjunction with the child's Parent develop a plan for phasing the child into the Early Head Start / Head Start program.

- During this Phase-In transition period, Parent / extended Family Member / Legal Guardian are encouraged to spend at least three hours (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM) on their first day of entry (or as their schedules permit) with children observing and participating in the daily routine. This supports the acclimation of the Parents and Child to Early Head Start / Head Start. We will support all family goals and needs if additional days/times are needed for a successful transition.
- Teaching Staff make early childhood books on separation available in the classroom for reading to an individual child or to a group of children to support the home to school transition.
- Teaching Staff and other Center Staff acknowledge Parents' feelings of anxiety in leaving their children especially if the child is also anxious or apprehensive. When Parents leave their children, Teachers communicate openly with children about their Parents coming and going.
- If a child is inconsolable when a Parent / Guardian leaves, the Teacher remains calm, describes the child's feelings and stays with the child, as needed, to provide comfort until the child regains composure.
- Teachers support anxious Parents by remaining calm, acknowledging their feelings, and encouraging them to remain at the Early Learning Center as long as they are able to do so.

Transitions within Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Programs

For families participating in Early Head Start, the transition process begins six months prior to a child turning 3 years old. Families will work with the Family Service Worker to discuss options to Preschool. If families choose to transition within our Program, a meeting is scheduled prior to the child's third birthday to identify enrollment requirements. As the child's third birthday approaches (pending available placement), Family Service Worker and the Parent / Guardian meet with the child's Early Head Start Co Teacher and Head Start Preschool Teacher to develop the child's individualized transition plan that includes Phase-In and Phase-Out activities.

Additional transitions that your child may encounter within the Early Head Start program:

- From crib to cot
- Highchair to chair
- Bottle to cup
- Diapers to toileting independently
- Adjustments from napping to feeding

Your child's Primary Caregiver will work with you to decide upon the correct timing for your child and to develop an individualized plan for consistency between home and school.

The following are sample activities your child may participate in to prepare for transitioning from Early Head Start Classroom into a Head Start Preschool Classroom:

- Visiting the Head Start (preschool) Classroom
- Reading books about preschool
- Visiting the new classroom and teacher with the security of the Primary Caregiver
- Create a book with the child on their new daily routine and read it at home
- Bring the child's scrapbook to their new Classroom

Head Start Preschool to Kindergarten Sample Transition Activities:

- Visit a Kindergarten Classroom

- Read books about Kindergarten
- Help children learn about transportation and pedestrian safety
- Allowing children to have a time to practice cafeteria-style eating with trays
- Kindergarten Teachers visit the Head Start Classroom to talk to the children
- Kindergarteners (former Head Start children) come back to share their experience
- Children receive a backpack with school supplies and activities
- End of year activities (i.e. Family Fun Day) and time to say good-bye to friends

From Early Head Start to Head Start Preschool

Individualized plans are written according to the needs of the child and family to support them as they move from Early Head Start to Head Start Preschool.

Transition Out of Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Program

When a family chooses a location out of the Step Forward Network, specific children's records will be copied for the Parent / Guardian upon request. When the transition is to the public school system, the Kindergarten Transition Packet will follow the children to the new setting by way of the Parent / Guardian.

Transition Meeting Process

Transition plans are written by the Teacher, with input from the parent. Meetings are scheduled in advance, at a mutually agreed upon time. Whenever possible, the Teacher from both Classrooms will be invited to the plan meeting. The plan may include setting an appointment for re-enrollment process into Head Start Preschool from Early Head Start, as well as the chosen time frames and activities.

Strategies for Supporting Transitions Into, Within, and Out Of the Program for Children and Families

Upon entry into the Early Head Start or Head Start program, you and your child will be offered many opportunities to feel comfortable in the setting. During enrollment, a tour of the facilities and classrooms will take place. Teachers will greet children and families during tours. You will have an opportunity to participate in an orientation session, which will assist you in getting to know the goals and philosophies of the program. At this time, we will highlight how children learn and grow. As school starts, you will have the opportunity to spend short amounts of time in the classroom along with your child to assist with her/his transitions. Another opportunity to get to know each other is provided through the Home Visit; when the Teacher(s) visits your home. After school has started, an Open House will allow another opportunity to see the many concepts being learned and the relationships developed. Step Forward has an open-door policy and a strong Parent Engagement Committee. We invite all family members 16 years of age and older to complete the needed documentation to volunteer in the classrooms as often as possible.

As children and families transition out of the program, many opportunities are provided to bring closure to the Early Head Start and Head Start experience. Another Home Visit will take place to begin the process, and the child will participate in activities that allow them to say good-bye to teachers and friends, including a Family Fun Day event.

Toilet Training

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Staff will work to enable children to independently use toilet facilities when it is developmentally appropriate and when Parents / Guardians support efforts to encourage toilet

training. To help children use toilet facilities independently, Staff will work with Parents / Guardians to understand the biological, physical, and emotional stages of toilet training. Head Start Preschool Teaching Staff will support children to independently use toilet facilities when it is developmentally appropriate. If Parents / Guardians, choose to use "Pull-ups" style training pants for toilet training they are responsible for providing them.

In the Early Head Start Program, diapers are to be changed immediately when soiled and / or checked minimally every 2 hours, changed if soiled. Each diaper check / change will be documented and provided to Parent / Guardian daily at Pick up. Parents will complete and sign off on the **Child Enrollment and Health Information Form (DCY 01234, rev. 8/2025) Diapering Statement** upon enrollment to inform staff when to check / change the child's diaper.

Infants and toddlers in the Early Head Start program that are not developmentally ready to be toilet trained will be provided with diapers. "Pull-ups" style training pants for toilet training are discouraged and will not be provided. If Parents / Guardians choose to use "Pull-ups" style training pants for toilet training, they are responsible for providing them.

Rest Time

Early Head Start / Head Start Preschool will ensure that all children in a classroom for five or more hours will be provided rest time during the day. The rest time should last no longer than 2 hours. The amount of time each child spends resting quietly or sleeping varies with the individual child. For Head Start Preschool Children, they may be provided with stuffed animals, books, etc. to assist them in resting. The lights are adjusted to help children feel comforted during rest time, and the classroom is illuminated enough so that teachers can maneuver around the room as necessary. NO outside bedding, blankets, and / or pillows are allowed.

Staff will create a warm, relaxing atmosphere for the children and be aware of children's fears, acknowledge them, and reassure them.

For the Early Head Start program, infants shall be placed in their cribs for sleeping and shall not be allowed to sleep in a bassinet, swing, car seat or other equipment. They will **NOT** be placed in cribs with bibs or any other items which could pose a strangulation or suffocation risk. All infants under 12 months old will be placed on their backs to sleep. Parents may alter this practice with written authorization on the DCY 01235, Rev. 7/2025 Sleep Position Waiver Statement for Child Care signed by child's physician. This form will be kept on file for review. If a medical condition exists where a child needs to sleep in equipment other than a crib, written permission must be obtained from the child's Physician and remain on file. No Blankets in crib. A one-piece sleeper or wearable blanket is permitted. Only children who are not yet able to roll over are permitted to be swaddled using a wearable swaddling blanket. Infants who are able to roll from back to front and front to back shall be placed initially on their back for sleeping but allowed to remain in a position they prefer.

Transition to a cot will occur when the transition plan is completed. The following are circumstance for this process: when the child is able to climb out of the crib; reaches the height of 35 inches; an infant over 12 months may use a cot with written permission from the parent; if the use of a crib is considered hazardous for a child, regardless of age, the infant may use a cot with written permission from the parent.

Infant Safe Sleep Policy: Step Forward will adhere to the infant safe sleep standards as endorsed by American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in their Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome's report, "SIDS and other

Sleep-Related Infant Death: Expansion of Recommendation for Safe Infant Sleeping Environment, released in October 2016.

Appropriate Dress

Clothes should be comfortable and manageable for children. Clothing can get rough treatment as children learn through play. Simple, easy to wash clothing is best for preschool.

Please help your child make appropriate clothing choices and make certain that your child's footwear is comfortable and safe for play. Sandals make running and outdoor play unsafe and are not to be worn in our Head Start Early Learning Centers. Children are required to wear closed-toed shoes, such as tennis shoes, while in attendance. During the winter months, if boots are worn to school, a pair of closed-toed shoes should be brought to the Center to be worn indoors.

Each child must have a change of clothes including undergarments kept at the Center. Clothing should be appropriate for the season. When extra clothes have been used, they should be replaced the following day. Please put your child's name on all clothing. The Center cannot be responsible for lost or stolen clothes.

Due to safety concerns, Parents are strongly urged not to place beads in their child's hair. Hair beads can be easily swallowed, lodged into a child's ear or nose and can cause other bodily harm. Should you allow your child to wear beads in their hair, you may be held responsible for any injuries to your child and liable for any injuries to other children or adults caused by misuse of the hair beads.

Transportation and Field Trips

The Step Forward Head Start Preschool program will utilize buses to provide transportation for all routine field trips. Staff will notify Parents / Guardians of field trip plans and obtain their permission or refusal for their child to participate. Before each field trip, the First Aid kit supplies will be checked. Current Child Enrollment and Health Information forms (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025) will accompany the children on the field trip.

For children with any special medical conditions, all documentation pertaining to the condition must accompany the child. Children receiving medication administered by Head Start Staff must have a *Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, rev. 7/2026)* as part of their field trip packet. Head Start staff will take the *Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, rev. 7/2026)* any time a child attends a field trip.

Each child on the field trip will wear identification of the Early Learning Center, including address and telephone numbers for emergency contacts in the event the child becomes separated from the group. Children's names are not included on the ID tag. Teachers conduct a head count (face-to-name) each time children enter or exit the bus. A specified number of children will be assigned to each staff member.

Children arriving at the Early Learning Center after the child's classroom has left for a field trip will **NOT** be permitted to stay. Once the child's Classroom arrives back at the Center from the field trip, the child may come back to the Center to be in his / her classroom.

A Staff person trained in First Aid, Communicable Disease and Adult / Child CPR is present on the bus and at the destination.

Children are supervised during neighborhood walks, and the staff / child ratio is maintained during the trips. Teachers conduct a head count (face-to-name) of all children attending the walking trip before leaving, periodically during the neighborhood walk, and upon returning to the Early Learning Center.

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start does not provide opportunities for water play (i.e. wading pools of any kind) at any Early Learning Center. This does not include Water Tables or supervised small group activities that include the use of water.

Media Viewing in Head Start Classrooms

Media viewing for entertainment purposes (television and movie) will be limited to once per month for each Head Start Preschool classroom. All media presented will be rated G only. All media watched by children will be limited to a 20-minute viewing time per month. Any child not interested or unable to sit still will be offered an active substitution for the media viewing.

Parents / Guardians are asked not to bring media from home for their child's Head Start Preschool classroom. All media viewed in the Head Start Preschool classroom will be approved by Head Start Education Staff.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

There will always be a minimum of two (2) Staff on the playground during outdoor play. The ratio will never fall below two (2) Head Start Preschool Staff per 20 children or three (3) Early Head Start Staff per nine (9) children.

A staff person must always take a First Aid Kit, Children's Enrollment and Health Information forms (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025) and Classroom Attendance Record when going outside to the playground.

Under DCY regulations, outdoor play will not occur when temperatures fall below 25 degrees Fahrenheit or rise above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Weather conditions will be assessed by Classroom Staff before children participate in any outdoor activities. Staff will postpone outdoor activities during inclement weather. If caught outside during a thunderstorm, Staff will move children to shelter. In the event of a field trip, children will be moved to the school bus, and windows will be kept closed. Staff and children must go inside immediately if there are conditions of lightning.

Prior to outdoor activities, staff will complete a Daily Playground Safety Checklist. If hazardous or unsafe conditions are found, children will stay indoors. Staff will provide gross motor activities in the classroom or a designated area in the building with adult supervision.

CELLPHONE USE WITHIN EARLY LEARNING CENTERS

At Step Forward Early Learning Centers, children and families are our primary focus. In order to ensure that staff and parents have the opportunity to converse and share information, we ask that those dropping off and picking up children refrain from cell phone use. This is an important time for children to have the undivided

attention of Parents and Teachers, in order to successfully make the transition from home to school and school to home.

CHILDCARE LICENSES

All Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers must post the Child Care License in a conspicuous location within the Early Learning Center that will be accessible to Parents and Employees.

All Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers will display all written reports of Inspections that have taken place.

Emergencies and Incidents

There is always one Staff member present that has received training in First Aid / Communicable Disease and CPR during hours of site operation. In the case of a minor incident / injury, Staff will administer basic First Aid. If the injury is of a more serious nature or life threatening, First Aid will be administered, EMS will be contacted, and the Parents / Guardians will be notified immediately. A Staff Member will accompany the child to the Hospital with all available health records. Staff MAY NOT transport children in their personal vehicle. Only Parents / Guardians or EMS will transport. If a Parent / Guardian chooses not to authorize Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Staff to contact EMS to have a sick child transported, then the child will remain at the Center until the Parent / Guardian arrives.

Incident / Injury Report Procedure

An Incident / Injury Report (DCY 01299, Rev. 10/2024) will be completed and given to the person picking up the child on the day of the incident / injury.

Incident / Injury Reports are written when an injury requires First Aid, a bump or blow to the head, a child being transported by emergency squad, and / or an unusual incident / injury.

First Aid Supplies and Procedures

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start will comply with the DCY child care licensing rules for First Aid by keeping First Aid Kits readily available in a clearly marked unlocked container and kept out of the reach of the children. First Aid Kits are replenished after each use to ensure that necessary supplies are available.

There is one (1) First Aid Kit per Classroom, and a Kit is available during all field trips. The Kits are also taken on routine walking trips, to the gym / gross motor room and playground with every Classroom.

Each Classroom maintains a supply of disposable gloves that are to be worn while handling bodily fluids, such as; blood spills, diarrhea and bloody noses. Gloves are discarded after each use. Hand washing with soap and water occurs after contact with any bodily fluids.

Equipment Safety

- Equipment is selected for safety features and is repaired or replaced as needed
- Mats or cushioning material are placed under climbing apparatuses
- Both indoor / outdoor facilities are kept free of debris and hazardous materials
- Cleaning supplies are labeled and stored out of the reach of children

- Equipment, toys, materials and cots are cleaned, sanitized weekly; blankets, bedding are laundered weekly
- The use of aerosol sprays is prohibited when children are in attendance
- Toys and other materials small enough to be swallowed are kept out of reach of children
- Mouthed toys are removed from play, and then cleaned and sanitized daily

Additional Safety Information

- Children are supervised at all times
- Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid
- A telephone is always available to contact Parents / Guardians for emergency purposes
- Emergency procedures are posted in each classroom, which explains the action to be taken and Staff responsibilities in case of fire emergency or weather alert
- Approved working fire extinguishers are available at all times
- Fire Drills take place at each Early Learning Center once a month.
- Tornado Drills take place at each Early Learning Center once a month within the time frame of March through October.
- Quarterly Lock Down Drill procedures; Staff and children will proceed to their designated hiding place and remain quiet until further instructions are given.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

All Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers has an evacuation plan posted in each Classroom of the Center. Each Early Learning Center has devised several procedures to follow in the event an emergency would occur while a child is in the Center's care.

In the event of a fire or tornado, Staff would follow the written instructions posted in each classroom, describing emergency evacuation routes and the procedures to be followed to assure that children have arrived at the designated spot. In order to prepare children for the unlikely need to evacuate, the Early Learning Center conducts monthly Fire Drills and Seasonal Tornado Drills. Should the need to evacuate be necessary due to fire, weather conditions, loss of power, heat or water to the Early Learning Center, the designated Emergency Evacuation Location is in the closest in proximity to each particular Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center.

A sign will be posted on the front door of the Early Learning Center indicating where Parents / Guardians are to pick up their child(ren). If a Parent / Guardian cannot be reached, Staff will contact the emergency contacts as listed on your child's **Child Enrollment and Health Information Form** (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025).

In case of an environmental threat or threat of violence, the staff will secure the children in the safest location possible, contact and follow the directions given by the proper authorities and contact the Parents / Guardians as soon as the situation allows. Enough supplies will be provided for an extended amount of time. An Incident Report would also be provided to the Parents / Guardians.

If an emergency occurs while children are on the bus, the bus drivers will determine which action to pursue. Decision will be based on which action will best protect the students decisively.

In the event children need to evacuate to any Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center-specific evacuation location, Staff will ensure that the First Aid Backpack (including Medication) and lockdown supplies are with them.

Evacuation Locations

CARL B. STOKES EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

<i>Good Shepherd Baptist Church</i>	(216) 481-5444
17822 Euclid Avenue	Cleveland, OH 44112
Contact Person:	Mr. Ken Abercrombie, Business Director

FRIENDLY INN EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

<i>East Tech High School</i>	(216) 310-4060
2439 E. 55 th Street	Cleveland, OH 44104
Contact Person:	Tiffany James, Principal
Alternate Contact Person:	Leroy Carter, Athletic Director
Alternate Contact Phone:	216-401-3906

GEORGE FORBES EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

<i>East Cleveland Public Library</i>	(216) 541-4128
14101 Euclid Ave	East Cleveland, OH 44112
Contact Person:	Theresa Flood, Deputy Director ext. 6229
Alternate Contact Person:	Erica Dye, Children's Librarian

LOUIS STOKES EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

<i>Cleveland Public Library – Harvard Branch</i>	(216) 623-6990
16918 Harvard Avenue	Cleveland, OH 44128
Contact Person:	Nick Durda

MEMPHIS EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

<i>Amazon</i>	(216) 971-1689
10575 Memphis Rd.	Brooklyn, OH 44144
Contact Person:	Brook Corrigan

Secondary Evacuation Location

<i>Gateway Safety Trucking Company</i>	(216) 889-2000
11111 Memphis Rd.	Brooklyn, OH 44144

Contact Person:

Michelle Neff

MILES EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

Cleveland Ballet

(216) 320-9000

23020 Miles Rd.

Bedford Hts. OH 44128

Contact Person:

Larry Goodman, President & CEO

SCHOLAR HOUSE EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

William Patrick Day Early Learning Center (216) 716-1009

2421 Community College Blvd

Cleveland, OH 44115

Contact Person:

Sonya Dean, Site Administrator

WILLIAM PATRICK DAY EARLY LEARNING CENTER

In case of emergency, Step Forward Early Learning Center Staff will move the children to:

Care Alliance Health Center

(216) 535-9100 x507

2916 Central Ave.

Cleveland, OH 44115

Contact Person:

Kerry Myers, Dir. of Facilities & Transp.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Communicable Disease Notice

Exclusion

There are a few medical conditions that require exclusion of sick children. This exclusion is to protect the other children and staff. The following list is the criteria for excluding ill or infected children and staff from a Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program.

- Temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit auxiliary (armpit) or greater when accompanied by any sign or symptom of signs of illness
- Diarrhea; more than one loose stool. Exclude until fever/diarrhea are gone and treated if necessary
- Vomiting more than one time when accompanied by any sign or symptom of illness
- Severe coughing
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Redness of eyes, eyelids, thick and purulent (pus) discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching or eye pain
- Stiff neck
- Sore throat with difficulty swallowing
- Unusually dark urine or gray/white stool
- Unusual skin patches or rashes
- Suspected infestation- scabies, ring worm and head lice.

- Infectious diarrheal germs — Extra strict hand washing, diapering, toileting and cleaning procedures will be followed. In the case of certain infectious vomiting/diarrheal diseases, such as Shigellosis, all exposed children will be required to be tested. Any child who is diagnosed with Shigellosis must be seen and treated by the child's physician, plus cleared by the Public Health Department, prior to returning to the classroom.
- This continues until two negative stool cultures after treatment. Special precautions for children and staff with no diarrhea or illness symptoms will be taken, but they are not excluded from the center.

Isolation Precautions

A child exhibiting any of the above symptoms of illness will be isolated, and the Parent or designated Guardian will be contacted to pick up the child. If the Parent / Guardian cannot be reached, the emergency contact persons will be called. Until the child is picked up, the child will be isolated within sight and hearing of an adult. The child will be provided with a cot and made comfortable. After use, the cot shall be disinfected with an appropriate germicide, or if soiled with blood, feces, vomitus, or other body fluids; the cot shall be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with an appropriate germicide.

Return Policy

Twenty-four (24) hours of recovery time and treatment is important to strengthen the child and help the child resist further infection. The following guidelines are used to determine if your child can return after an illness:

- 24 hours after beginning antibiotic treatment
- 24 hours after vomiting has ceased
- 24 hours after stool has returned to normal consistency
- 24 hours after child has been sent home due to illness / fever
- If child(ren) is out of school for more than three (3) days, a doctor's written approval is required for re-admission.

Notification of Exposure

An exposure sheet will be posted for any child who has been diagnosed and or suspected as having a communicable disease.

Outbreaks, epidemics or other infectious disease emergencies

- If there are any *Outbreaks, epidemics or other infectious disease emergencies*, the Site Administrator or Designee will notify their manager and then contact the Health Coordinator for further instructions.
- The Health Coordinator will contact the local health departments for further instructions to follow.
- Parents will be contacted as soon as authorities gives specific instructions to follow_

POLICY ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION & ADA COMPLIANCE

Step Forward Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start has established a written procedure regarding the administration, handling, and storage of medication for any child who requires it. Staff with regular child contact will be trained in these procedures within three months of hire and on an ongoing basis to ensure the safety of children in our care. Appropriate Staff members who will be administering the medication will be

trained by a health professional or parents on the specific needs of the child. *Administering medication in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for Children with Disabilities, Staff will be trained by Parent / Guardian and follow the written request found on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).* *Administering care procedures in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for Children with Disabilities, Staff will be trained by Parent / Guardian and follow the written request found on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, rev. 7/2026).* Staff will demonstrate proper techniques for administering, handling, and storing medication, including the use of any necessary equipment to administer medication. The child's individual record of all medications administered will be maintained at the center in the health folder for at least one year after the last administration of the medication.

It is the Parent's responsibility to administer their child's routine medication at home. Trained Staff members will administer dosages of emergency medication and those medications required to be given during Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start hours.

Over the counter medication will be administered, but medication must be in the original container with a manufacturer's label containing directions based on the age and / or weight of the child. There will be no administration of "folk or homemade remedy" medications or treatment.

Storage of medication will be out of reach of children and are accessible to employees at all times. *Emergency medications will accompany the child at all times, within and outside of the Early Learning Center.* If medication has to be stored in the refrigerator, then it will be placed in a separate container. No food or drink is allowed in the refrigerator that holds medication. Medication that has expired or is no longer being used must be removed from the center.

All Step Forward Early Learning Centers have Emergency Medical Devices (AED) in addition to complete First Aid Kits. Early Learning Staff maintain proper First Aid and Adult, Child, and Infant CPR to provide emergency lifesaving action if a medical emergency should occur.

The administration of any medication or treatment will require the completion of the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).

- The parent will provide the original labeled container of medication from the pharmacy. (Date on the prescription should be no more than one year old or expired.) The label will state the name of the child, the medication, the dosage to be given, the route it is to be given, the frequency and possible symptoms noted.
- The instructions on the medication label must exactly match the information in Box 1 of the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).
- Box 2 of the form must be completed by a licensed Physician, licensed dentist, advance practice nurse, Family Service Worker, or Health/Dental Coordinator.
- It will be completed when:

It is a sample medication without a label.

The non-prescription medication is to be taken for longer than 3 consecutive days within a 14-day period---or---a topical product or lotion that is being used for a skin ailment and is to be applied longer than 14 consecutive days ---or---

The medication contains aspirin or codeine.

Every time any medication is given, the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026) must be completed.

- The staff who will administer the medication will receive training from the parent / guardian on how to administer the medication and / or provide the treatment. The staff who are trained by the Parent / Guardian will sign the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026) acknowledging they were trained. Staff will be further instructed by the Parent / Guardian of the possible side effects, adverse reactions, and any emergency procedures. When and if these possible side effects, adverse reactions, emergency procedures do occur, then the following:
 1. If reaction is severe, 911 will be called.
 2. Recorded in the signature section of the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236 Rev. 7/2026).
 3. Child's parent should be notified as soon as possible.
 4. Site Administrator should be notified.
- The Family Service Worker, as designated by the Health/Dental Coordinator, will assist Parents / Guardians to complete the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026) based on information specific to the child.
- *Emergency medications such as Inhalers, Epi-Pen or seizure medications are required to be easily accessible at all times but stored out of the reach of children.*
- Staff must wash their hands before and after administering medication.
- Only Staff who have been trained by the Parent / Guardian or certified professional can administer the medication and/or treatment.
- Health Staff will review all requests for administration of medication 90 days after the medication is started.
- Request for 'as needed' medication and / or treatment must have specific instructions from the Parent / Guardian to assist staff in the decision-making process, and must be documented on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).
- Over the counter medications, cough syrup, eye drops, etc. must have a completed Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026) before they can be administered. The medication must be in its original container and must not be expired.
- All other treatments will be demonstrated by the Parent / Guardian prior to the completion and signatures on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).

Activities Near Bodies of Water

Step Forward will obtain written permission from the Parent / Guardian when water is directly accessible to children and for the following categories:

- Before children participate in activities near water 18 inches or more in depth
 - This includes field trips that may be near water

For Field Trips

Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026), including the medication for the children with health conditions (allergies, asthma, seizure disorders, or breathing problems), are taken on the field trip. Staff trained, as identified by signature on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026), to perform a medical procedure must go on the field trip.

HEAD START PROGRAMS FOOD PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Head Start Nutrition Service Area follows all rules and regulations set by the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program. Mealtimes serve as social and educational activities. Table conversation is focused on daily activities, child-initiated topics, and discussion of food and health. Classroom staff eat with the children. Meals are served family-style and children participate in setting the table, serving themselves, cleaning up, etc. Children are encouraged to try new foods but are not forced to eat. Food is never used as a reward or punishment.

Meals are provided for all children in the centers and meet 1/3 to 2/3 of the daily nutritional requirements. Menus meet the USDA/CACFP Food Program Regulations. Children enrolled at Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start receive:

- Breakfast,
- Lunch and
- Snack

Because Step Forward Programs are also Ohio Healthy Programs, we adhere to the following menu requirements:

1. Offer a different non-fried vegetable and whole fruit every day in a 5-day period
2. Offer a whole grain food everyday
3. Serve beverages with no added sugar or sweeteners including plain milk
4. Serve cereals with 6 grams of sugar or less per serving
5. Offer fried foods no more than once a week
6. Offer 100% Juice no more than once a day and limiting the portion to 4-6 oz
7. Do not serve highly processed meats such as hot dogs, bologna, pepperoni, sausages, salami or breakfast meats to name a few
8. Offer water to children during meals and physical activities
9. Encourage a half hour of general activity and half hour of large motor physical activity
10. Computers, videos, television, and other screens will be used sparingly if at all. A maximum of 30 minutes per week may be used in the program for educational activities in Smart Teach or physical activity purposes only.

The cultural and religious needs of our general population are taken into consideration when menus are planned. Pork and seafood are not served at Head Start sites. Peanuts can be a highly allergic food; therefore, peanuts are omitted from Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start menus. Chocolate milk or any flavored milk is not served to infants, toddlers, and pre-school children.

NOTE: The children with any specific restrictions or food allergies must submit a statement from a Physician. The Parent / Guardian of a child with any food allergy must complete a Health Care Plan Documentation and

Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026) with the Family Service Worker. If the child receives a modified diet or food supplement (i.e. Pediasure), they must have the child's physician complete the appropriate section of the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026). All children on a medically based diet or with a food allergy will have a JFS Health Care Plan completed and on file at their site JFS / DCY 01236.

Head Start Programs will follow the regulations specified by DCY under 5101:2-12-39: Requirements for meals and snacks in licensed childcare centers (7)(D): Modified diets shall be approved in writing by a licensed physician. If an entire food group is eliminated, the center shall obtain written instructions from a physician on the prescribed form provided by the department (ODJFS / DCY Health Care Plan 01236). When special diets are required for cultural or religious reasons, the center shall obtain written, dated, and signed instructions from the child's parent or guardian unless the special diet is part of a center program.

Special diets/dietary needs require documentation from a medical doctor in order for these modifications to be implemented. *Step Forward Head Start / Early Head Start will follow the regulations specified by DCY under 5101:2-12-31: Administration of medication in licensed child care centers (A)(I): Prescription medication, food supplements and modified diets: the center shall secure and follow the written instructions of a licensed physician, an advanced practice nurse certified to prescribe medication, or a licensed dentist on the Health Care Plan Documentation and Permission to Administer Medication for Early Care and Education Programs (DCY 01236, Rev. 7/2026).*

All instructions on this form shall be followed. The center shall also secure written instructions from the Parent or Guardian on the form.

Parents may request in writing (using Step Forward form) that their child drink soy milk if they do not drink cow's milk due to following a vegetarian diet.

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start monthly menus are posted at the site, are shared at the monthly Parent Committee meetings and available on site.

The Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start food program is a supplementary meal program and does not in any way replace meals the child eats in the home. If Parents / Guardians are unable to provide food in the home, they are encouraged to speak to a Family Service Worker for available resources.

Each Parent will complete the CACFP Enrollment Form for each year his or her child participates in the program. The form and instructions to complete it will be available during the enrollment process.

The Early Head Start program supports parental preferences in infant feeding, including breastfeeding and the introduction of solid foods when developmentally appropriate. Each parent must sign an infant meal-parent preference letter. Parents may provide their own iron-fortified formula, use the specific iron-fortified formula provided by the Early Learning Center, bring expressed breast milk, or come to the center to breastfeed. If breast milk is provided by the Parent / Guardian, it shall be labeled with the child's name, the date that the breast milk was expressed, and the date of receipt to the Early Head Start program. The breast milk will be immediately frozen or refrigerated by staff of the Early Head Start program. Infant food is prepared and served in a manner appropriate to the developmental needs of each individual child according to his / her stage of

development. All infants are fed on demand. *Onsite space for mothers to breastfeed and/or pump breastmilk is available (DCY Rule 07).*

A toddler menu is posted in each classroom indicating which foods will be served each day. Children older than 12 months but under 24 months will receive whole milk- no chocolate milk. Children ages 2 to 5 will receive 1% milk. Meal service for the Early Head Start program follows all rules and regulations set by the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Rules and Regulations for Meal Service

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start promotes and encourages healthy eating habits. The USDA-CACFP meal pattern provides the appropriate daily intake of food for children. To comply with Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start regulations, no outside food is to be brought into Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers.

Parents / Staff / Children are not permitted to bring in any food items; this includes snacks, candy, birthday cakes or holiday treats, into the Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers. This policy ensures that children with food allergies are not exposed to harmful allergens, especially peanuts.

Neither Staff nor Parents / Guardians may take food or food supplies out of any Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center. The only exception to this rule is when bag lunches are taken with the children on field trips.

Individuals volunteering to assist with mealtime activities more than one time, must have a negative tuberculosis test reading, have had a recent physical (within one year) and possibly a background check as well.

Additional Information

Children may be referred to WIC for a variety of reasons. Parents / Guardians are encouraged to participate in the WIC program for supplementary food and nutrition education.

In Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start, children are provided a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat and low sugar snacks and water. In an effort to address the rise in childhood obesity, children are encouraged to follow the menu portions and make daily exercise and movement part of their day.

Health and nutrition information is made available to Parents / Guardians at trainings and through handouts that are sent home with the children. Parents are encouraged to explore www.ChooseMyPlate.gov and <https://teamnutrition-usda.gov> at their home or library computer and incorporate these suggestions for healthy eating practices as part of their everyday family life.

Nondiscrimination

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

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of Communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or Local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3207) found at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992 Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

PARENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Program Governance: Parents As Leaders

The Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program encourages all Parents/ Guardians to be an active participant in their child's educational and social development process. We believe that a child's achievement is encouraged through their parent's achievement.

Some things you should know:

- Every Parent / Guardian officially becomes a Head Start Parent Committee member and has the opportunity to join in monthly Parent Committee meetings.
- Parents / Guardians help plan the agenda and vote on activities relating to their child's participation at their Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center

What we do to ensure a functional meeting environment: each Parent Committee must elect Officers to lead them as a whole. We encourage all Parents to participate with the vote for Officers (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) at their Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center.

Parents can be nominated by their peers or self-nominated to serve as their Early Learning Center's Parent Committee Officer. In addition to serving as a Parent Committee member / officer, we have Policy Council Executive members who are selected Parent Committee members that work together in a formal leadership and policy-making role on behalf of all program parents.

Parents have opportunities to achieve their goal of being "Parents as Leaders", both personally and professionally, through workshops, trainings, and community peer meetings at each Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center.

For more information on the election process, please have a conversation with your Family Service Worker or contact the Program Governance Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Coordinator at (216) 696-9077 ext. 434.

Parent Training / Workshops

The Early Head Start Preschool / Head Start Preschool program offers a range of training and workshops for Parents / Guardians throughout the program year. We encourage all Parents / Guardians to attend these informative and valuable sessions at their center. Please see the Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Program Year Calendar and the Parent Board at your child's Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center for notices on upcoming activities.

It is a known fact that "Word of Mouth" is the highest-ranked way that people in the community hear about Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start. We thank you in advance for sharing your wonderful experience and opportunities in Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start. Know that all families are welcome to participate in Recruitment Events. Please call 216-589-9922 or contact your Family Service Worker to obtain the list of events.

Volunteering / In-Kind

All Parents / Guardians are encouraged to participate as volunteers in the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program. Community leaders, Grandparents and other relatives over the age of 18, are also welcome. Volunteers build skills and confidence, are exposed to employment opportunities at Step Forward, and strengthen the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start experience.

Volunteer options include assisting in the classroom, attending field trips, participating in parent meetings, helping with special projects, recruiting new families, serving as Policy Council or Parent Committee Officers, and more. A Tuberculosis (TB) Risk Questionnaire must be completed by volunteers who are on-site four or more times per calendar year; a follow-up TB Test may be required. Background checks may also be required for frequent volunteers.

Our Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start program must match at least 20% of the federal grants that fund our programming with non-federal match, or in-kind, contributions. Donations of volunteer hours, goods, supplies, services, equipment or property that benefit our Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start programs count as In-Kind and help us meet our annual requirements.

Every time you contribute to our program, make sure to record your participation in In-Kind records. We can only 'count' in-kind that has been properly documented. At the end of the program year, volunteers are recognized for their service at Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Volunteer Recognition Events.

Male Involvement

Step Forward recognizes the vital role that a positive male presence plays in the healthy development and well-being of children. As such, Step Forward Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start are committed to providing a variety of community resources and engagement opportunities specifically designed to support male caregivers.

We acknowledge that not every child has a father in the home; however, many individuals contribute meaningfully to a child's upbringing, including uncles, stepfathers, brothers, and other significant male caregivers. Step Forward values and supports all individuals who play an active role in the lives of children.

Throughout the program year, Step Forward offers a range of activities, programs, and events intentionally designed to engage male caregivers. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, Father's Walk to School, Step Forward Pancake Breakfast, Donuts for Dads, Hoop It Up, Men's Conversation Wednesdays, and various educational family engagement events hosted at Early Learning Centers.

The Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) service area also recognizes that male caregivers may benefit from additional guidance and support. Male caregivers are encouraged to connect with their assigned Family Service Worker to access referrals to community-based agencies that can assist with meeting individual and family needs. In addition, caregivers may collaborate with their Family Service Worker to develop a Family Partnership Plan, which provides an opportunity to identify strengths, establish goals, and outline supportive strategies to promote family well-being.

For additional information, please contact the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Coordinator at 216-696-9077 ext. 421.

Family Partnership Process

Step Forward Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start is committed to developing positive, respectful, and ongoing relationships with families by honoring the Family Partnership Process (FPP). This process is not simply a form; it is a collaborative, strength-based approach that supports families in identifying their goals, building on existing strengths, and addressing needs related to economic stability, health, and child development.

During the Family Partnership Process, staff partner with families to identify priorities and establish meaningful, individualized goals. At enrollment, each family signs a consent form to participate in this process, which enables them to identify their needs, interests, strengths, goals, and the services and resources that support overall family well-being, including safety, health, and economic stability.

Through this family-driven partnership, families are able to build positive and trusting relationships with their assigned Family Service Workers. Staff are committed to engaging all parental figures in the partnership process, while remaining sensitive to the diverse needs, roles, and interests of each individual.

All partner locations where children utilize public school transportation will receive an electronic version of the Family Partnership Plan to ensure continuity and accessibility. This ensures that every family has the opportunity to actively participate in the Family Partnership Process throughout their time in our programs.

For more information, please contact the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Coordinator at 216-696-9077 ext. 421.

Parent Grievance

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start encourages Parents / Guardians to settle differences and complaints with other Parents / Guardians or Staff (Teachers, Family Service Workers, and Site Administrators) in a cooperative fashion. If this is not possible, please follow the procedures below:

1. Share the concerns or complaints with the Site Administrator or assigned Family Service Worker. The matters should then be documented and forwarded to the Site Administrator. If the matter is not resolved at the center level, the Site Administrator is responsible for submitting the written documentation and a request for assistance from the appropriate Head Start Manager.

2. The Head Start Manager will arrange a team conference with the Center Staff, then a resolution meeting with the Parent(s) / Guardian(s). If the issue(s) remains unresolved or unsatisfactory at this level, written complaints will be submitted to the Direct Operated Program Manager.
3. The Director of Student and Family Support will review all documentation and arrange to speak with the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) via phone, person-to-person, or in-group with the necessary parties. If and when both parties agree to a solution, a letter will be drafted detailing the solution that was agreed upon, and copies will be given to all parties involved.
4. Complaints are considered a high priority. If a resolution is still not reached, the written complaint will be forwarded to the Vice President for Children and Families.
5. The Vice President for Children and Families, and with appropriate parties, will attempt to resolve the matter, as he/she deems most appropriate for the best interest of the family and staff.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STEP FORWARD PARENTS

RIGHTS

1. To always be respectful toward others and to be treated with respect and dignity
2. To take part in policy decisions
3. To be welcomed into the classroom
4. To choose whether or not to participate without fear of endangering my child's rights to be in the program
5. To be informed regularly about my child's progress in Head Start
6. To expect guidance for my child from teachers and staff which will help his/her total individual development
7. To be able to learn about program and fiscal operation
8. To be informed about community resources
9. To have input into the program

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To ensure that the Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start child is in attendance and brought to the Early Learning Center on time every day
2. To always treat Staff with respect and dignity
3. To accept Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start as an opportunity through which I can improve my life and my children's lives
4. To provide leadership by taking part in elections, center meetings, and parent activities
5. To take part in the classroom as an observer, a volunteer or paid employee and to contribute my services in whatever way I can toward enrichment of the total program
6. To learn as much as possible about the program and to take part in major policy decisions
7. To complement and work with staff, teachers and other parents in a cooperative way, as partners who care to build a better program
8. To welcome teachers and staff into my home to discuss ways in which parents can help their children's development at home in relation to the school experience
9. To take advantage of programs designed to increase my knowledge about child development and my skills in areas of possible employment
10. To offer constructive criticism of the program, to defend it against unfair critics and to share in evaluating the program

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start parents and visitors are expected to conduct themselves as responsible individuals and positive members of the Head Start program, consistent with the philosophy and vision of Step Forward. Disorderly conduct, physical or verbal abuse, profanity or violence in any form is disrespectful and hurtful and will not be tolerated.

Every Early Learning Center displays the No Tolerance Statement that aligns with the Standards of Conduct Policy. This policy is shared with families upon enrollment and again at the beginning of each school year.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Discrimination

It is unlawful for Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start to discriminate in the enrollment of children and families based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, or disabilities.

Weapons

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers, classroom, and on the premises must not have any including but not limited to firearms, pellet or BB guns, darts, bows and arrows, cap pistols, stun guns, paint ball guns, or objects manufactured for play as toy guns. Pepper spray and knives are not permitted. The only exception to this policy is Law Enforcement Officers on duty.

A sign is posted that contains this statement: "Unless otherwise authorized by law, no person shall knowingly possess, have under the person's control, convey, or attempt to convey a deadly weapon or dangerous ordinance on to these premises."

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Because of the large geographical areas served by Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers and the variability of weather conditions, Step Forward's decision about center closings will reside with the Vice President, Children and Families or designee in consultation with Step Forward's President / CEO. In case of severe weather conditions and other emergencies, which require the entire agency and / or Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center closings, the official notice will be announced via ChildPlus, on local television, Step Forward social media, and the Step Forward website.

In case of an individual Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Center emergency closing, Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start staff are required to notify Parents / Guardians. The telephone numbers on the child's pick-up slip and Child Health and Enrollment Information (DCY 01234, Rev. 8/2025) will be used to contact Parents / Guardians to pick up their children within one hour of contact.

Step Forward reserves the right to adjust the program calendar to meet or exceed the minimum number of attendance days. In this event, timely notice will be provided.

LICENSING

1. The Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start (Early Learning Centers) are licensed to operate by the Department of Children and Youth.
2. The license is posted at all Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers for review.
3. The Department of Children and Youth has its own manual governing licensing rules and regulations for childcare programs. These manuals are available to be reviewed by parents upon request, from the Site Administrator.
4. The licensing capacity in each age category of the center is also available at each Head Start / Early Head Start Early Learning Center.
5. Food service licenses are posted at each site (Cuyahoga County Board of Health or Cleveland Department of Health).

SMOKING POLICY-TOBACCO/VAPE

Step Forward Head Start Preschool / Early Head Start Early Learning Centers provides a smoke-free environment. A no smoking sign is posted at the main entrance of the center with a notice stating that smoking is prohibited on Step Forward premises, including parking lots and within parked personal vehicles.

Information Required By Ohio Administrative Code

The facilities are licensed to operate legally by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. This license is posted in a conspicuous place for review.

A toll-free telephone number is listed on the facility's license and may be used to report a suspected violation of the licensing law or administration rules. The licensing law and rules governing childcare are available for review at the facility upon request.

The administrator and each employee of the facility is required, under Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) to report their suspicions of child abuse or child neglect to the local public children's services agency.

Any parent, custodian, or guardian of a child enrolled in the facility shall be permitted unlimited access to the facility during all hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their children, evaluating the care provided by the facility or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises, the parent or guardian shall notify the Administrator of his/her presence.

Contact information for Parents / Guardians of the children attending the facility are available upon request. The information will not include the name, telephone number or e-mail of any Parent / Guardian who requests that his/her name or telephone number or e-mail not be included.

Recent licensing inspection reports and substantiated complaint investigation reports for the past two years are posted in a conspicuous place in the facility for review.

The licensing records including compliance report forms, complaint investigation reports, and evaluation forms from the building and fire department are available for review upon written request from the Ohio Department of Children and Youth. The Department's web site is <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/for-families>. The center's licensing inspection reports for the past two years are also available for review on the Child Care Ohio [website](#).

It is unlawful for the facility to discriminate in the enrollment of children upon the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin or disability in violation of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, 104 Stat. 32, U.S.C. 12101 et seq.

Center Parent Information

Note: A copy of this document is required to be given to the parent upon enrollment of their child in the licensed child care center.

The center is licensed to operate legally by the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY). This license is posted in a noticeable place for review.

A toll-free telephone number is listed on the center's license and may be used to report a suspected violation of the licensing law or administrative rules. The licensing rules governing child care are available for review-online at <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/chapter-5180:2-12>

Administrators and each employee of the center is required, under Section 2151.421 of the Ohio Revised Code, to report their suspicions of child abuse or child neglect to the local public children's services agency.

Any parent of a child enrolled in the center is permitted unlimited access to the center during all hours of operation for the purpose of contacting their children, evaluating the care provided by the center or evaluating the premises. Upon entering the premises, the parent, or guardian shall is to notify the Administrator of their presence.

The licensing record, including licensing inspection reports, complaint investigation reports, and evaluation forms from the building and fire departments, is available for review upon written request from DCY. Early care and education program information and inspections are also online using the Child Care Search Tool on the DCY website at <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/for-families/early-care-education/child-care-search>

It is unlawful for the center to discriminate in the enrollment of children upon the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 104 Stat. 32, 42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq. To file a discrimination complaint, write or call Health and, Human Services (HHS) or DCY. HHS and ODCY are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Write or Call:
OCC/ACF/HHS
Southwest Region
1301 Young Street, Suite 958
Dallas, TX 75202
214 767-3849

Write or Call:
ODJFS
Bureau of Civil Rights
30 E. Broad St., 30th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215-3414
(614) 644-2703 (voice)
1-866-277-6353 (toll free)
(614) 752-6381 (fax)
1-866-221-6700 (TTY) or (614) 995-9961
bcr-fax@jfs.ohio.gov (e-fax)
Civil_Rights@jfs.ohio.gov (e-mail)

For more information about child care licensing requirements as well as how to apply for child care assistance, please visit <https://childrenandyouth.ohio.gov/for-families>

For more information on Medicaid health screenings and early intervention services for your child, please visit <https://medicaid.ohio.gov/families-and-individuals/citizens-programs-and-initiatives/healthchek> and <https://ohioearlyinterventions.org>

Universal Pre-kindergarten

What is Universal Pre-Kindergarten?

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) is an award-winning program administered by Invest in Children to help 3-5 year olds have access to **high-quality** pre-kindergarten programs. UPK is a top priority of Cuyahoga County government, and is funded through the county's Health and Human Services Levy, and the generosity of private foundations and individuals. Only those preschool sites that meet our higher gold standard of quality can be a UPK Site!

What is Invest in Children?

We are Cuyahoga County's effort to improve the health and education of all young children, and provide helpful services to parents. We partner with Starting Point, the local child care resource and referral agency, to provide technical assistance and training to all UPK programs.

Accessible Affordable



Where can I find a UPK Preschool?

UPK sites are located throughout the county and include public preschools, Head Start programs, community child care centers, and family child care homes. All UPK sites meet a series of standards, proven through research to be the hallmarks of quality that result in improved school readiness. Find a UPK site at www.cuyahogakids.org

Who can Attend? Is UPK Affordable?

Any preschool-aged resident of Cuyahoga County can attend a UPK Preschool. Each program sets its own tuition rates, but Cuyahoga County can provide scholarship assistance to families earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (for example: \$98,400 annual income for a family of four.)



High Quality

What does a UPK preschool look like?

The very best preschools meet these high standards and many others.



Teachers hold higher education qualifications, and value and participate in professional development that exceeds the minimum requirements.



Low teacher / child ratios.



The needs, interests and abilities of children are the basis for developing experiences and activities.



Programs share child screening and assessment results with families and together activities and plans are developed to support children's learning and development goals.



Family and community input is used to inform the program's continuous improvement process.



A variety of high-quality and engaging materials are provided for children to explore.

UPK Sites
are a step UP!