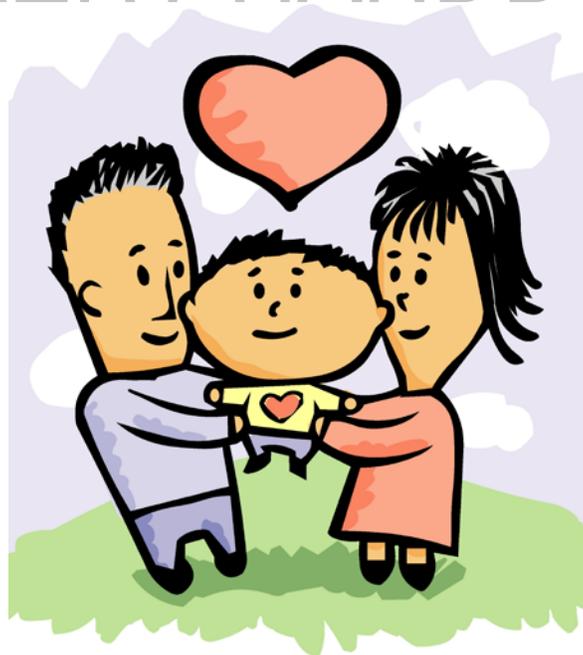


**Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative
Early Head Start Program**

PARENT HANDBOOK



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WELCOME

Welcome to the **Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative Early Head Start Program**. We are glad you have chosen our program and are excited to serve your child and/or children and family this year. This handbook was written as a guide to describe our program and provide details that go into making each Early Head Start day a positive experience for you and your child.

The program serves a total of 56 infant and toddler children in the Center-Based and Home-Based setting in the Claiborne County area. The children receive comprehensive services in the centers and in their home.

Parents are encouraged and supported in their efforts to participate in the program with participation being voluntary and not a requirement of the child's enrollment. We have an open door policy and the centers are open to parents during all program hours.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission Statement of Clinch-Powell Educational Cooperative Head Start/Early Head Start Program is to provide high-quality comprehensive services to enhance the lives of children and families from prenatal to preschool age.

EDUCATION

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

In order for your child to fully benefit from the Early Head Start experience, he/she must be dropped off by 9:00 am, when the learning program begins. You are expected to send your child every day unless he/she is ill. Early Head Start is a voluntary program with service hours and attendance requirements designed to provide maximum benefits to your child. Classroom operation hours are 7:30-3:30. Due to the increased focus on school readiness and the need for additional staff training, all classrooms will be closing at 1:30 p.m. on the 2nd Wednesday of the program year. Children will not be permitted to stay beyond 1:30 on these days.

HOME VISITS AND PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Home visits and parent-teacher conferences are a very important part of the center-based program. Caregivers are required to make two home visits and schedule two parent conferences a year. The first home visit will be at the start of the program year, usually in August. The purpose of this visit is for your child to get to know his/her caregiver, to complete all necessary paperwork, and to answer any questions you may have about the program. The second visit will be near the end of the program year. The purpose of this visit is to establish new developmental goals and to discuss transitioning. Your participation in these home visits and parent-teacher conferences are greatly appreciated!

HAND-TO-HAND POLICY

When transporting your child to the center, you are required to hand deliver him/her to a primary caregiver or a caregiver inside the Early Head Start center. We require that you pick up your child in the afternoon by the same method. You will not be permitted to deliver your child to the center until a primary caregiver or caregiver is present. Only Early Head Start caregivers are allowed to receive your child. Check with your child's primary caregiver for the correct time to bring him/her.

CLOTHING

Your child should dress in clothing that is comfortable and suitable for the weather. Children are involved in a number of messy, creative activities that can get clothes dirty. Therefore, we ask you to send your child in comfortable clothes that they can play in without worry. A few extra sets of clothing should be available at the center at all times in case of an accident.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoor play is a very important part of our program. It is also a State licensing requirement that outdoor play be provided every day except when weather conditions prohibit and when temperatures are below 32° or above 95°. Infants also participate in outdoor play, so please make sure that your infant is suitably dressed for all weather conditions with shoes, coat, gloves, etc.

TOYS AND TREASURES

Each child has a specially marked “cubby” for personal belongings and treasured art projects. Past experience has shown that toys from home create many problems at the center. We have a wide variety of fun and interesting toys in the classroom that offer many opportunities for sharing. We ask that you leave personal belongings at home.

DISCIPLINE

The staff is trained to intervene immediately to stop behaviors that are unsafe or destructive. Primary caregivers and caregivers will strive to always model appropriate interactions. They will not isolate, spank, shake, jerk, shame or deny food, rest or outdoor play. Children will not be punished for bathroom accidents. Activities will be provided to keep children involved both physically and mentally to help promote positive behavior. Good behavior will be praised and reinforced. We require that parents who volunteer or visit the center abide by these standards if you must correct your child in the presence of other children.

DISABILITIES

SERVICES TO CHILDREN

The Head Start/Early Head Start program offers services to children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of the disability. The program will not deny placement on the basis of the disability when parents wish to enroll their child; the child meets eligibility requirements; Head Start/Early Head Start is an appropriate placement; and the Program has available openings to enroll more children. The Program will assist families with locating services for their child with special needs. Staff will be trained in working with each child's specific needs through guidance from parents, therapists, the Program and outside agencies. Placement options will be determined based upon the needs of the child, M-Team and/or therapist recommendations and parent requests.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

PARENT/CENTER COMMUNICATION

It is very important that parents, primary caregivers and caregivers communicate regularly. Calendars, flyers and other information regarding training and activities/events are sent home in a timely manner. Also, please feel free to talk to your child's primary caregiver or caregiver at any time by visiting or calling her at the center. Transporting your child to the center and escorting him/her to the classroom would be a good time to share a few words with the primary caregiver or to arrange a later time to talk. Your input is always welcome.

ATTENDANCE

In the event of an unexpected absence, you must contact the center within one hour of the program start time to inform the staff that your child will not be attending that day. If your child is absent for consecutive days, your Family Advocate will contact you to provide support services as needed for the child to resume attendance. If your child has a pattern of absences, you must meet with staff to develop an attendance plan that includes strategies to improve the child's attendance. If a child ceases to attend or continues to have frequent absences, the program will consider the enrollment slot as a vacancy and will be filled with another family on the waitlist.

GOVERNANCE

POLICY COUNCIL

The Policy Council is a formal structure of shared governance of the Early Head Start program in accordance with the Federal Performance Standards, which provides parents an opportunity to participate in decision-making concerning program design and implementation. Parents of currently enrolled Early Head Start children are eligible to serve and make up the majority of the Council. Other members are from the community and may include previous Early Head Start parents. The Policy Council has a total of 18 members, which includes: 11 parents and 7 community representatives. Membership on the Council is limited to a total of five years of service with re-elections annually. Policy Council representatives are elected from each center at the September Parent Meeting. Each center receives a copy of the Policy Council Minutes for Parent Committee review and the minutes are posted on the Parent Room bulletin board. The names from each center are drawn for appropriate representation with the remaining names serving as alternates. All program options are represented. There are five scheduled meetings per year with more if needed. Meetings are held at the central office in Tazewell and transportation is provided.

HEALTH

REQUIRED SCREENINGS

Before a child under the age of thirty months is allowed to attend our Early Head Start center, he/she must have a physical examination (EPSDT). All children over the age of thirty months will follow the EPSDT schedule for well-child examinations. The EPSDT examination includes:

- Height and Weight
- Hematocrit and Hemoglobin (children 12 months and older)
- Blood Pressure
- Hearing and Vision Screening
- Tuberculosis Screening (recommended, but not required)
- All Immunizations Up-to-Date
- A general health assessment, to be completed on a Early Head Start physical form
- Lead Screening

Each child will have screenings that include:

- Behavioral
- Speech
- Developmental
- Nutritional

SICKNESS

You are the best judge of your child's health and we trust that you will not bring a sick child to the center. However, if in the opinion of the teaching staff your child is sick, he/she will be separated from the other children to a quiet place and you will be notified to come and pick up your child. The following criteria will be considered, but not limited, in determining if your child must go home:

- * A temperature of 100.5° or more
- * Vomiting
- * Difficulty breathing
- * Yellowish skin or eyes
- * Open sores
- * Diarrhea
- * Severe coughing
- * Sore throat
- * Pink eye

MEDICATION PROCEDURES

Before any medication can be given to your child, the medication must be brought to the center by the parent with a medication form signed and dated. All medication must meet the following guidelines to be given at the center:

- *be in the original bottle
- *include the date of prescription
- *list the amount and time to be given
- *contain a prescription number
- *list the doctor's name

Only one day's worth of medication can be accepted per day. If at all possible, ask your doctor to prescribe medication so that it will not need to be given during center hours. We cannot give any medication other than those prescribed by a medical professional; therefore no, over-the-counter drugs (such as Tylenol, Benadryl, etc.) or sunscreen are to be sent to the center. All medication will be stored in a metal box under lock and key.

SMOKING

To promote the health and well-being of children and families, the program will strive to provide a smoke-free environment for staff, parents and children. Staff and volunteers will serve as role models by not smoking in the presence of children, parents and participants in any program facility, including both indoor and outdoor areas not limited to playgrounds and parking lots. Staff will assist parents who wish to quit smoking by facilitating access to recommended smoking cessation programs and materials.

NUTRITION SERVICES

Children attending Early Head Start will be served nutritious meals daily including Breakfast, Lunch, and Snack.

Early Head Start partners with USDA Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP), which reimburses for Early Head Start children to have nutritious meals and snacks. Therefore, all meals and snacks are at no cost for Early Head Start families.

Meal time is also a learning time in the program. Staff and children eat together, during this time children have the opportunity to taste new foods, ask questions and share their likes and dislikes of the foods that are being served. All meals MUST meet USDA and CACFP guidelines. Children on medically-based diets, who have allergies or intolerances to food or other required medical dietary modifications, will be accommodated. However, written documentation from the child's physician is required. Religious and Culture customs will be accommodated with written request by the parent/guardian.

While volunteering at Early Head Start, please feel free to eat lunch with your child. Volunteering two hours will permit you to eat at no cost.

MENTAL HEALTH

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Head Start/Early Head Start program promotes positive mental health/social-emotional wellness for enrolled children through daily routines, activities, and scheduled classroom observations that are conducted by a professional with knowledge of child development and best practices for preschool classrooms. The program also offers referral to mental health professionals upon request from the parent/guardian. Staff also offers referrals for mental health services for adults, upon request.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parent Engagement is built on mutual trust and respect between families and staff. It means promoting relationships with families that support family well-being and promoting positive parent and child relationships, and providing ongoing learning for the parent and child. Every family has diverse interest and strengths that the program will encourage and build on to enhance the educational outcomes for the child (ren).

PROGRAM SURVEYS AND EVALUATIONS

In an effort to continuously improve the program, we need your feedback and input throughout the year. At the beginning of the program year, you will be given the opportunity to fill out a parent training survey to help choose topics for monthly parent training. At the end of the program year, you will be asked to complete a program evaluation to express your thoughts and feelings about the program, your child's teacher, and what your child has learned. These are very important to us as we strive to improve the quality of your program. Please take the time to complete and return them to your child's teacher.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent engagement is the cornerstone of the Early Head Start Program; therefore we encourage all parents to volunteer and become engaged in all areas of the program. As parents, you are the primary educator in our child's life. We want to partner with you and encourage you to become actively engaged in your child's education. Volunteering in the classroom, attending parent meetings, and serving on various committees are just a few of the opportunities for parent engagement offered by Early Head Start. However, because the interest and needs of Early Head Start families differ, you may choose to become involved in different ways. Please talk to your child's primary caregiver or family services worker to discuss the many ways that you can become involved.

PARENT MEETINGS

The program provides monthly parent meetings which allow parents an opportunity to connect with other parents in the program, participate in requested training to enhance parenting skills and goals, receive school readiness activities to use at home, plan fun events for the classroom, participate in leadership activities by serving on parent committees, Policy Council, Health and Education Advisory committee and participant in special projects. Representatives for different community agencies are invited to the meetings to provide training, resources, and information. The scheduled meeting day will be voted on in September at the first parent meeting and the parent questionnaire will also be used to determine the time of the meetings in order to ensure the best possible attendance. It is our hope that you will take the opportunity to attend these meetings.

VOLUNTEERS

Anyone volunteering at least 30 hours per month must have proof of a negative TB skin screening on file with the Health/Nutrition Manager, with a copy posted in the child's classroom. Parent visits and volunteering during center hours are always welcome. You are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities throughout the year to volunteer in your child's classroom.

MALE INVOLVEMENT

The program is committed to encouraging male involvement in a child's life. This involvement can be demonstrated through shared decision making about the program, participation in classroom activities, attending parent meetings, as well as with their child at home. There are various activities offered at the centers such as the "Buddy Breakfast/Lunch", Reading Program and the "Father's Story" contest. You will be provided with additional details.

CELEBRATIONS

Holiday celebrations in the classroom will be planned with respect to families' culture and conducted in a way as to honor the family's value systems. No child shall be forced to participate in any celebrations and an alternate activity will be planned and provided. Families will not be expected to make donations for celebrations/events. However, if parents wish to donate food for celebrations, such as family day or other center activities, only store bought, pre-packaged, unopened food can be accepted (to ensure the safety of the children). Homemade food items are not permitted to be served in the center. No cupcakes, cookies, etc. will be allowed for any event at the center. Only healthy snacks like gold fish crackers, etc. will be permitted. Your teacher can provide healthy snack options that are safe for young children.

HOME-BASED ONLY

SOCIALIZATION SESSIONS

Times will be scheduled for you, your child, your home visitor and other children and families to attend **weekly** group socialization. Each session will last about three hours and will include breakfast (for the children) and lunch for the parent and child. Your Home Visitor will let you know your socialization day and time. Please make every effort to attend these sessions because they are very beneficial to you and your child. You will be asked to sign a socialization agreement outlining socialization responsibilities. We can also provide transportation to these sessions if needed. Please discuss your transportation needs with your Home Visitor.

HOME VISITS

The home-based option is designed to provide weekly home visits to each family. The Home Visitor will stay at least 1½ hours at each visit. Cancelled visits must be rescheduled within the week that they are cancelled. Home Visitors will bring information and activities to share with you and your child. Parents are expected to be an active part of each home visit. It is very important that you and your child are prepared for the visit at your scheduled time. This will give your child a sense that he/she is special because you are setting aside this time just for him/her. You will be asked to complete and sign a Parent/Home Visitor Agreement, which outlines both the responsibilities of the parent and Home Visitor.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parent engagement is the cornerstone of every Early Head Start Program; therefore we encourage all parents to volunteer and become engaged in all areas of the program. As parents, you are the primary educator in your child's life. We want to partner with you and encourage you to become actively engaged in your child's education. Keeping all scheduled home visits, attending socialization sessions and serving on various committees are just a few of the opportunities for parent engagement offered by Early Head Start. However, because the interest and needs of Early Head Start families differ, you may choose to become involved in different ways. Please talk with your Home Visitor to discuss the many ways that you can become involved in Early Head Start.