



Parent Handbook

2021 - 2022

Attention Head Start/Early Head Start Families:



us on Facebook!



Username: Warren County HEAD START



us on Instagram!



Username: @warrencountyheadstart

***To find out about upcoming events, parent surveys,
workshops and much more!***

OUR PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe that in partnerships with families our program promotes the positive interactions which help children develop the skills necessary for school readiness.

Children learn best through play and meaningful experiences that are relevant to their lives. Our purpose is to guide them to develop their curiosity and reasoning skills and to encourage them to use their imagination and creative abilities.

We believe each child is an individual with special strengths and interests. As a result of observations and communication with each child and their families, we provide individualized planning to maximize learning.

We strive to ensure all children in the program receive the foundation to succeed in school and in life.

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WHAT IS HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START?

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs for pregnant women, children ages birth through 5 years old and their families. In Warren County, 282 children and families benefit from the comprehensive services offered.

Warren County Head Start provides information and services for families in the areas of Education, Family Services, Health, Mental Health, Dental Health, Nutrition and Disabilities.

This handbook can answer many questions you may have about the program – now or throughout the year. Keep it handy.

MISSION STATEMENT

Setting the stage for lifelong success. Providing high-quality education and support, as early as pregnancy through the Preschool years to children, families and our community.

WELCOME TO HEAD START!

Your Head Start and Early Head Start program is a place for you, your child, and your family. We hope you will take advantage of every opportunity to spend some time with us.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Let the Teacher know of any special happenings in the home that might affect your child - a new baby, a move, vacation, birthday, family illness, etc. This way staff can better meet your child's individual needs.
2. A Parent or Guardian must let us know of **any changes** in address, telephone number, change of employment or change in emergency contact person. This information must be in writing.
3. Each child is expected to attend programming every day. If your child will be absent or if you need to cancel a home visit, please call your Center or Home-Based Visitor. In order to properly plan for meals and classroom activities for the day, we will call if your child is not here an hour after the start of class. Absences of two days or more, without contact from a parent or guardian, will be followed up by a home visit from your Family Worker. Please inform us of severe illness, viral infections, or other health concerns that keep your child out of school. Excessive absenteeism could result in a child being withdrawn and placed on our waiting list.
4. All information that we receive concerning your child remains confidential and **CANNOT** be given to any other agency without your written consent, excluding Child Protective Services.
5. A child **will not** be released to anyone other than a parent or guardian without written permission from the parent or guardian. Picture identification is required.
6. For safety reasons, while attending field trips it is requested that siblings not attend. However, if this is not possible each sibling must be accompanied by an additional responsible adult assigned by the family. The cost of the field trip will not be covered for the additional adult and sibling.
7. The centers are locked at all times. At the Glens Falls Center, families will be provided a swipe card which allows parents access to the center between the hours of 7:30am and 3:30pm. At the SUNY Adirondack

Center, families will be provided a swipe card which allows parents access to the center between the hours of 7:30am and 5:00pm. All other visitors must present identification when entering the center.

8. Please sign your child in to the center upon arrival and sign them out when picking them up.

ELECTRONIC MONITORS AND SURVEILLANCE EQUIPMENT

Each center is equipped with electronic monitors or surveillance equipment. Listed below are the locations of this equipment for each of our centers.

- Glens Falls- An electronic monitor is used for the entrance at the top and the bottom of the stairs for security of letting people in the building.
- Queensbury- Two cameras are used at the entrance and one camera is in the hallway for security purposes.
- SUNY Adirondack- Electronic monitors are used for observation purposes in the classroom. Parents and staff will be notified when they are in use. A surveillance camera is utilized at the entrance of the building and monitored by campus security for safety.
- Warrensburg- Surveillance cameras are located inside and outside of the school solely for the purpose of security.
- Lake Luzerne- Surveillance cameras are located inside and outside of the school solely for the purpose of security.
- Chestertown- Surveillance cameras are used to monitor hallways and passageways for security purposes.

EDUCATION

PARENTS ARE THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT TEACHERS OF THEIR CHILDREN!

You teach them every day at home. Now you can be part of their experiences at Head Start. Come join us in the classroom and on field trips into the community when possible. We'll work together to help your child blossom and grow.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

- practice social skills and act out experiences in the family area
- explore and compare size, shape, structure and numbers in the block area
- read stories and rhymes to promote listening, love of books, language and vocabulary
- explore letters, words and numbers
- experiment with all kinds of materials in the art and science areas
- make friends and learn routines and rules of the classroom
- learn about good nutrition as we prepare some parts of our daily menu and as we eat together
- listen to music, learn songs and play games at group time
- stretch our muscles and play outdoors
- visit places of interest in the community
- All children will learn about pedestrian safety as both passengers and pedestrians
- learn many things about the world around us
- daily, infants will be allowed to move freely (indoors and out), have tummy time when awake, and explore their environment, all with adult supervision

WHAT SHALL WE WEAR?

- play clothes – things that are washable
- clothes children can get on and off by themselves

- sneakers **must** be worn on the playground and in the gym
- children spend a lot of time on the floor and outside, therefore, pants are the best choice
- warm coat, hat, snow pants, mittens and boots in the winter (with child's name inside)

HOME BASED PROGRAM OPTION

In the Home-Based option, parents and children work together with a Home-Based Visitor. Visits take place in your home once a week for 90 minutes. All family members can take part in the visit, but a parent or guardian must be present. Together with the Home-Based Visitor, you will plan activities to do with your child at visits and during the week between visits. Twice a month there is an opportunity to meet with other children and parents in a group setting. At these “play groups” you can observe your child interacting with other children their age. Parents also meet on play group days to plan activities, field trips and workshops.

DURING A SHUTDOWN

In the event a shutdown occurs as a result of a pandemic, natural disaster, etc..., Warren County Head Start, Inc. will need to suspend in-person services. The agency will continue to provide services to your child and family virtually as well as supply drop-off visits. Your Family Services Worker, Home-Based Visitor and/or Teacher will communicate how the virtual services will be provided. Your participation is required in order to remain in our program and not be placed on the waiting list.

CHILD ASSESSMENT

Assessment plays an important role in teaching young children. At Warren County Head Start, assessment is an ongoing process of purposefully observing each child. Three times a year your Head Start child's progress will be evaluated using our Teaching Strategies GOLD checkpoint system. Early Head Start children's progress will be evaluated 4 times a year. After each checkpoint period is completed, your child's Teacher/Home-Based Visitor will schedule a family conference to review the results and set goals with you on how best to support your child's development and learning.

Each classroom Teacher, Home-Based Visitor and Assistant Teacher hold an “Inter-Rater Reliability” certificate and renew their reliability every 3 years to ensure validity of checkpoints.

GUIDANCE

Children are the primary focus of Warren County Head Start. Every child and family member must be treated with respect by parents and staff. Corporal punishment is prohibited. No child may be physically, verbally, or emotionally mistreated.

It is the role of all staff to maintain an atmosphere that is nurturing, respectful, and accepting of each child. Our goal is to help children feel good about themselves. Consistent rules and routines to provide a safe environment in which children can learn and grow are established. Some of the techniques used to maintain this environment as well as help children develop self-regulation are:

- Stating rules in a simple positive manner (“Use your walking feet” instead of “Don't run”)
- Offering acceptable choices (“Do you want to put your jacket on by yourself or would you like me to help?”)

- Recognizing positive behaviors (“I like the way you helped put the blocks away.”) Catch the child being good.
- Reminding children to use their words and talk about their feelings (“I don’t like it when you pull my hair. It hurts.”)
- Re-directing the child to another activity (“You can play with the play dough until there is room at the easel.”)

Staff and parents working together ensure a successful year at Head Start.

Warren County Head Start does not, under any circumstance, participate in the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures. This policy is in line with all federal and state civil rights laws.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Newsletters are sent home every month. These newsletters are planned and written by the classroom staff, Home Based Visitor, and/or the Family Services Workers. They identify the staff, classroom activities, field trips, special events, and parent information. Each month your newsletter will have a school readiness goal and an activity that you and your child can do together.

Reading your newsletter is another way to share Head Start with your child.

Be sure to like us on Facebook to find out about parent activities and other program events and information! **You can also be a part of your classroom’s/Home Based program’s Facebook page, Class Dojo, ...**

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

In the classroom we maintain a friendly and respectful atmosphere at all times. All classroom conversations should revolve around the children and their activities. If you would like to have an extended conversation with the teacher about your child’s development, or any other topic, please schedule a time to meet with them outside of the classroom. Personal conversations should be limited.

Mealtime – Parents are invited to join the classroom for meals. Everyone eats family style. Adults model table manners, child portion sizes, and appropriate conversation. Children serve themselves.

Personal food/drink items (excluding water) must be kept in the parent room/kitchen and not consumed in the classroom.

If you receive a call on your cell phone, please step out of the classroom to take the call.

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Services Workers and Home-Based Visitors are advocates for children and their families. During the process of application, intake and filling out the Family Partnership Agreement, Family Services Workers and Home-Based Visitors gather information so that we can be sure we are meeting the individual needs of children and families. Paperwork is completed during home visits as it allows for privacy and time for discussion. Every family will be offered the opportunity to partner with their Home-Based Visitor or Family Worker in a goal setting process, which helps identify family’s strengths, interests, needs and resources.

A **Community Resource Manual** lists agencies and organizations providing services to residents of Warren County. These are available to families on our website (www.wchsny.org) or you can request a paper copy from your Family Worker or Home-Based Visitor.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All families' and children's records are kept confidential. If there is ever a time that a parent or legal guardian would like to access their child's files, they can contact either their Teacher, Home Based Visitor or Family Services Worker. A signed release is needed for staff to speak to or send information to another agency about you or your family, excluding Child Protective Services. Parents must respect the confidentiality of others in the program. This includes not repeating things you overhear or see in the classroom or in the hallways regarding other people. Please do not share pictures/videos on social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) of children other than your own. If you have a concern, please speak to your Family Services Worker, Home Based Visitor or Center Director.

Video and audio equipment may be used by Warren County Head Start for classroom/Home Based visit observations. All video and audio recordings will be kept confidential.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Warren County Head Start welcomes parent involvement in all aspects of the program. Parents are encouraged to help in the classroom, join parent group meetings, and have the opportunity to be elected to Policy Council and/or the Governing Board of Directors. These activities provide parents with valuable hands-on experiences to enhance their child's life and the Warren County Head Start Program.

VOLUNTEER TIME (IN-KIND)

Any time parents, guardians, or community volunteers help at Head Start (helping on field trips or in the classroom, participating in Policy Council meetings, or doing a class project at home or in the center) Head Start can record that time as a dollar donation. The time you donate is called "in-kind" and helps us to meet federal requirements. Monthly tracking sheets are available in the classroom or with your Home Based Visitor. Please make sure to fill one out each month.

PARENT GROUPS

Each Center and the Home-Based option have a Parent Group that meets **6 times a year**. Each parent who has a child in Head Start is automatically a member of their Parent Group. Dates for your parent meetings are on your newsletter. Policy Council Representatives are elected at the second parent meeting. Parents decide on activities for their child, their parent group, their socialization and their center. Transportation and reimbursement for childcare are provided for parent meetings. For evening parent groups childcare is provided.

PARENTING SKILLS

Parenting Skills Classes will be offered during the program year. Parents have an opportunity to socialize, share parenting ideas, learn new skills and ideas that will help with everyday parenting situations. All parents are welcome to attend these classes.

POLICY COUNCIL

Policy Council is one of the governing bodies in Head Start. It is an opportunity for parents to be part of the decision-making process. Parents elected to Policy Council meet with other parents from the Warren County Head Start program and Community Representatives to discuss and vote on grant applications, the budget and other major decisions for the program. The term of office for a Policy Council member is from December to November. Meetings are held monthly, except in July. Family Services Workers and Home-

Based Visitors will provide transportation and reimbursement for childcare for Policy Council Members. Policy Council Members receive training and the materials needed to make this a meaningful experience.

PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT

At the end of the school year parents are asked to participate in an evaluation of the Warren County Head Start Program along with staff members and community members whenever possible. All service areas that Warren County Head Start provides are reviewed and discussed. Data for each of the service areas is also shared and discussed. The outcome of Self-Assessment is to find areas of strength in each of the service areas as well as create an improvement plan for each of the service areas. Transportation, reimbursement for childcare and training are provided.

HEALTH AND DENTAL SERVICES

Before a child may attend class in Warren County Head Start or attend Home Based play group, they must have an up-to date physical exam and be up to date on immunizations or provide a medical exemption certificate. Any child not up to date on immunizations must provide a “catch-up” schedule written by their physician. Children must receive the immunizations on the dates indicated on the schedule to avoid missed school days. Siblings attending play group are also required to have a certificate regarding immunization status prior to attending play group. Documentation of your child’s lead level and hemoglobin/hematocrit are required. Documentation is required for allergies and/or intolerances.

Head Start Program Performance Standards require that all enrolled children, have a dental screening within the first 90 days of entering the program. Regular visits to the dentist are very important to the health of your child. Your Family Services Worker or Home-Based Visitor can support you in making an appointment and completing all necessary paperwork. During Home Visits and the program day, all children with teeth are assisted by appropriate staff in brushing their teeth with toothpaste containing fluoride. For children without teeth, their gums will be wiped with a clean cloth or soft toothbrush and water. Oral health observations are completed three times a year. For Home Based children, these observations will happen in the home. For Center Based children, two of the observations will be completed in the classroom and one will be conducted during a Home Visit.

Hearing and vision screenings are services provided by Warren County Head Start. Parents are informed of the screening results. If a referral is needed, your Family Services Worker or Home-Based Visitor will discuss this with you and assist with making referral appointments. The Family Services Workers and Home-Based Visitors work with families in helping to arrange appointments and transportation, when necessary, for any health concern.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, please do not send them to school or play group, or keep your home visit that is scheduled.:

- a temperature of 100 F or greater within the last 24 hours, without a fever reducer
- a rash that is spreading and has not been seen by a doctor
- diarrhea, or stools that contain blood and/or mucus within the last 24 hours
- vomited within the last 24 hours
- open, draining or crusty sores that have not been evaluated by a doctor
- colored, gooey drainage from eye(s)
- live head lice
- is lethargic, irritable, crying non-stop, has trouble breathing or other signs of possible severe illness

- chicken pox - must have a doctor's note to return
- illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities
- **Bed Bugs: until a plan has been approved by the Service Area Coordinator or ED.**

Your child will be sent home if any of the above are present. If your child is sent home with a fever, the child cannot return to school unless fever free for 24 hours without a fever reducer. If your child has had vomiting or diarrhea, they must be symptom free for at least 24 hours before returning to programming.

When your child has been absent, please remember to contact your Teacher, Family Services Worker or Home-Based Visitor as to why. Attendance at Warren County Head Start is very important. Staff are required to follow-up on unexplained absences.

All hospitalizations or visits to the ER will require a doctor's written permission for the child to return to Warren County Head Start.

Medications:

Staff are prohibited from administering any medication unless it is prescribed by a physician for a particular illness, allergy, etc. In order to administer medication, parents must fill out a Medication Authorization Form and obtain a physician's signature. **Parental permission and physician orders must be obtained every 6 months.** Medication must be in its original container.

Medication can only be transported to the center by the child's parent/guardian or an individual designated by the parent/guardian over the age of 18. Medication can only be accepted by a MAT trained staff member at your center. Medication will be stored out of reach of children.

DISABILITIES SERVICES

All children entering Warren County Head Start will receive screenings for speech, physical development, and social/emotional development. If a concern arises as a result of the screening process, or as a result of the on-going observation of your child, you will be contacted. With your consent, your child will be referred to their school district's **Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)** or **Early Intervention Services (EI)** by the Disabilities Services Coordinator. The CPSE office of each school district or County Health Services is responsible for arranging evaluations of children at **no cost** to any parent. Head Start will assist, in any way necessary, in completing the evaluation process.

If a child is identified as needing services, these services can be provided to the child at Head Start or in your home.

MENTAL HEALTH

A Mental Health Consultant is available to provide services for children and families. Your Family Services Worker or Home-Based Visitor can support you in making an appointment to have your child observed within his/her classroom or in the home. The Mental Health Consultant is also available to speak to families to provide suggestions and support. All conversations are confidential. Families will also be supported with finding and setting up appointments for outside counseling when the need arises.

NUTRITION

Children are encouraged to try new or different foods but are never forced to eat. Food is never used as a punishment or reward. A variety of foods are served. New foods are introduced gradually to broaden the child's food experiences. All foods are provided by Warren County Head Start or our approved vendors.

Documentation for allergies and/or intolerances is required per New York State Law. All allergy documentation must be obtained prior to your child starting the program. Parents and staff will work together to create a food allergy care plan for children with an allergy.

Our Head Start recipes, menu plans, and nutrition information are available at each Center. All parents are encouraged to visit their Center and make use of this information. Nutrition information, as well as other information involving shopping for food, budgeting for food, meal planning, etc. is available to all parents upon request. Nutrition workshops can be scheduled throughout the year. Menus are posted in each classroom and a copy is available upon request.

Good eating habits are developed at an early age. Children learn about food and eating by observing others and modeling their behavior. Warren County Head Start's policy is to have classroom staff eat with the children at mealtime. We will provide meals for parents at mealtime as well. Parents are always welcome to eat meals with their child.

For infants on breast milk, formula, or baby food, feeding is individualized. Breastfeeding mothers are encouraged to visit and breastfeed during the day. We follow the CACFP meal patterns for infants. According to the CACFP meal pattern, infants are categorized into two age groups: 0 through 5 months and 6 months to their first birthday. Breastmilk and/or Iron Fortified infant formula are served to infants 0-5 months. The introduction of solid foods can begin around 6 months of age if the infant is developmentally ready. Breastfeeding areas are available at SUNY Adirondack and our Glens Falls Center. During your weekly home visit, your Home-Based Visitor will be providing a snack to those infants who are eating table foods. Please communicate with your Home-Based Visitor any new foods you would like served to your child. For infants, the introduction of any new food must be done by the parent/guardian before we can provide the requested food item. All snacks for infants/toddlers are prepared with special attention to size, consistency, and easy handling.

CACFP Meal Patterns are available upon request.

Requirements for Meals Served at Centers for Infants (6 weeks – 11 months)

<u>Breakfast:</u>		<u>Lunch:</u>	
Birth – 5 Months	6 – 11 Months	Birth – 5 Months	6 – 11 Months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk or Iron Fortified Formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk or Iron Fortified Formula; and • Infant cereal, meat, fish, poultry, or • Cheese or • Yogurt or • Vegetable, Fruit or combo of both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk or Iron Fortified Formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk or Iron Fortified Formula; and • Infant cereal, meat, fish, poultry, or • Cheese or • Yogurt or • Vegetable, Fruit or combo of both

Requirements for Meals Served at Centers for children ages 1-5

<p>Breakfast:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serving of milk • a fruit or vegetable, or both • a meat/meat alternate may be used to substitute the grain component up to 3 times a week 	<p>Lunch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • serving of milk • a serving of lean meat, fish, cheese, beans, eggs, or peanut butter • a serving of a vegetable • a serving of a fruit • a serving of whole grain or enriched bread
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HEALTH, EDUCATION, NUTRITION SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (HENSAC)

Warren County Head Start’s Health, Education and Nutrition Services Advisory Committee (HENSAC) is made up of community professionals and parents of enrolled children. Its purpose is to advise in the planning, operation and evaluation of the health, education and nutrition services. We invite any parent that is interested to serve on this committee which meets twice a year.

HOLIDAYS

Holiday celebrations reflect the cultures in the local community and are sensitive to the religious practices of the Warren County Head Start families. Parents teach their children about special days and create their own traditions when they choose to recognize holidays - or not to. Parents are encouraged to share those traditions, customs, and celebration activities with their classroom or socialization. This will enrich the children's experiences as well as their understanding and appreciation of how we are alike and how we are different. All activities connected to holidays and celebrations must be appropriate and meaningful for children.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS OR DELAYS

If SUNY Adirondack is closed due to weather, the SUNY Adirondack Child Care Center will be closed.

For all other Centers, if your local school district is closed due to weather, your child's Center will be closed.

For Home Based, if Warrensburg School District or your child's school district is closed due to weather, your child's home visit will be canceled.

If a decision is made to close or delay for any reason the information will be announced on local radio and television stations as well as online.

VEHICLE SAFETY

To ensure the safety of all children, no child is to be left alone in the car without adequate supervision.

Idling vehicles are discouraged in all parking areas, except if vehicles need to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures.

SMOKING

It shall be understood by all that our agency is smoke free. Smoking of any substance, including but not limited to tobacco products, e-cigarettes, marijuana..., is not permitted in any Warren County Head Start area, in any Warren County Head Start vehicle or in view of children. This includes parking lots or other outside areas that are visible by the children in our program.

STANDARD OF CONDUCT

Adult behavior directly influences children. Adults are role models; therefore, they need to behave appropriately and promote an attitude of respect towards staff, children and parents. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

All staff, consultants, parents, and volunteers must abide by the following Standard of Conduct:

1. They will respect and promote the unique identity of each child, family, employee, Policy Council and Board member and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.
2. They will follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and other staff members.
3. No child will be left alone or unsupervised while under their care.

4. They will use positive methods of child guidance and will not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. In addition, they will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basics.

CUSTODY

If a parent has custody determined by the courts, we require that a copy of the custody papers be on file so we can follow the rulings of the court. Please discuss any custody concerns or changes with your Family Services Worker or Home-Based Visitor immediately. If a court order is not provided to Warren County Head Start, then both parents have equal rights.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All staff are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect according to the laws of New York State. Any suspicion of abuse or neglect will be reported. It is our policy that Child Protective Services will be allowed to speak to any child (in the presence of our staff) while in our care.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Community Grievance Procedure

In the event a community grievance (problem or concern) occurs, which cannot be resolved by discussion with the staff person it concerns, the following procedure shall be followed:

Step 1 - Informal Procedure

If the problem cannot be solved by discussing the issue with the staff member it concerns, then the matter should be discussed with the Center Director.

If the issue involves the Center Director, then the community member should discuss the matter with the Executive Director.

It is expected that every effort will be made to resolve grievances at this informal level.

Step 2 - Formal Procedure

If the matter cannot be resolved at the informal level, then it is necessary to use the following formal procedure.

The community member shall contact the Executive Director and discuss the grievance in detail; a written summary may be requested. The Executive Director will speak with all parties involved and gather information about the situation. The Executive Director will take some time to review the matter then call a meeting of all concerned parties to discuss the matter. If the community member feels that the Executive Director has not resolved the grievance, the matter may be taken to the Policy Council.

Community grievances that concern alleged abuse or maltreatment of a child will follow the NYS Office of Children and Family Services procedures and the Executive Director will be notified immediately.

This Institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider