



# Family Handbook

## 2020-2021

775 Hazen St, Paw Paw, MI  
269-657-2581 or 800-792-0366  
Approved by the Board and Policy Council: 7/23/2020



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## Mission Statement, Vision, and Philosophy

### Our Mission...

To be a vibrant and progressive educational agency supporting the development of children 0-5 years of age while promoting healthy family functioning for Head Start children and families in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties.

### Our Vision...

To partner with families, staff, and communities in providing quality services with compassion and professionalize to achieve stability, guidance, and a positive educational experience.

### Our Philosophy...

There are two factors that distinguish Head Start from any other early childhood programs in the communities we serve; the comprehensiveness of the program and the degree to which parents are involved in all aspects of the program. We believe we must prepare, educate, and develop our children and their families to be positive contributors to their community.

We believe all young children are individuals who learn best by actively exploring, interacting with their environment (physical setting and materials) and engaging with quality teaching staff and parents. Caring adults help children create, experiment, and question within a positive atmosphere that facilitates problem solving, beginning concepts, and the formation of relationships. We strive to individualize learning and help each child develop a positive self-image. We think it is important to attend to children's overall health as we foster social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.



Dear Families,

Welcome to our Tri-County Head Start school family!

Since 1972, TCHS's dedicated staff have worked successfully with more than 40,000 children and families, in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties. Our Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide a comprehensive and educational experience for young children to successfully begin their journey to life-long learning.

At Tri-County Head Start, we take great pride in our staff, classrooms, and the services we provide to your child and family. You are your child's first and most important teacher and we will form a partnership to provide the support your child needs to success in school and in life.

We welcome you to become involved in the various activities offered throughout the year. Your involvement is very importation to every child's success in the Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

For the 2020-2021 school year, there are many unknowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but one thing we know is that you can count on TCHS to help support you and your child's educational experience no matter what happens. This year we are providing a Guide to a Safe Start, which provides an overview of all of the ways we will do our very best to keep your child, your family, and our staff safe and healthy.

This handbook has been developed to provide all families enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start with detailed information about the program during typical operation, each center and/or classroom operation may vary due to various rules and regulations due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. I encourage you to carefully read this handbook and participate as much as possible in the many activities available throughout the year and take advantage of the services we offer.

We are excited to have you join our school family.

Sincerely,

Chanda Hillman  
CEO/Executive Director

## Important Information

### **Employment Opportunities with Tri-County Head Start**

It is the policy of all Head Start programs to provide opportunities for employment to parents of enrolled children. In the event of vacancies, qualified parents are welcome and invited to apply. Job posting can be found in our Classroom Welcome Centers, posted on the Tri-County Head Start Website [www.tricountyhs.org](http://www.tricountyhs.org) and our social media outlets.

*Before you apply, try volunteering in the classroom (please check with individual centers/classrooms for building entrance policies). Hands on experience with your child's preschool or early head start class and teaching staff is an excellent way to find out if early childhood education is the right field for YOU!*

### **Enrollment Opportunities for Your Community**

#### **Refer Pregnant Moms and Families with Young Children to TCHS**

Tri-County Head Start is always accepting applications for children from birth to age 5, and for expectant mothers. If you have a friend, a neighbor, a family member who needs preschool, prenatal and or early childhood services, please encourage them to call TCHS at 1-800-792-0366 or visit our website [www.tricountyhs.org](http://www.tricountyhs.org) and click the "apply now" link to complete the online application. A Family Advocate will contact them to complete the paperwork.

*You've taken the biggest step toward making sure that your children are ready for school by the time they reach kindergarten age. The best referral is a trusted friend. Now, help your friends and loved ones apply for quality preschool and early childhood education services, always at no cost to the family.*

### **My Child's Important Information:**

Center: \_\_\_\_\_ Teachers/Home Visitor: \_\_\_\_\_

Classroom Hours: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Times: Arrival: \_\_\_\_\_ Dismissal: \_\_\_\_\_

Bus Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Bus Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Evacuation Location and Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Our Locations

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE (HSO)</b> 775 Hazen St. Paw Paw, MI 49079 PH: 800-792-0366 or 269-657-2581 Fax: 800-834-2500 or 269-657-6608	<b>BANGOR ANNEX</b> HS, EHS, & HB Kristina Root – Center Director 305 W. Douglass St. Bangor, MI 49013 PH: 269-427-4020 Extensions: Office: 5      HS Rooms 1:1    2:2 Infant:3      Toddler: 4 Home Visitors: 6	<b>BANGOR CEC</b> Head Start Desiray Moses – CPD 12 N. Walnut Bangor, MI 49013 PH: 269-302-0245
<b>BENTON HARBOR (DEC)</b> Head Start Nona Newburn – Center Director 465 S. McCord Benton Harbor, MI 49022 PH: 269-757-0030 Extensions: Nona: 4      Transportation:5 Room 1: 1      Room 2: 2 Room 3: 3	<b>CASSOPOLIS</b> HS & EHS Leslie Smith – EHS Center Director Vici Grote – HS CPD 725 Center St. Cassopolis, MI 49031 HS PH: 269-228-5841 EHS Infant PH: 269-228-5828 EHS Toddler PH: 269-228-5831	<b>CASS MODULAR OFFICE</b> 1122 Follett Dr. Cassopolis, MI 49031 PH: 269-445-5108
<b>DECATUR</b> HS/GSRP Blend Bethany Peterson – CPD 405 Harrison St. Decatur, MI 49045 PH: 269-423-9661	<b>DECATUR KITCHEN</b> 405 S. Williams Decatur, MI 49045 PH: 269-423-3221	<b>DOWAGIAC</b> HS & HB Patty Humphreys – CPD 203 S. Paul Dowagiac, MI 49047 HS PH: 269-782-2983 HV PH: 269-782-4599
<b>EDWARDSBURG</b> HS/GSRP Blend Brenda Steele – CPD Shirley Penley – CPD 23889 Avenue C Edwardsburg, MI 49112 PH: 269-663-1040	<b>GOBLES</b> Head Start Sherry Whitfield-Yancy – CPD 409 N. State St. Gobles, MI 49055 PH: 269-628-5083	<b>GRAY ST. OFFICE &amp; SOCIALIZATION</b> Home Based Georgia Hunter-Atkinson – HB Coordinator 355 Gray St. Benton Harbor, MI 49022 PH: 269-944-5007
<b>MARCELLUS</b> Head Start Alicia Turnbow – CPD 301 W. Arbor St. Marcellus, MI 49067 PH: 269-646-9209	<b>NEW BUFFLAO</b> Early Head Start Noelle Krawiec – Center Director 704 W. Merchant St. New Buffalo, MI 49117 PH: 269-586-3921 Infant: 269-586-3916 Toddler: 269-586-3932	<b>NILES BELL</b> HS & HB Marcy Wentz – CPD Becky Welsh – CPD Laura Brugh – HB Coordinator 1830 South Third St. Niles, MI 49120 HS PH: 269-262-4200 HB PH: 269-262-4206

<b>NILES BRANDYWINE</b> Head Start Kim Snouwaert – CPD Tammy Colson – CPD 2428 South 13 <sup>th</sup> St. Niles, MI 49120 PH: 269-684-6010	<b>PAW PAW CEDAR ST.</b> Head Start Amanda Roberts – CPD Amy Higbee – CPD TBD – CPD 555 Cedar St. Paw Paw, MI 49079 PH: 269-415-5939	<b>RIVER OF LIFE</b> Head Start Amber Lyles – CPD Jessica Laylin – CPD 671 McAllister Benton Harbor, MI 49022 PH: 269-757-7406
<b>RIVERVIEW</b> Early Head Start Melanie Bullock – Center Director 777 Riverview Ave Bld. D Suite 108 & 109/110 Benton Harbor, MI 49022 Office: 269-925-9541 Main: 269-925-9561	<b>SAWYER</b> Head Start Shelby Basham – CPD 5791 Sawyer Rd (PO Box 247) Sawyer, MI 49125 PH: 269-426-4400	<b>SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE (SMC)</b> HS/GSRP Blend Heidi Mott – CPD 58900 Cherry Grove Dowagiac, MI 49047 PH: 269-782-4593
<b>SOUTH HAVEN</b> Head Start Kim Ertman – CPD Julie Williams – CPD 540 Aylworth St. South Haven, MI 49090 PH: 269-639-8936	<b>SOUTH HAVEN H.O.P.E</b> Home Based 901 S. Bailey Ave, Suite 1 South Haven, MI 49090 Tara Clements – HV PH: 269-539-7217 Jennifer Kruger – HV PH: 269-674-1138	<b>SPINKS</b> Head Start Ashley Hart – CPD Lena (Alberlena) Adams – CPD 1720 S. Park Benton Harbor, MI 49022 PH: 269-944-4119
<b>WATERVLIET</b> HS & EHS Rhonda Pallas – Center Director 188 Lucinda Lane Watervliet, MI 49098 PH: 269-201-7247  Extensions: Office: 10 FA: 11 Infant: 12 Toddler: 13 HS R1: 17 HS R2: 16 HS R3: 15 HS R4: 14	<b>DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS</b> CEO/Executive Director Chanda Hillman, Ext 113  EHS Education Director Patti Masters, Ext 114  HS Education Director Mandy Orlando, Ext 116  Family Services Director Gloria Walter, Ext 108  Health Services Director Cindy Thomas, Ext 118  Operations Director Allison Lowry, Ext 119  Finance Manager Laura Burtis, Ext 117  Human Resources Manager Mindi Baker, Ext 120	<b>HSO OFFICE EXTENSIONS</b> Education: 128 Autumn  Family Services: 127 Maria 134 Stacey 112 Benny  Health Services: 132 Chelsea 105 Dorinda 130 Kristina 106 Lisa 131 Robin  Transportation: La Trease Brown 269-674-9513 Missy Cottrill 269-910-0273 or x110  113 Jeremiah, IT 101 Nancy, Administrative 125 Samantha, HR

## Important Dates

September 8	First Day of School
October 1	Early Release Day *
October 16	Friday School (HS Only) *
November 5	Early Release Day *
November 13	Friday School (HS Only) *
November 25-27	No School – Thanksgiving Break
December 21 – January 1	No School – Winter Break
January 7	Early Release Day *
January 15	Friday School (HS Only) *
January 18	No School – Martin Luther King, Jr Day
February 4	Early Release Day *
February 12	Friday School (HS Only)*
February 15	No School – Presidents Day
March 4	Early Release Day*
March 12	Friday School (HS Only)*
April 1	No School – Professional Development Day
April 5-9	No School – Spring Break
April 16	Friday School (HS Only)*
May 6	Early Release Day*
May 14	Friday School (HS Only)*
May 31	No School – Memorial Day
June 10	Last Day of School for Head Start
August 19	Last Day of School for Early Head Start

Please be advised that due to COVID-19 dates are subject to change.

### Early Release Days\*

Tri County Head Start is committed to providing excellent Professional Development of our Teachers. Early Release days allow teachers time to participate in trainings that enrich your child's experience in Head Start.

7-hour classrooms will end 2 hours before regularly scheduled time. For example, if class typically ends at 4:00, on Early Release Days it will end at 2:00. Transportation will be provided as usual. Afternoon classes will not be held on Early Release days. Transportation will be provided with afternoon take-home routes running 2 hours ahead of schedule.

\* Will only occur if in a typical learning schedule

## Program Governance

You are valued and needed, you have an important voice, and your involvement makes a difference for your child. TCHS needs YOU!

Tri-County Head Start could not exist without tremendous parent and caregiver involvement and interest in the program. Parents and caregivers are the most important participants in the program as they are their child's first and most important teacher.

### Policy Council

The Policy Council (PC) is a critical part of all Head Start programs. Policy Council is part of the governing body of the program and acts as the family's voice in making major decisions for the program. It is comprised of parents or caregivers of currently enrolled children who are elected at each center, as well as representatives of our community.

The Policy Council works in partnership with key administrative staff and the governing Board of Tri-County Council for Child Development to ensure that parents have the opportunity to be involved in shared decision-making with regard to Head Start program operation, grants and policies.

The Policy Council meets monthly, in person or virtually depending on COVID-19 rules and regulations. Childcare and transportation will be provided or reimbursed for elected Policy Council representatives for in person meetings. All parents are welcome to attend the meetings.

### Parent Committee

**All parents and caregivers are automatically a member of the parent committee at your child's center.**

Parent Committees are established at the beginning of the year. Be looking for information about the meeting time and location at your center! Each center elects a Policy Council representative to represent the center at the Policy Council meetings and a Parent Committee Vice-Chair who will become the Policy Council Representative if the elected representative cannot fulfill their duties.

### Process for Resolving Community and Parent Complaints

Purpose: To establish a process by which community and parent complaints can be heard and resolved.

Definition: A community complaint as used in this procedure is initiated by a parent or community member.

Policy: Tri-County Head Start administration understands that concerns or complaints will be made by people served by Tri-County Head Start and/or community members. When complaints arise, Tri-County Head Start staff will respond to the concern or complaint immediately, assuring that the issue is heard and resolved quickly.

### Parents and community members, please use the following procedure:

**Step #1:** The complaint needs to be discussed with the Teacher. All complaints regarding the health and safety of a child need to be discussed immediately.

**Step #2:** If complaint is not resolved with the classroom Teacher the parent or community member may express concerns to the agency Director.

**Step #3:** If the complaint is not resolved with classroom Teacher or Agency Director the parent or community member may express concerns in writing, to the Policy Council (PC) representative for that classroom. These concerns will be brought before the Policy Council. The PC representative will contact individuals with the outcome.

## Family Services – Attendance, Enrollment, Family Advocates, Resources

### Criteria for Admission and Withdrawal

TCHS serves children ages 0-5 years and prenatal mothers within Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. There are no organization affiliation requirements. We prioritize in serving families who are at or below 100% of poverty, foster children, families receiving SSI or TANF or children with IFSP and/or IEP.

Items needed before a child can attend; documentation of income, proof of birth, immunization records, Well Child Exam documentation, signed application, signed health test and release, written packet documentation, child health history, Child Information Card, Signed Transportation Agreement, Permission to observe, parental rights of privacy and custody documentation.

Tri County Head Start does not withdraw or expel students per the Head Start Performance Standards for any reasons. Parents can withdraw their students at any time.

### Fee Policy

There are no fees to attend Tri County Head Start.

### Family Engagement

Families are the cornerstone of Head Start. We believe that parents are the first and best teachers of their children. Families have much to contribute to Head Start including their cultural heritage, family values and experiences. Head Start serves a diverse population and we do everything possible to assure all families feel comfortable and included. We encourage parents to be involved in all aspects of the program and their child's education. The more involved parents are, the more their child will achieve. Teachers partner with parents to ensure their children get the best pre-school education possible!

Family members have many opportunities to participate in the program. They can:

- Read Aloud for 15 minutes in the classroom.
- Volunteer in the classroom (See Volunteer Policy).
- Attend Freddy Night, Fantastic Fathers and Families events, and Parent Training events, virtually or in-person.
- Share ideas about learning that can be used in the classroom and on home visits.
- Attend Parent Committee Meetings. This is the place to connect with other parents in the program.
- Participate in Policy Council which meets monthly. They work with administrative staff to make decisions about the program.

### Freddy Nights

Freddy Night is all about getting Ready for School – for families and children alike! It is just one of our training opportunities for parents. Freddy Night provides parents the opportunities to assist in the development of activities that address their interests and needs and that support the education and healthy development of their children.

- For parents of all children participating in Center Based and Home-Based options.
- Includes essential information, training, resources, activities and a meal.
- Addresses issues specific to each community.

- Provides resources to assist parents in working with community organizations.
- Freddy nights may be virtual or in-person, due to the ongoing pandemic.

### Fantastic Fathers and Families Events

Tri-County Head Start recognizes the importance of fathers, father figures and male role models in the lives of children. We support the idea that father engagement means making committed partnerships between staff and the significant males in a child's life and education. Fathers, father figures and male role models are included and encouraged to participate at all levels of our agency, such as program governance, home kit activities, classroom volunteerism, employment and other areas. Our philosophy of inclusion of any and all significant males in a child's life contributes directly to strengthening the foundation of family engagement across our entire program and positive outcomes for the family and child.

Fantastic Fathers and Families events are designed to be an informational and fun evening for children to bond with the male figures in their lives. While all family members are welcome to attend, the evening does have an emphasis on the involvement of fathers and father figures and the positive impacts they play in the lives of children. The event embraces the concept of using household items to educate and build relationships with children.

- For parents of all children participating in School Based and Home-Based options as well as any family in our TCHS community.
- Includes essential information, training, resources, activities, take home materials and a meal.
- Provides educational opportunity for children and parents on how to use common household items for fun, educational purposes
- Provides the opportunity for fathers and families to network with others in the area

### The Role of our Family Advocates

Tri-County Head Start employs Family Advocates who are Ambassadors of our program and Champions of our children and families. Their role includes, but is not limited to:

- Forming relationships with families and working with the family to assess areas in need of support through a family needs assessment and Family Partnership Agreements, a strength based, goal setting process
- Referring families to community resources and following up on families' satisfaction with resources to which they have been referred
- Assisting families in meeting all Head Start health requirements
- Promoting regular attendance in school-based and home-based programs
- Recruiting families and completing applications for eligible children

## Family Needs Assessment & Family Partnership Agreements

An important piece of Head Start programming is to help families reach goals towards personal, family, and professional success. Tri-County Head Start Family Advocates and Home Visitors use the Family Needs Assessment, a Head Start specific interview and assessment tool, to identify each family's strengths, determine areas needing support and set achievable goals for the family to reach. TCHS staff support families with resources and encouragement on their path to goal achievement. Families are linked to other agencies and organizations offering programs including but not limited to:

- Housing
- Employment
- Food
- Clothing
- Child Care
- Counseling
- Domestic Violence Assistance
- Education (GED, Diploma, College, Skilled Trades, etc.)
- Family Literacy
- Financial Education (Budgeting, Savings, Banking, Tax Credits, Tax Filing, etc.)
- Health Needs (Finding a doctor, getting insurance, etc.)
- Substance Abuse Assistance
- Utility Payment Assistance

## Resource Book

Each family participating in the program receives our Resource Book. The Resource Book contains valuable information on community organizations and services available to families. A few examples are: WIC and Michigan State University Extension (nutritional services), Mental Health Services, Domestic Violence resources, services for children with disabilities and many more. If you are in need of assistance and cannot locate it in the Resource Book, please call our office at 1-800-792-0366.

## Custody Order of Children

In order to ensure that all parent rights are respected, the following has been established for dealing with custody issues.

- The person(s) with physical custodial rights of the Head Start enrolled child is responsible for listing all persons on the Child Information Card to whom their child may be released and for notifying staff of any changes.
- The most current court order regarding release of children to a particular parent/legal guardian shall be kept on file at the center.

Head Start locations are not used for supervised visitation. Likewise, Tri-County Head Start cannot side with any parent in the case of a custody battle. Tri-County Head Start is a neutral party and will always follow whatever the most recent court orders declare. To learn more about custody, and custody resources, please see the Family Resource Book\*

## Child Attendance Policy and Procedure

Policy: If a child is absent from HS or EHS without explanation from the parent, within 1 hour, a TCHS staff person must contact the family to determine the reason for the absence and how the staff and program can support the family so the

child can return to school as soon as possible. This effort must be documented. It is an expectation the program maintains an 85% average daily attendance rate over a month-long period, for in-person services and virtual visits. It shall be the responsibility of all TCHS staff to support parents and families in understanding the importance of regular attendance, the responsibilities of participating in the program and assist in resolving any barriers.

**Procedure:**

1. Staff follow-up
  - If a child is absent without explanation, a staff person will attempt to contact the family to determine a primary cause for the child's absence. The attempted contact must be made within 1 hour of the start of class to ensure the well-being of the child. Staff document this attempt and all subsequent attempts, including when contact with the parent is made and a reason for the absence is provided.
  - If a child continues to be absent without explanation (for 2 consecutive days) staff will conduct a home visit or make other direct contact with the child's parents. Staff will provide access to resources that may assist the family to overcome barriers to daily attendance for the child.
  - If by reviewing individual attendance history and patterns, a child has or is at risk of missing 10% of available program days (chronically absent) staff will work with the family to develop individual strategies. These strategies can include:
    - i. Provide Information about the benefits of regular attendance
    - ii. Support Families to promote the child's regular attendance
    - iii. Intensive case management
    - iv. Temporarily provide services outside the classroom until barriers are resolved
  - If a child ceases to attend staff must make all effort to re-engage the family to resume attendance including home visits and in-writing.
2. If, after all means of support have been exhausted, the child has not resumed participation in the program the program must consider the slot vacant and fill it with an eligible child from the waitlist.
3. For Homeless or Foster children ONLY, a slot will be held for 30 days from the last date of attendance to reestablish participation. If after 30 days, services have not been re-established, the slot will be considered vacant and either placed in reserve for a new Homeless or Foster child or filled with a child from the waitlist.

**Attendance –First Day, Every Day**

Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work someday.

Regular attendance is essential for children to receive the benefits of the Early Head Start and Head Start Programs. This is the best time to start building a habit of good attendance. Young children with poor attendance in preschool also lose out on valuable learning time and if chronic absence continues into kindergarten, it can pull down academic achievement.

Children who are chronically absent in preschool are more likely to continue the pattern into elementary school and beyond. These kids are more likely to be held back before they reach 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, less likely to graduate from high school, and generally have lower earning potential than graduates throughout their working career.



## What You Can Expect from Head Start

- If your child misses 'school and our classroom staff have not heard from you, they will make every attempt to reach you within the first 30 minutes of class on the phone or make a home visit to learn the reason for the absence.
- When two days are missed, Head Start staff will contact you directly or make a home visit to discuss ways to improve attendance at pre-school for your child.
- Teachers will also discuss attendance concerns and set goals with families at conferences.
- Family Advocates can provide strategies, resources, and referrals to community partners that may help families overcome barriers to regular attendance at pre-school.
- If every effort has been made to improve attendance, yet chronic absenteeism persists, a child's spot may be considered an enrollment vacancy.

## Weather and Closures

### One Call Now

We keep families informed through One Call Now system. We use One Call to deliver clear messages to parents by telephone, cell phone, e-mail or in any combination. One Call is used to notify parents of school closings or delays, to send reminders regarding events and other important program information.

This messaging system is kept up to date with our database. Make sure to keep your Family Advocate and/or Teachers informed of any changes so that you won't miss an alert or notification.

When local schools are closed due to weather, our Head Start preschool center(s) are closed and Head Start home visits are cancelled in those areas. Decisions to close for weather, other than when the public schools are closed may occur based on current weather conditions and any other factors that may affect the safety of children and staff.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be necessary to close a classroom, center, or entire agency. Decisions to close will be based on local, state, and federal requirements and recommendations.

### Early Dismissal or Closure after Preschool is in Session:

In the event of an early dismissal based upon weather, illnesses, building issues, power outage, etc. parents are notified using the information from the Child Information Card. Every attempt will be made to notify the parent or guardian listed on the card. If a parent or guardian cannot be notified of the early dismissal, the emergency contact numbers will be called. Honeywell Instant Alert.

We also contact local TV and radio stations regarding delays and closures. Below is a list of stations we notify:

#### TV Stations

Berrien County – WSBT 22, WNDU 16  
 Cass County – WWMT 3, WSBT 22, WNDU 16  
 Van Buren County – WWMT 3, WOOD 8

#### Radio Stations

WGMY AM 940, WIRX FM 107.1, WSJM AM 1400, WZBL FM 103.7, WYTZ FM 97.5, WCSY FM 98.3 and The Coast FM 94.5

## Education Services

At Tri-County Head Start and Early Head Start children learn...

- **reading and writing** through a wide variety of experiences. They learn to recognize and use written symbols on labels, charts, graphs, personal books, signs, and their own pictures. They learn about letter names and sounds
- concepts related to **mathematics**. They practice classifying, ordering, patterning and counting with many kinds of materials. They use numbers in games, projects, charts and graphs, measuring, songs and so on.
- to be active **problem solvers** as they use all kinds of materials to experiment and explore. **Science** areas and activities offer opportunities to try out ideas, make observations and do experiments. Interesting projects from making mixtures to testing magnets to growing plants engage children's curiosity.
- to use their natural **creativity**. They explore art, music, movement and drama. We provide a wide variety of materials for expressing creative ideas and feelings. Children's ideas are respected and valued.
- basic **fine motor skills** are so important to future schoolwork. They do this with construction toys, pegboards, playdough, and art materials, to name a few. Children will exercise their developing **gross motor skills** by using equipment and participate in activities planned to challenge their coordination and strength in fun ways.
- **independence** by making choices and decisions. They learn self-help skills – hand washing, tooth brushing, setting the table, serving themselves at snack and lunch, dressing skills, cleaning up and so on are practiced so often they become routine.
- to develop **positive relationships** with other children and adults. They learn about **resolving conflicts** in acceptable ways. They're helped to practice skills of negotiation and expressing feelings in words.
- **about other cultures and traditions**. They learn there are many differences and similarities among people the world over.
- **health and safety** Children develop awareness about many topics including fire, poisons and abuse prevention. They learn about **nutrition** and participate in gardening and cooking activities.



## Your Child's Development

At the beginning of each year, we use several tools that focus on your child's overall development. One is a developmental screening called the Ages & Stages Questionnaire or ASQ for short. The other screening tool is a questionnaire that you complete called the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire. This tool focuses on your child's social and emotional development. These screenings help us see if a child may need any additional services.

We use the Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment System to document each child's abilities and progress throughout the school year. Your child's teacher completes a child assessment portfolio tracking your child's progress. The teacher will update and share information with you three times a year.

We track learning outcomes in these areas: language, literacy, science, math, physical health and development, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, creative arts, logic & reasoning and social studies in the fall, winter and spring.

## Curriculum

At Tri County Head Start we prepare child for kindergarten using several curriculums. Our center-based option for Preschool utilizes the Creative Curriculum, which is study-based lessons that are in-depth and content-rich, encouraging higher order thinking skills and active learning. Our center-based option for Infants & Toddlers also uses Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Two's, which focuses on using routines as teachable moments, learning language, encouraging thinking skills, and active learning. Our home-based option utilizes Growing Great Kids, which is strength based and parent focused.

During the 2020-2021 program year your child's teacher/classroom may be using another curriculum, High Scope that we are piloting.

Our teachers write lesson plans and adapt those plans as needed to individualize for each child. You will work with your child's teacher to write individualized goals and plans to achieve goals for your child.

We believe you are your child's first and most important teacher. We value your ideas and encourage you to fill out the Family Ideas and Observations form so we can incorporate your ideas into lesson plans. Your teacher will let you know when he/she schedules your plans, so you can join in on the classroom fun!

## CLASS/GGK Observation Tools

Our teachers and home visitors are assessed using the CLASS (classroom assessment scoring system) and GGK Fidelity Tool tools two times a year.

The CLASS™ tool helps educators focus on support students' social and emotional functioning, asking open-ended questions and encouraging higher-order thinking skills. The GGK tool is focuses on family engagement/support, parent-child interactions and Home Visitor facilitation of visit (coaching parent).

## Classroom Home Visits and Conferences

Center based families participate in at least two home visits and two conferences with your child's teacher. You are welcome to request additional home visits or conferences at any time. The purpose of the home visits and conferences is to share information about your child's progress, share information on topics of interest to families. Set goals for your child, and answer your questions.

During home visits and conferences your child's teacher reviews the child assessment portfolio with you. Together, you set goals and plan activities for home and school to help your child learn,

The first home visit occurs before classes start, or when your child begins attending the program. Orientation to the classroom is scheduled so each child and family can meet the center staff, see the classroom, and feel comfortable the first day. Visits may be virtual.

### Classroom Daily Schedule

Both Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms follow a daily schedule (schedules and activities may vary due to the COVID-19 pandemic). We know that children thrive in a predictable environment. We also know that in preschool, things happen, and the schedule cannot always be followed. Teachers will designate their own classroom schedules based on their curriculum and the needs of their students. Each classroom participates in the following activities:

**Greeting:** This is a short whole group circle to get ready for the day. During this time the daily activities are introduced, children greet each other and plan for the day.

**Outdoor Gross Motor:** Children go outside daily, weather permitting. Small and large group activities are planned.

**Breakfast/Snack:** Meals are served family style at tables. Mealtime gives the class an opportunity to make connections and have conversations. In Early Head Start Infant classrooms children are fed on demand.

**Child Choice Time:** Children choose activities from a variety of areas. Adults lead planned activities for small groups and work with individual children one on one.

**Small Group Time (Head Start only):** Small group lasts about 10-15 minutes. Teachers plan activities to complete at the tables. The activities have a specific area of focus such as literacy, math, science, etc.

**Circle/Group Time:** Adults lead children in stories, songs and movement.

**Lunch:** Food is passed, family style, children serve themselves and are encouraged to try new foods.

**Tooth brushing:** All children brush their teeth after a meal. Adults teach healthy dental habits.

**Rest Time:** 7-hour classes have a 45-minute rest time. In 5-hour classrooms, rest time will consist of quiet time with low lighting, soft music, reading and table toys such as puzzles and play dough. In Early Head Start infant classrooms children rest as needed, on demand. Children are encouraged to rest but do not have to sleep.

### Holiday and Celebrations

TCHS recognizes that holidays and birthdays are exciting events in the lives of our children and families. Our goal is to celebrate in respectful ways. Families are encouraged to share their family traditions with their school families. Families are encouraged to communicate with their Teachers about how/what you celebrate. Teachers work to plan educational and intentional celebrations that are inclusive of all families.

Birthdays are special events! Birthdays are celebrated in our classrooms in different ways such as with song, special hat/ribbons and special jobs for the day. If a family wishes to provide a treat on their child's birthday, please remember

that only commercially prepared foods and nothing homemade are allowed in the classroom. Refer to the Food Safety section of this family handbook for more information and suggestions.

### [“Home Kits”: Individualized Home Activity Record for Center Based Programs](#)

Home kits are a big part of what you and your child will work on together this year!

Home kits are a collection of activities that are created individually for each child, each week. Sometimes your teacher will send home materials, other times it will be activities you will be able to complete with items from your home.

Home kits are important for 2 BIG reasons...

1.) They extend the classroom experience into your home.

2.) The time you spend completing home kits is donated to our program, which is critical for TCHS to meet our in-kind requirements.

While doing the Home Kit activities, watch and observe what your child is doing and write your comments on the form. When activities are complete, send the form back to your teacher and she will use your observations to assess your child's development.

Doing home kits together helps you and your child prepare for Head Start and/or kindergarten. It increases your child's outcomes and school readiness.

We want you and your child to enjoy the time you spend completing the activities and reading! Talk to your teacher about the kind of home kits you would enjoy!

### [Dress Code](#)

Clothing for preschoolers should be appropriate for school. The clothing should be easy to manipulate by the child, simple, comfortable, and weather friendly.

### **What to Wear:**

Any color pants – they must fit the child as not to fall down and cause tripping hazards. A belt can be worn to hold up the pants. Leggings, capris, and jogging pants may be worn. Any color shirts – T-shirts, sweatshirts etc. work well and are comfortable for the child.

Closed toe shoes (such as tennis shoes) are REQUIRED. No sandals or flip flops.

Weather appropriate clothing must be worn at all times. As children go outside to play MOST days. Reminder: Boots for rain or snow; coats or light jackets depending on the season, snow pants for cold winter days and wet playgrounds, hats, and gloves. Make sure your child is dressed appropriately when they leave the house, some classrooms start their day on the playground. If you are unable to provide weather appropriate clothing, please reach out to your FA or HV.

If children are required or recommended to wear masks, a clean mask will be provided for your child daily. Children under the age of 2 will not wear masks at anytime.

For Adults: When volunteering in the classroom, we ask that you please follow the same dress code guidelines as we ask our staff. Open toed shoes are not permitted. Please wear shoes or boots appropriate for the weather. Tight fitting, revealing, and low-rise pant styles are not appropriate for interacting with children in the classroom. Following these guidelines creates a respectful and wholesome atmosphere where quality teaching and learning can flourish.

## Home Based Home Visits

Since parents are the child's first and best teacher, as you know them best, you are the primary teacher for your child during home visits. Your Home Visitor provides support for you and your child to work together to build their school readiness skills. Together, you'll plan the activities for the visits and provide learning materials from common household items. You and your home visitor will collect information and observations for your child's online portfolio using the TS Gold online Assessment System to track their development to ensure they are prepared for the next step when they are ready for Preschool or Kindergarten.

Home Visitors visit their families each week for 1 ½ hours. Federal regulations require 32 home visits for our Head Start Home Visitors and 46 home visits for our Early Head Start Home Visitors. If a home visit must be missed, your home visitor will partner with you to find the best day and time to make it up.

You and your child will also attend SCHOOL for 2 hours at one of our centers for a classroom experience twice a month, these visits could be virtual. It's a great way to introduce your child to a classroom setting. These experiences build on experiences that have occurred on home visits. During your weekly home visit, you will help plan the activities.

### [Skill Builder \(Home Kits\) for Home Based Program](#)

Every week parents and home visitors plan activities/experiences to build their child's skills in between home visits. As you and your child work together to building the skill you had discussed with your home visitor, parents write their observations down on the Skill Builder Home Kit. The home visitor and parent will talk about how the skill building went at the next visit and discuss how the child is developing as we will track your child's development together.

Building skills every week helps you and your child prepare for preschool and strengthens your child's school readiness skills.

The time that families spend working on the activities contributes to the agency wide In-Kind requirements. Every hour of time working at home on EHS or HS activities with your child, represents a monetary donation and is counted as a dollar amount towards our In-Kind goals.

We hope you enjoy the time you spend with your child completing the activities and reading!

## Health Services

### Health Exams

Children enrolled in Head Start are required to have a Well Child and Dental exam.

Children must have a current Well Child Exam to attend Head Start. Well child exams are required yearly for Head Start Children.

Children must have a current Dental Exam within 90 days of entry into Head Start. Dental checkups are required every 6 months.

Your child must meet the minimum immunization requirement to attend a Head Start classroom.

The minimum immunization requirements in the State of Michigan are:

- 1-DTaP
- 1-POLIO
- 1-HepB
- 1-MMR at/after 12 months of age
- Varicella at/after 12 months of age or proof of disease
- Completed series of HIB or one at/after 15 months of age
- Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine - 1 dose at or after 24 months of age or an age appropriate completed series



**NOTE:** Immunization (shot) records must be on file at the Administrative office for your child to attend a classroom session.

## Health Updates

As part of your child's enrollment in Head Start, we ask you to keep our staff informed of any new or ongoing health concerns that may arise during the year. Head Start's goal is to assure your child's safety and the safety of all children in our care. Please report any diagnosed or suspected communicable disease(s) (see next page) your child may have. Our staff will keep you informed of health issues at centers that arise during the year that may be of importance to you, your child and your family.

If a child or a member of your family is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or have a positive test, please contact our agency. Children who have exhibited multiple symptoms of COVID-19, have had possible exposure, or test positive for COVID-19 must stay home until it is safe for them to return. Criteria for return is in the Guide to a Safe Start.

## Mental Health

The Head Start Mental Health Consultants promote positive mental health, emotional well-being, social competency and resiliency; and as a program, we strive to create conditions where young children and their families have the necessary support system for school readiness success.

Mental Health Consultants post their schedule in each classroom and are available to meet with families upon request. (Please see your child's teacher)

Mental Health Consultants provide support, education and trainings to staff and families. Mental Health Consultants partner with parents and teaching staff to create Action Plans for children with challenging behavior, as well as providing referral for services outside of Head Start.

## Discipline Policy

All Staff and Volunteers adhere to the following Daycare Licensing rule for discipline. R 400.8140 Discipline Rule 140.

1. Positive methods of discipline that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation must be used
2. All of the following means of punishment are prohibited:
  - a. Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
  - b. Placing any substances in a child's mouth, including but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
  - c. Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
  - d. Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.

- e. Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
  - f. Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
  - g. Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
  - h. Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar enclosure.
  - i. Time out must not be used for children under 3 years of age.
3. Non-severe and developmentally appropriate discipline or restraint may be used when reasonably necessary, based on a child's development, to prevent a child from harming himself or herself or to prevent a child from harming other persons or property, excluding those forms of punishment prohibited by subrule (2) of this rule.
  4. A written policy must be developed and implemented regarding the age appropriate, non-severe discipline of children. The policy must be provided to staff and parents.

All Head Start staff adheres to the Michigan Child Care Licensing Rule140 and meets the expectations by implementing Conscious Discipline. Employees, volunteers and visitors treat children with kindness and respect.

All Head Start classrooms follow a daily routine and we provide children with a visual schedule, so they know what to expect. Classroom Rules are used as daily commitments with children. The teacher's job is to keep children safe; the children's job is to help keep it that way.

Staff remain calm when responding to children and connect with children. At Head Start we encourage children to problem-solve and practice calm down steps. Calm Down Steps are taught and practiced in each classroom and an area of the classroom is set aside as the "Safe Place" for children to use for comfort and calming.

Staff provide children with choices and use logical and natural consequences. Head Start Staff focus on positive expectations and view mistakes as opportunities to learn.

If a child is harming themselves or others a safety hold may be used only as a last resort. Conscious Discipline strategies are used first to assist children and are documented. The parent is notified if a safety hold has been used in the classroom. Safety holds are never used as a form of discipline or control.

Action Plans are written to create positive strategies for children in the classroom. We believe all children want to be successful in Head Start. We work with families to understand a child's behavior and create steps to help the child be more likely to choose positive solutions.

Any employee who observes staff, volunteers or visitors using inappropriate disciplinary practices must report the incident to the building Coordinator immediately. Failure of an employee to follow the Discipline Policy will result in termination.

### Special Needs

If you have concerns about your child's development, speak with his or her teacher. A Head Start Disability Consultant will contact you to discuss your concerns and ask for permission to observe your child. The Disability Consultant supports families in getting needed services for children who may need additional support.

Disability Consultants work with Classroom Teachers in lesson planning for children who already have an Individual Education Plan or Individual Family Support Plan. This may include activities in your weekly Home Kit that provides continued support for your child.

Children who do not qualify for services outside of Head Start will be provided additional strategies to assist their school readiness success.

### Accidents/Injury

While we make all attempts to ensure the safety of your child while in our care, occasionally accidents happen. Head Start has staff trained in First Aid and CPR at all centers in accordance with the State of Michigan Licensing Regulations. For a non-emergency illness/injury, parents will be notified by phone, in writing or in person on the day it occurs. Should your child require immediate medical attention, we will call 911 and then notify you.

### When Your Child Is Ill

The health and safety of all children is important. There are situations in which you need to keep your children at home so they can rest and feel better. These include

- If experience symptoms or test positive for COVID-19
- If your child has a temperature of 100.4 or higher (Children should remain at home until they do not have a fever for a 72-hour period not using fever reducing medication)
- If your child is coughing and cannot stop, breathing hard or fast, and/or has a fever.
- If your child has many watery stools (diarrhea “the runs”)
- If your child is vomiting (not explained by other medical conditions, i.e. asthma)
- If your child has a rash that is spreading or is accompanied by a fever or is scratching

If your child becomes ill at school with a rash, fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, we will make every attempt to contact you so you can take your child home to provide comfort and rest.

Due to the safety concerns surrounding COVID-19 you will be asked to pick up your child immediately. Have a plan in place if you will not available to pick up your child.

If you have any question about sending your child to school do not hesitate to call and speak with your child's teacher or a member of our Health Services Team.

### When your Child is Ill, Injured or Hospitalized

If your child is injured at home and you have taken him or her to the doctor, the emergency room or he/she has needed some type of surgery, you must have a note from the doctor allowing your child to come back to school. You must contact the teacher first, before the child can return to school, to notify her that the child does not have restrictions (special things that must be done to care for an illness or injury). If the doctor has noted restrictions on the return to school note, the teacher will contact Health Services Staff to make sure it is safe for your child to return.

### Child, Employee and Volunteer Communicable Disease Procedure

According to the State of Michigan Public Health Code (Public Act 368, of 1978 as amended), the local health department shall be notified of the occurrence of any reportable communicable disease.

Tri-County Head Start follows those guidelines established by the Van Buren/Cass County District Health Department and Berrien County Health Departments for Communicable Childhood Illness for exclusion of children, employees and volunteers. Guidelines for re-admission to a Head Start center are as indicated below. We ask you to report to staff any of those conditions listed below when diagnosed by your child's health provider.

\*Proof of treatment is required by TCHS for: **Impetigo, Ringworm and Scabies** prior to child returning to a center. This is to assure children are properly treated. This means parents must provide proof of treatment including showing medication container or a note from health provider. Proof MUST be shown to Teacher/Teacher Assistant.

The following guidance is from the 2019/2020 school year. Our local Health Department will update for the coming school year in August or September for the 2020/2021 school year.

**\*If you report that your child or somebody in your family has or has been exposed to COVID-19, Tri-County Head Start will report that information to the Health Department in the county in which you live. If your child has had family exposure or diagnosed COVID-19, the Health Department will advise on the length of time the child will remain out of school and any further steps that must be taken. Read the Safe Start Guide for further information.**

CHICKENPOX (Varicella)	Exclude until lesions are dry and crusted.
COLD SORES	Exclusion not required.
CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink Eye)	Exclude until 24 hours of treatment or symptoms resolved.
DIARRHEA: Non-specific, Rota-virus and most Salmonella	Exclude when diarrhea cannot be contained or presence of fever.
SALMONELLA Typhi	Exclusion until permission from health department to return.
SHIGELLA	Exclusion until permission from health department to return.
FIFTH DISEASE (erythema infectiosum)	Exclusion not required
HAND-FOOT-MOUTH DISEASE	Exclusion not required
HEPATITIS	Until approved by a health care provider
IMPETIGO*	Exclude until 24 hours of antibiotic treatment
LICE	Exclude following school policy. Head Starts' Policy is to exclude if live lice or eggs less than $\frac{1}{4}$ " from scalp
MONONUCLEOSIS	Exclusion not required
PERTUSSIS (whooping cough)	After five (5) days of treatment
RINGWORM*	Exclusion not required (should be treated)
SCABIES*	Until treated
STREP THROAT & SCARLET FEVER	After 24 hours of treatment
TUBERCULOSIS	Until Physician's advise
UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION	Not until fever is gone

## Lead Poisoning

Tri-County Head Start works with each family to assure that their child is safe from lead poisoning. Each family will complete a lead questionnaire at registration; and we ask for parent consent to perform a lead test on their child, if he or she has not been previously tested for lead. Lead testing requires a finger poke to analyze the blood.

**ALL CHILDREN** should have a blood lead test at 12 months of age and 24 months of age. If a child was not tested for lead between 36 months and 72 months of age, a blood lead test should be performed.

If your child has a lead value of 5 or more, a Tri-County Head Start will contact the local health department. A public health nurse will contact you to provide lead education and support.

Many families live in areas that have been identified as high risk for lead exposure; precautions can be taken to keep children safe and help lower their lead level.

## According to the Center for Disease Control:

### 5 Things You Can Do To Lower Your Child's Lead Level

- Work with your doctor to find the best treatment for your child and ask questions if you do not understand something.
- Find the lead in your home – most children get lead poisoning from the lead paint in homes built before 1978.
- When old paint cracks and peels, it makes lead dust that cannot be seen. Children get lead poisoning from swallowing the dust on their hand and toys – **WASH BEFORE EATING AND SLEEPING**
- Feed your child healthy foods with calcium, iron, and vitamin c. These foods help keep the lead out of the body. (You can contact our Nutritionist for a complete list)
- Contact your local Health Department. Trained staff can answer questions and refer you to other resources in your community.

## Medication Procedure

Medications are only given after all steps are taken to ensure the safety of your child and our staff. Health Services will work with you and your child's doctor to set up a schedule for medication administration at the center if needed. Before medications are administered at school, Health Services must have written instructions from your child's doctor prior to administration being set up. Classroom staff and/or Health Services staff will meet with you to review medication administration, and potential emergency plans on an individual basis. Accommodations will be made based on each individual case.

## Hand Washing

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of germs and illness. Children are taught and perform hand washing daily with meals, after toileting and touching soiled surfaces. Staff and volunteers also wash hands before meals, after toileting and touching soiled surfaces/items.

## Tooth Brushing

An essential part of being healthy is having healthy teeth. Poor dental health may cause trouble with eating and/or drinking and may lead to other health/behavioral issues.

Children need to learn the importance of brushing teeth, unfortunately we will not be toothbrushing in the classrooms this year due to COVID-19. A toothbrush will be sent home for every child and we ask you to help your children brush their teeth at least one time a day.

Parents can learn to “Lift the Lip” check monthly on children’s gums and teeth to watch for early signs of decay (chalky white spots, brown spots or other discoloration

## Children with Outdoor Activity Restrictions

Children at Head Start play outside every day, weather permitting. All center staff are required to be on the playground to assure the safety of children. Due to this policy, children at single classroom sites who are too ill to go outside, may need to stay home or adjust attendance times to exclude outdoor play time. At multiple classroom sites, children with medically documented activity restrictions may be allowed to stay inside based on medical need. Health Services will work with you and your child’s health provider to meet your child’s needs.

## Be Busy Stay Healthy

The Be Busy, Stay Healthy Program is offered to all families. Our Nutrition Consultant will contact families and offer activity home kits - Fun for the whole family. Parents play a big role in promoting healthy choices! Let's work together to keep our kids healthy!

## Nutrition

Head Start provides meals for children based on the USDA Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines for breakfast, lunch and /or snack. Food is never used as a reward or a punishment. Meals are served family style. Staff and volunteers present in the classroom during mealtimes eat with the children. Children will be introduced to a variety of new foods.

Tri-County Head Start partners with several public schools to provide food. The public schools may use other free food programs such as National School Lunch, or the School Breakfast Program. The same quality and Head Start guidelines are followed when using other food service programs.

Parents will receive copies of menus at Orientation. Menus with noted food substitutions will be posted in the classroom in a place visible to parents. Children with special dietary needs will receive meals/snacks in accordance with the child's needs. Food substitutions will only be provided for **doctor-diagnosed** food allergies/intolerances, in accordance with CACFP guidelines. Parents may **not** send in food for their own child.

All food served to children is provided by Tri-County Head Start and funded through the CACFP program, which assures all the children in our program have a good, healthy meal. Mealtime is a learning experience for children; teachers eat with children to model a variety of skills. Parents and Volunteers in the classroom are welcome to eat, if there is food left after the children have been served their meal.

In accordance with the Michigan food code, and per Health Department regulations: **no left-over food or drinks served at TCHS Centers at meals, during Freddy Night, etc., may be taken home by parents, volunteers, or staff.**

Black bowls and lids that have been used for serving food may be recycled for personal use by parents and staff. Bowls should be emptied of food before leaving the Center. Bowls may not be re-used at the Center to serve food.

Please let us know when your child will not be attending class so that the amounts of food prepared can be adjusted, in an effort to eliminate food waste

#### Non-Discrimination Statement

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, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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 responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or 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 discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint 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, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

#### Procedure for Communication with Parents regarding Child's Nutrition

Parents of Head Start children can advise Head Start staff of concerns regarding their child's nutrition through the Child History form completed at time of application. During the school year, a Nutrition Questionnaire is provided to parents, where they may address any nutrition issues of their child. In addition, parents are encouraged to discuss individual concerns with their child's teacher. The teacher can follow-up by notifying the Nutrition Consultant, who will then make contact with the family. Nutrition concerns can be communicated one-on-one between the parent and the Nutrition Consultant at individual nutrition counselling sessions. If families wish to speak with the Nutrition Consultant directly, they may get the contact information from center staff. Parents may also submit their suggestions or concerns in the Suggestion Box provided in each classroom.

#### Food Safety

The safety of children in Head Start is our most important concern. Due to health concerns including food allergies/sensitivities, we **cannot** allow foods in the classroom which have been prepared outside of our Head Start kitchens/classrooms. Tri-County Head Start understands you may wish to bring a special treat to celebrate your child's

birthday. Please review the list of allowed items and discuss with your teaching staff what you have selected so they can monitor the treats for children's food allergies.

Healthy foods to share with friends: granola bars without nuts, fruit bars, fruit cups, prepared Jell-O and pudding cups (**only those that do not need refrigeration and do not contain red dye**) animal crackers, vanilla wafers, cheese crackers, 100 calorie snack packages

Recommended foods to keep home: cake/cupcakes, ice cream, cookies, donuts, snack chips

Foods that are NOT ALLOWED at Head Start due to Choking Hazards: all candy, popcorn, peanuts and other nuts, raisins or dried nuts fruit, unless cooked in food, any nut butters



### Head Lice Policy & Procedure

Tri-County Head Start follows the policy recommendations of the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Michigan Department of Education which focuses on the exclusion of active head lice infestations only. Active infestations can be defined as the presence of live lice or nits found within  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the scalp. Nits that are found beyond  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of the scalp have more than likely hatched or are no longer viable.

When live lice are discovered on a student, staff will contact a parent/guardian to pick the child up as soon as possible. Staff will provide the parent/guardian with information regarding treatment. Immediate treatment at home is advised. If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, the staff will continue with emergency numbers until someone is reached who can pick the child up. If contact cannot be made, every attempt will be made to decrease close contact with other students. The student will be re-admitted to school after treatment and examination by staff. If, upon examination, there are NO live lice or nits closer than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the scalp, the child may re-enter the classroom.

***Any student with nits (farther than  $\frac{1}{4}$ " from scalp) should be allowed in school.***

***Parents should remove nits daily and treat if live lice are observed.***

### Bed Bug Procedure

Occasionally a bed bug may be brought into one of our classrooms; however, we have never had an infestation of bed bugs to date. If a bed bug is discovered in the classroom the teacher follows the Bed Bug Procedure.

- A letter will go home indicating that a bed bug, or what appears to be a bed bug, was discovered in the classroom.
- Children will not be able to bring book bags to and from school until we feel that the risk of spreading bed bugs has passed. We will determine this after a few months of not seeing any more bed bugs.
- Children's coats and/or rest-time blankets will be kept in individual bags until the risk period is over.
- If the bed bugs are discovered on a specific child, the teacher will call that parent and inform them of the finding. The teacher **WILL NOT** disclose the identity of the family to any other students or family.

Bed Bugs can be very difficult to get rid of, if you need information pertaining to bed bugs you may call Tri-County Head Start Health Services or speak to your Family Advocate.

### Facility Cleaning and Sanitizing Procedures

Tri-County Head Start expects that all centers will always be clean and sanitary. On occasion it may become necessary to clean and sanitize toys, equipment, and surfaces which have been contaminated by accidental spills or body fluids. Should contamination occur, staff will immediately make that area, surface, or toy inaccessible to all children until it has been cleaned and sanitized. Staff will wear nonporous gloves and clean surface initially with paper towels and wash area thoroughly with soap and water. The surface will be disinfected using a solution of bleach and water (mixed according to sanitation procedure). The area will be sprayed until it appears glossy, then wiped off with a clean paper towel or if possible, air dried for a minimum of two minutes.

Refer to the Safe Start Guide for our enhanced cleaning and sanitizing procedures, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Emergency Procedure

Immediate and appropriate first aid is given by certified staff at the center or on the bus. For children who require **IMMEDIATE** medical intervention call 911 then notify Health Services Director or designee at the Head Start Office. If no answer between 12:00- 12:30 the Program Director or Center Coordinator will provide directions until the Health Services Director or designee can be contacted.

**\*\*IMMEDIATE MEDICAL INTERVENTION: Loss of consciousness, breathing difficulties, severe bleeding, seizure, neck or back injury, possible broken bone, or shock.**

**\*\*Dental Emergency Care: Tooth knocked out baby/ permanent or chipped tooth does not require 911 unless the child became unconscious. Follow the Dental Care Emergency Poster and contact the parent ASAP. We recommend that the child be seen by their dentist in this situation.**

1. I. Pull child's information card prior to calling HSO and speaking with Health Services.
2. Staff person immediately contacts Health Services Staff via phone at the Head Start Office. (800) 792-0366 ext. 118 or ext. 101 and indicate it is an emergency. If there is nobody available at the Head Start Office, the Program Director or Center Coordinator will provide directions until the Health Services Administrator can be contacted.
3. After review of the situation with Health Services, staff phones the parent. If the parent cannot be reached by phone, staff will call the numbers on the Childs Information Card. Once contact is made with the parent, staff may be directed to contact Health Services again for further direction.
4. While staff is calling the parent or emergency contact, Health Services will phone staff's Supervisor, if not available at site of emergency.
5. If the parent is home but cannot provide transportation, a staff member will take the child home. An additional staff member will accompany the child.
6. A sick or injured child will never be taken home and left unless a responsible adult is there for him.
7. If the child's parent is not at home, the information from the emergency card will be used and the Emergency Contact person will be notified of the situation.
8. When a sick or injured child is taken home, and further care is needed, the parent will be instructed to call the family physician or dentist. If the parents have no family physician or dentist, or cannot afford private care, they should be instructed how to proceed in order to obtain the services of a physician, hospital, or dentist.

9. Staff involved in the emergency situation will complete an Injury Report Form and fax it to the Health Services Staff for review.
10. In order to determine if the parent has arranged for professional attention, staff is required to follow up within 24 hours of the initial injury. (i.e. a phone call or home visit) An Injury Follow-up Report must be completed to document any medical treatment the parent obtained for the child. A copy is faxed to the Health Services staff.

## Transportation Services

Your child's safety is our main concern. Children **must** be accompanied by a responsible adult to and from the bus stop or to and from school. Children **will not** be released to anyone who is not listed by the parent on the Child Information Card. Children are only released to a parent or legal guardian, or other individual identified in writing by the parent or legal guardian. If a person who is listed on the Child Information Card is not familiar to staff, **identification will be required**. Be sure to carry identification daily to the bus stop in the event there is a substitute driver or monitor.

### Bus Routes

Families at centers that provide transportation are assigned a bus stop. They may go to their assigned stop or provide their own transportation. Enrollment changes cause route changes.

- Only children enrolled in the center may use Head Start transportation. Parent volunteers may be able to ride the bus, depending on available seats.
- Be at the bus stop 5 minutes before pick-up and drop-off times to ensure you do not miss the bus.
- Hold your child's hand to and from the bus stop.
- Assist your child up and down the bus steps. Remind your child to hold the handrail.
- The Bus Monitor will buckle your child into the seat.
- If your child misses the bus, you may bring them to another bus stop or to the center.
- When drivers are unable to work or buses break down, you may be asked to provide your own transportation. We make every effort to keep these times to a minimum.
- Transportation services may be limited due to COVID-19 requirements and recommendations.

### Self-Transportation

- Buckle your child in your car according to Michigan State Law.
- Stay with your child for 15 minutes to help him/her transition into the classroom and pick up your child 15 minutes prior to the end of the session to help him/her transition out of the classroom.
- Use extreme caution in the parking lot and hold your child's hand at all times.

### Information for Parents

- If your child is not coming to school, call the center and let us know or send a note the next day with your driver to let us know why your child was absent.
- If you must cross the street to put your child on or off the bus, the Driver will signal you when it is safe to cross with the crossing paddle.
- There are DANGER ZONES around the bus that you and your child need to be aware of:

- Directly in front of the bus
- Directly behind the bus
- Ten feet out on both sides of the bus
- Directly in front of and behind the front and rear wheels
- Stay away from the DANGER ZONES

### Late Pick-Up

If a child is picked up late from the classroom and/or bus staff will follow this procedure with families. When a child is still at school or on the bus after the scheduled pick-up time, the teacher/bus staff will start calling the family and people listed on the Child Information Card.

If a child is left at school or the bus and no one on the Child Information Card has been contacted within 30 minutes, the teacher/bus staff will need to call the local police. Once the local police arrive at the center, the child is released to the police with a copy of the Child Information Card.

#### **First Notice**

If a parent is more than 5 minutes late teacher/bus staff will start the late pick-up notice form and explain the late pick-up procedure.

#### **Second Notice**

If a parent is more than 5 minutes late teacher/bus staff will review the late pick-up notice form and explain the process that follows. Teacher/bus staff will have a conversation with parents about the importance of picking up on time and set an informal action step/goal to assure it won't happen again.

#### **Third Notice**

If a parent is more than 5 minutes late teacher/bus driver will review the late pick-up notice form and explain the process that follows. Teacher/bus staff will contact the Family Advocate, who will then contact the family to set more formal goals to ensure they can pick up their child on time.

#### **Final Notice**

If a parent is more than 5 minutes late the teacher/bus driver will review the late pick-up notice form and explain the process that follows. The teacher/bus driver will let the family know that the child cannot return to school and/or bus (depending on method of pick-up) until the family is contacted by the Family Services Director or the Transportation Coordinator.

### Transportation Concerns

The transportation policies were designed for the safe and efficient transportation of your child. If you have questions, talk with your Bus Driver, Teacher, or Transportation Coordinator.

### Licensing and Safety

Safety is our main priority. Our centers are always locked.

Children are only released to the people listed by the parent or guardian on the Child Information Card. Staff will require identification at the center and bus stop if they do not know the person listed on the card. Bus staff check the Child Information Card for each child at each bus stop prior to releasing the child. Center staff check the Child Information Card for each child who is picked up from the center prior to releasing the child. Children's arrival and departure times are documented. Parents are required to hold children's hands in our parking lots and at bus stops.

We frequently count children and we ask that parents count with us when they volunteer. No volunteer is ever alone with children. We have two paid staff in every classroom and encourage family and community volunteers to visit at any time. Staff actively supervise children and volunteers at all times.

For the safety of our children and staff, each of our classrooms is equipped with a camera. This allows us to view classroom footage when needed.

## Center Licensing

**Center/Program Directors:** Center/Program Directors have either a BA or A/A in Early Childhood Education. In addition, all Program Directors have at least 2 semester hours in childcare administration. Program Directors have current certification in infant, child and adult CPR, first aid and blood borne pathogen training. Program Directors exceed the minimum training requirements annually.

**Inspections:** Prior to a center being licensed the following inspections take place

- **Fire Safety:** A Fire Safety Inspection is completed by a qualified fire safety inspector. After the initial license is issued, fire safety inspections occur every 4 years.
- **Environmental Health Inspections:** An environmental health inspection is completed by the local Health Department. After the initial license is issued, environmental health inspections occur every 2 years for centers that do not have public water/sewer or prepare food.
- **Lead Hazard Risk Assessment:** A Lead Hazard Risk Assessment is completed on all structures built prior to 1978. Any lead hazards identified are addressed as noted in the report.
- **Fuel fired furnaces/water heaters:** Furnaces and water heaters are inspected by a licensed contractor. After the initial license is issued, they are inspected Every two years.
- **Boilers:** Boilers are inspected by a licensed contractor. After the initial license is issued, they are inspected as required by the State of Michigan parameters. These inspections are done at the state level and occur every 3 years. They schedule them as required by law.
- **Playground:** Playgrounds are inspected and approved by a National Playground Safety Institute Certified Playground Safety Inspector prior to use by children.

## Quality of Our Centers

Our classrooms are inspected and licensed by the State of Michigan's Licensing and Regulatory Affairs every two years. We consistently meet all regulations for Child Care Centers and the Head Start Performance Standards. We are also required to have Environmental Health and Fire Safety inspections. Staff working in our centers meet the educational requirements and have the experience required by the State of Michigan and Head Start Performance Standards. Our playgrounds have been inspected by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector.



We monitor the quality of our centers with regular visits and inspections throughout the year. We look at the buildings, equipment, activities and interactions among children, staff and family members. Children's safety and health are of primary concern and are monitored closely. Be assured that we are providing children and families with a high-quality pre-school program.

### Participant Protection

At no time is any individual permitted to possess any type of weapon, firearm, drug, alcohol or drug paraphernalia, or be under the influence of an illegal substance or alcoholic beverage on any Head Start property. Threatening behavior or swearing will not be tolerated. Smoking and/or vaping is not allowed on Head Start property.

### Playground Procedures & Outdoor Play

Outdoor activities are planned daily, weather permitting. If the temperature is below 20 degrees or above 90 degrees, we do not go outside. We stay inside and engage children in indoor gross motor activities. Be sure your child dresses for outdoor play.

### Fire and Tornado Drills

Classroom fire and tornado drills are practiced regularly. Staff, volunteers and children participate in drills. Children are counted at the beginning of the drill, attendance is taken at the designated evacuation/safe location, and children are counted upon return to the classroom. Fire and tornado drills are also practiced from the bus.

### Crisis Management Plans

Every Head Start classroom has a Crisis Management Plan and a Crisis Kit. The purpose of the plan is to assist staff in responding to an emergency. Staff are responsible for ensuring the immediate safety of children and will coordinate with local public safety personnel. The Crisis Kit includes items staff may need in the event of a Crisis. A list of these items can be found in the crisis kit.

### Notification of Integrated Pest Management Program

The Tri-County Head Start Integrated Pest Management program ensures that centers are routinely inspected and monitored for possible infestations of pests/rodents.

Locations are inspected monthly when children are not in attendance.

If staff notice a problem, they submit a request using School Dude. Head Start office contacts the pest management company or the person responsible at public school/church locations. Non-chemical methods are used for infestations whenever possible. If pesticides are needed, they are applied when children, staff and volunteers are not present.

Parents are notified in advance through the Honeywell Instant Alert and a note sent home. The advance notice includes the target pest or purpose, approximate location, date of the application, center contact information and the toll-free number for the National Pesticide Information Center. Information is also available on our web site: [tricountyhs.org](http://tricountyhs.org)

For additional pesticide information, call the National Pesticide Information Center: 1-800-858-7378.

## Licensing Notebook Notification

Licensing regulations require that we inform parents:

- The center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans.
- The notebook is out and accessible to parents for review during regular business hours.
- Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from the past 5 years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

## Volunteers

### Volunteer Policy

Tri-County Head Start welcomes family and community volunteers. Tri-County Head Start is required to complete a comprehensive background check on all volunteers.

#### Family Volunteers:

One of Head Start's fundamental principles is based on parents being the first and best teachers of their children. Families are considered valued partners in the process of helping children develop to their fullest potential and volunteers are an essential part of that process. Having a special person come to volunteer is very meaningful to each child. Families are asked to participate, when they can, in Head Start activities such as:

- Volunteering at their child's center
- Attending Parent Committee meetings, FREDDY Nights and other Head Start/Early Head Start events scheduled for families throughout the year.
- Participating in Home Visits & Conferences
- Assisting in planning and making activities at home or at school
- Completing Individualization Home Activity Records (Home Kits) and Weekly Individualization calendars
- Reviewing and returning the Parent Communication folder weekly
- Participating in socialization activities
- Participating on the Health Services Advisory Committee, the Head Start Policy Council, Parent Committee, School Readiness Committee, Average Daily Attendance Committee, Transportation Safety Committee, Site Planning Committee, etc.

### Community Volunteers:

Volunteers from the community are welcomed at our centers. Volunteers from the community may:

- Volunteer at a center
- Act as a resource person
- Assist in planning and making activities
- Participate on the Health Services Advisory Committee, the Head Start Policy Council, the School Readiness Committee
- Participate in our annual Self-Assessment

At Tri-County Head Start centers no volunteer is ever alone with children, although parents may assist their own child with toileting. Volunteers, including parents, are supervised by Tri-County Head Start staff at all times.

All volunteers are required to read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct. Head Start and EHS classrooms that are in public school locations will require iChat background checks of all volunteers.

### Regular Volunteers: (four hours per week for more than two consecutive weeks)

Michigan Licensing Regulations state: Evidence that all volunteers who have contact with children at least four hours per week for two consecutive weeks is free from communicable tuberculosis, verified within one year before volunteering, shall be kept on file at the center. Regular volunteers also require a comprehensive background check, to be completed by Human Resources Department.

The Center Director (CD)/Classroom Program Director (CPD) is responsible for assuring State of MI Child Care Licensing Rules for regular volunteers are met. The CD/CPD is responsible for assuring the required documentation is completed, including application and Tb test results. The CD/CPD is also responsible for community volunteer scheduling and assuring on-going volunteer training occurs. The CD/CPD is responsible for keeping documentation for regular volunteers in the Center Licensing file.

### Volunteer Training and Development:

All volunteers receive training and development opportunities. The training for parents begins during the First Home Visit when Teachers review the Family Handbook. Training is also provided during Orientation. Center staff provide training via the Volunteer Training Checklist for parents and community volunteers. On-going training is provided to volunteers as they work with staff in the classroom.

All Head Start families are invited to attend a variety of planned events throughout the year. A variety of activities and training topics are presented. Topics may include mental health, Conscious Discipline, transition, nutrition, etc. Community volunteers are invited to centers throughout the year as resources for families.

Head Start parents are given the opportunity to run for Policy Council and take an active role in program planning and policies. Policy Council members receive training and information which they share with parents during Parent Committee meetings.

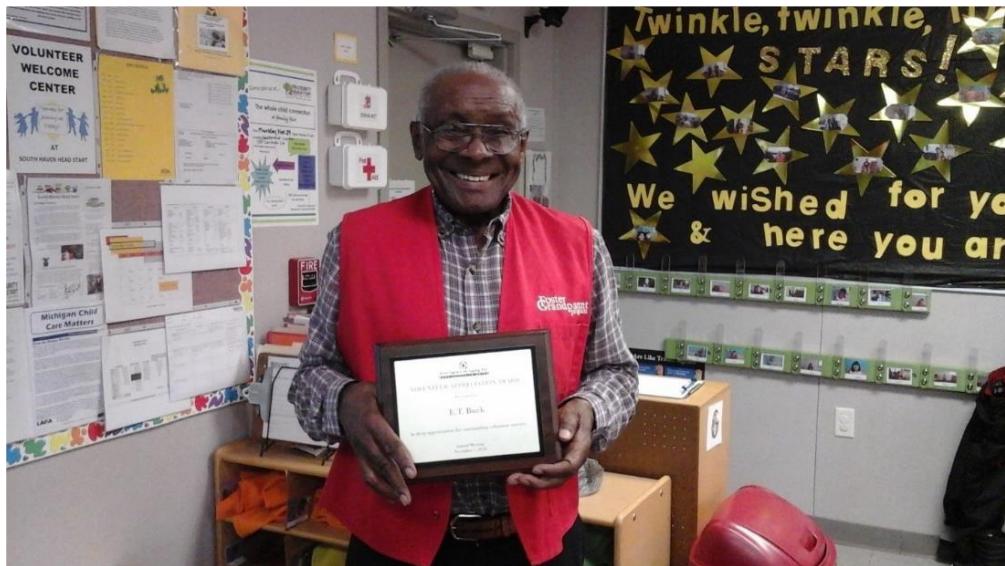
Volunteers who are interested in working for Head Start are encouraged to apply for open positions within the organization.

### What you can do in the classroom

When you are a volunteer in the classroom you can help with a variety of activities. You may be needed to help with a activity, to supervise an area of the room or to work with an individual child. You can also help by eating lunch with children, joining in circle time activities and participating in outdoor play.

Here are some things you can do in the center:

1. READ! READ! READ!
2. Attend a field trip
3. Write your ideas and observations on a Family Ideas and Observations form.
4. Write a child's name – have them trace it with a finger/pencil.
5. Join children while they play. Look for the signs in each area with suggestions for things to say or ask.
6. Help with grounds maintenance.



## In-Kind

We are able to offer a free preschool experience to many children because of the Federal funding we receive each year. One of the requirements of receiving these funds is to generate what is called In-Kind in the amount of a 25% match of the funding. We receive In-Kind from donations to the program.

If we do not meet the 25% In-Kind match, we must return dollars to the Federal government and may receive less money to serve our children and families the following year.

Parents can help contribute to the In-Kind match by:

- Volunteering in the classroom
- Completing home activities
- Riding the bus
- Attend Parent Committee Meetings
- Participate on the Policy Council
- Donate items such as:
  - cardboard paper towel tubes (not toilet paper tubes)
  - pinecones and seashells
  - child size clothing (newborn to 5T), shoes & winter outerwear (for use in the classroom)

Please also see the In-Kind brochure for greater detail about materials that are useful for the classroom.

When a parent volunteers or donates items to the program, a form is filled out that allows us to count parent time or any items donated as money to go towards our 25% federal match. The rate of In-Kind for volunteer hours is \$14.29 per hour. Parents who bring their child to school are encouraged to sign the in-kind form and stay 15 minutes to help their child transition into the classroom. Parents who pick their child up from school are encouraged to arrive 15 minutes before the end of the session, sign the in-kind form and help their child transition out of the classroom.

This year we need to document approximately \$2.0 million dollars' worth of In-Kind from our community. We know that parents are helping the program in many ways. We need to make sure that Head Start receives the credit for all of the volunteer work that is performed. We appreciate your help and your time on this important function for your children.

Please help us reach our In-Kind match by filling out and signing the In-Kind form every time you volunteer.

## Adult Behavior Expectations Policy

Tri-County Head Start expects all adults to behave in a manner that does not violate the Code of Conduct. Our expectation for adults is to resolve issues, problems and conflicts in a manner that includes mutual respect among all parties.

Unreasonable and/or disorderly behavior, language, or mannerisms that threaten, intimidate, demean, harass, or provoke employees or families, or are generally considered vulgar or offensive are not acceptable. Violence or threats of violence, either displayed, plainly stated, or implied will not be tolerated.

The Tri-County Head Start Code of Conduct applies to employees, adult visitors including spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, relatives, or any other person who may have contact with agency staff in relation to the enrollment of a child or

children. Such contact may be at agency locations, on home visits, at bus stops, or in the community while staff and children are engaged in agency sponsored activities.

Any person, determined by the Health Services Administrator to have violated this policy, will be personally notified of the violation. They will be reminded of the expectations to follow the Code of Conduct and will be given an Adult Behavior Expectation Notice.

If the inappropriate behavior, language, or situation continues after notification, the Mental Health Consultant will meet with the individual (s) in conflict and develop strategies to ensure compliance with the policy.

If there is a third occurrence, the Director and Policy Council will be notified and will determine if the violator will continue participation in the program.

Incidents of violation of the policy are brought to the attention of the Health Services Administrator IMMEDIATELY by phoning the Head Start Office (800) 792-0366 ext: 118 and speaking directly to Health Services Administrator. Health Services Administrator will begin the investigative process and document the incident.

The severity of the violation of the Code of Conduct will determine the actions that will be taken.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct and Professional Ethics Policy

All volunteers are required to understand and abide by the codes of conduct as set forth in the Federal Performance Standards. The following standards specify that:

- I will respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and refrain from stereotyping on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability.
- Maintaining confidentiality is important to the success of our mission, our reputation in the community and the privacy of clients and staff. Family files, personnel records, financial information, client information including health and safety needs and other related information is considered confidential. I am required to protect this information by safeguarding it when in use, filing it properly when not in use, and discussing it only with those who have legitimate need to know. If approached by members of the news media requesting information regarding Tri-County Head Start operations I will refer requests to the Director.
- I understand that no child shall be left alone or unsupervised while under my care. I will use positive methods of child guidance that do not engage in corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, or humiliation. In addition, I will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation, the use of food as punishment or reward, or the denial of basic needs.
- I understand that no child may be removed from the presence of staff other than the child's own parent or guardian or other authorized person.
- I have received and understand that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
- I have been informed of Tri-County Head Starts policy on child abuse and neglect.
- I know that all staff and volunteers are required by law to immediately report suspected child abuse and neglect to Children's Protective Service.
- I understand and will follow the Adult Behavior Expectation Policy set by TCHS.
- I understand I am to report known conduct violations to the supervisor or to the administrative office.
- I understand this document shall be placed in the child file and that violations of these codes shall result in my no longer being able to volunteer.

## Procedure for Violation of Code of Conduct

### 1302.90 (c) (1) Standards of Conduct

All Tri-County Head Start employees and volunteers must read and sign the Code of Conduct.

Violations of the Code of Conduct are taken seriously and subject to the following process and procedures.

### Violation of Code of Conduct Procedure

If somebody witnesses a violation to the Code of Conduct, it is reported immediately to the Health Services Director at the Head Start Office. (800) 792-0366 ext:118

The Health Services Director will document the report and begin an investigation.

Legal Council may be contacted to assist in formulating questions and or advise on taking immediate actions if required.

A Mental Health Consultant will be assigned to investigate the allegations, which may include questioning a child, parent, caregiver, and other staff in the room or volunteers. Mental Health conducts interviews, documents results, and contacts Health Director.

### Report of violation to the Code of Conduct about a Volunteer

The Health Services Administrator or Mental Health Consultant notifies the volunteer in question of the violation to the Code of Conduct and the procedure(s) that will take place. The volunteer may not be allowed to volunteer in the classroom until the investigation is completed. You will be notified of our investigation results; it may take several days.

### Report of violation to the Code of Conduct about an Employee

The Health Administrator or Mental Health Consultant notifies the *employee* in question of the violation and the procedure(s) that will take place. The employee may have supervised contact with children or may be suspended with or without pay pending the investigation. You will be notified of our investigation results; it may take several days.

The Mental Health Consultant confers with the Health Services Administrator and reports the allegation to Protective Services and Michigan Child Care Licensing if warranted. The director will notify region V if it is a reportable event.

The person who made the report will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

The MHC is the one to inform the parent/caregiver:

- The person who made the report will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.
- Once the investigation has been completed and a determination has been made, the Mental Health Consultant schedules a **face to face** conference with the parent/caregiver at a location determined by the parent/caregiver.
- The allegation, the findings and the outcome are explained to the Parent/Caregiver

### ***If a violation to the Code of Conduct is found to be true about a Volunteer:***

If the results of the investigation support the report of violation to the Code of Conduct toward a volunteer; the Health Services Administrator or Mental Health Consultant inform the volunteer. The volunteer is told that he or she may not volunteer for the program in the future.

**If a violation to the Code of Conduct is found to be true about an Employee:**

If a report of violation to the Code of Conduct is substantiated for a Tri-County Head Start employee; they are subject to disciplinary actions up to and including termination.

## Child Protective Services Policy and Procedure for Reporting and Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

The State of Michigan Child Protection Law provides for the protection of children from child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect of children is against the law.

***Tri-County Head Start Staff are mandated reporters. Staff are required by Michigan law to report any suspected child abuse or child neglect to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Children's Protective Services (CPS) immediately. Note: this means anytime, whether at work or not.***

*In addition, Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers require a written statement by staff and volunteers at the time of hiring or before volunteering indicating all of the following information:*

- The individual is aware that abuse and neglect of children is against the law.
- The individual has been informed of the center's policies on child abuse and neglect.
- The individual knows that all staff and volunteers are required by law to immediately report suspected abuse and neglect to children's protective services.

*Staff and volunteers receive the required child abuse and neglect information at the time of hiring and before volunteering. In addition, all returning staff receive annual training at pre-service and new staff receive training during the new staff training plan.*

### Procedure for Reporting

If a staff person or volunteer suspects child abuse or neglect they are required to make a report (online or verbal) to CPS **immediately. It may not wait until the end of the session or the end of the day.** Each classroom has a red folder with the policy and procedure for reporting, the form (3200) that needs to be completed and the Child Protection Law.

Prepare for the verbal report by locating the red folder. Have the family's information readily available when the call is made. Go to a private location and phone CPS. Tell them that you are calling to report suspected child abuse or suspected child neglect. Identify yourself and your position. Tell the caseworker that you are with Tri-County Head Start at \_\_\_\_\_ Center. The center is located at \_\_\_\_\_. (Center name) (Center address)

Centralized Intake (State of Michigan DHHS) - (855) 444-3911 (Toll Free Number) (616) 977-1154 Fax

While on the phone with DHHS/CPS, ask for a Log number and fill it in on the form 3200. All follow-up correspondence is identified by the Log number. The caseworker will ask questions regarding when the child attends, etc. Answer all questions honestly.

After completing the verbal report, a written report must be completed and faxed to the MDHHS/ CPS Centralized Intake. The law states that the written report must be filed within 72 hours of making the verbal report, although we

require that the written report be completed and faxed immediately. You must also fax the report to the Health Services Director at the Head Start Office.

### [Procedure for completing the written report](#)

The written report is completed by the person making the report on a form 3200 located in the red folder in each classroom. The instructions are on the form. Use the address for the Head Start Office: 775 Hazen Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079. When the written form is complete fax it to Centralized Intake at one of the fax numbers listed under Procedure for Reporting.

### **If you have a situation and are unsure if it should be reported:**

Call the Health Services Director

### **If you suspect a child or young children are alone in the home**

- Do not enter the home.
- Do not ask the child or children to leave with you.
- Call the local Police and report the situation. Do not leave the area until the police arrive. The police will determine if a referral to CPS will be made.
- Call the Emergency Contact numbers on the Child Information Card. Ask anyone you contact if they are available to come to the home.

### **Eyewitness of abuse**

If you are an “eye” witness of physical abuse and you believe the child is in danger; then you are to call 911 immediately. You are to report to the police officer exactly what you saw and nothing more. The next step is making a CPS report. You follow the same method of calling CPS and providing a written document within the same day.

### **CPS Investigations**

A CPS worker and /or the police may visit or call a center to interview a child, staff, or volunteer. Staff must verify identification of the CPS worker/police. Staff/volunteers must cooperate fully with any requests or directives given by CPS or the police. If staff/volunteers are interviewed, they are to give facts and not opinions. Staff/volunteers do not need to call or send information to the Health Services Director.

### [Pictures, Video and Cell Phone Policy](#)

The staff at Tri-County Head Start respects every individual’s and family’s right to privacy. In our commitment to ensure your privacy, we do not allow parents or volunteers to photograph/video children. Parents may photograph their own child with Freddy the Frog during Freddy Night. We obtain parent permission for Head Start staff to photograph/video children in the classroom for our program newsletter and staff training.

We require cell phones to be off or the ringer set to vibrate in Head Start classrooms when children are present. If you need to make or return a call, we ask that you leave the classroom.

## Sharing of Data and Protections for the Privacy of Child Records in Head Start and Early Head Start

### Purpose of Procedure.

This procedure is intended to ensure that Tri-County Head Start maintains the privacy and confidentiality of records concerning children in our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. It also sets forth the steps TCHS will follow to ensure Parental access to Child Records and Personally Identifiable Information (PII), as defined below. It is a part of TCHS's larger program-wide, coordinated approach to ensuring the management of program data to support effectively the availability, usability, integrity, and security of data as per 45 C.F.R. §1302.101(b)(4).

### Definitions.

**Child Records** means records that: (1) are directly related to the child; (2) are maintained by the program, or by a Party acting for the program; and (3) include information recorded in any way, such as print, electronic, or digital means, including media, video, image, or audio format.

**Confidential** means to be kept private with certain specific protections.

**Consent** means written approval or authorization that is signed and dated. It may include a record and signature in electronic form that: (1) identifies and authenticates a person as the source of the electronic consent; and, (2) indicates the same person's approval of the information. Consent can be revoked going forward.

**Disclosure** means to permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of Personally Identifiable Information contained in Child Records by any means, including oral, written, or electronic means, to any Party except the Party identified as the Party that provided or created the record.

**Party** means an entity or individual.

**Parent** means person or agency legally authorized to act on behalf of the child, typically mother, father, or legal guardian authorized to act in place of the mother or father.

**Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** means any information that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child's name, name of a child's family member, street address of the child, social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

### Procedure

**I. Location of PII.** Tri-County Head Start keeps PII from Child Records in the following places: locked paper files in the Child Records File Room (HSO), Classroom locations, Dead File Room (HSO), and in password protected data management system ChildPlus. Access to Child Records is provided to TCHS staff during working hours only. During non-working hours, files are locked and not accessible.

**II. Need to Know Basis.** All Disclosures of PII from Child Records are on a need to know basis or otherwise "deemed necessary" for the purpose of Disclosure. In other words, at Tri-County Head Start, we do not disclose PII from Child Records for no reason or any reason. We have a specific process that must be followed, and it depends on the type of PII that has been requested and by whom. Our process limits the amount of PII disclosed to only that which must be provided, and nothing more.

**Annual Notice.** Tri-County Head Start requires our Head Start/EHS program to annually notify Parents of their rights in writing described in this procedure, key definitions, and exceptions for when Parental Consent is not needed. TCHS uses the Annual Notice Regarding PII and Parental Rights and we provide it to Parents at Registration. Parents will receive a copy of the Annual Notice at the time of Registration and it is included with the Family Handbook.

**III. Process.** When someone requests to see a copy of a child record -- whether it is a federal reviewer, an auditor, an official from the state, a, or someone else – we follow our process. We do not provide information about children in our program without following our process.

- a. First, whoever receives the request for the information shall document receipt of the request in ChildPlus data management system. Requests may come to Teachers, Family Advocates, Administrative Staff, etc. Requests can be made with a TCHS PII Disclosure Authorization Form or similar document from another party.
- b. Next, the person who received the request sends it to the Family Services Administrator to review it and make sure it is a valid request. If the Family Services Administrator is unsure, s/he shall contact the Director and local counsel when necessary.
- c. Additionally, if the request comes to us through a subpoena or court order, the Family Services Administrator shall send subpoenas or requests pursuant to a court order to local counsel for confirmation prior to approving any such request.
- d. Once the Family Services Administrator has determined the validity of the request, s/he shall also determine which of the types of PII Disclosures the request falls under (see Section V below for Types of PII Disclosures).
- e. Once the type of PII Disclosure has been determined, if the type requires a written Consent, the Consent shall be obtained if TCHS does not already have it on file.
- f. If instead, the type requires only a written notice to be provided to the child's Parent with an opportunity for him/her to refuse, TCHS shall provide notice of the Disclosure to the child's Parent.
- g. Tri-County Head Start shall keep a record of Disclosures of PII from Child Records by documenting in the Child Record the date, the name of the person or third-party entity to which the PII is disclosed, and which PII is disclosed. This record does not need to be kept for Disclosures made within TCHS. This record shall, in effect, become a “log” for Disclosures for each Child Record.
- h. A copy of the request itself shall also be maintained by TCHS in the Child File and ChildPlus data management system.

**IV. Types of PII Disclosures.** Disclosures of PII can be made to Parents (as defined above) who have legal authority. Additionally, for Disclosures to third Parties, there are 3 main types of Disclosures of PII for Head Start/Early Head Start that TCHS can make. The first is Disclosure Without Parental Consent (Section VI below). The second is Disclosure Requiring Parental Consent (Section VII below). The third is Disclosure Requiring Parental Notification/Opportunity to Refuse, (which does not require Consent) (Section VIII below). Each type of Disclosure has a different process set forth below, and we have different rules to follow for each one.

**V. Disclosure Without Parental Consent.** Tri-County Head Start must disclose PII from Child Records without Parental Consent to the following Parties, with the following limitations:

- a. **Within this organization for Head Start purposes.** To officials within Tri-County Head Start if TCHS determines it is *necessary for Head Start services*, and TCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further Disclosure, and maintenance of Child Records;
- b. **To Contractors or Delegates/Sub-Recipients for Head Start purposes.** To officials acting for Tri-County Head Start, such as contractors and delegates/sub-recipients, if the official provides services for which TCHS would otherwise use employees, TCHS determines it is *necessary for Head Start services*, and TCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further Disclosure, and maintenance of Child Records, such as through a written agreement;
- c. **In connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs or for enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements.** To officials within Tri-County Head Start, acting for TCHS, or from a federal or state entity, in connection with *an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements* of TCHS; provided TCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further Disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the Disclosure, except when the Disclosure is specifically authorized by federal law or by the responsible HHS official;
- d. **For studies to improve child or family outcomes or quality of services.** To officials within Tri-County Head Start, acting for TCHS, or from a federal or state entity, to *conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs*, for, or on behalf of, TCHS, provided TCHS maintains oversight with respect to the use, further Disclosure, and maintenance of Child Records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the Disclosure;
- e. **During Disasters or Health/Safety Emergencies.** To appropriate Parties (such as local health departments, police, fire, EMS, etc.,) to address a *disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency*, or a *serious health and safety risk* such as a serious food allergy, if TCHS determines that disclosing the PII from Child Records is necessary to protect the health or safety of children or other persons;
- f. **Pursuant to Court Orders or Subpoenas.** To comply with a *judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena*, provided TCHS makes a reasonable effort to notify the Parent about all such subpoenas and court orders in advance, unless:
  - 1. A court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed;
  - 2. The Disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General (or designee not lower than an Assistant Attorney General) concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331.
  - 3. A Parent is a Party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect (as defined in section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101)) or dependency matters,

and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding, additional notice to the Parent by the program is not required; or,

4. Tri-County Head Start initiates legal action against a Parent or a Parent initiates legal action against TCHS, then TCHS may disclose to the court, also without a court order or subpoena, the Child Records relevant for TCHS to act as plaintiff or defendant.

g. **CACFP Monitoring.** To the Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, *if the results will be reported in an aggregate form* that does not identify any individual: provided, that any data collected must be protected in a manner that will not permit the personal identification of students and their Parents by other than the authorized representatives of the Secretary of Agriculture and any PII must be destroyed when the data are no longer needed for program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements;

h. **Foster Care Caseworkers.** To a caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency, *who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement*, when such agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection, under state or tribal law, if the agency agrees in writing to protect PII, to use information from the child's case plan for specific purposes intended of addressing the child's needs, and to destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and,

i. **Suspected or Known Child Maltreatment.** To appropriate Parties such as Child Protective Services to *address suspected or known child maltreatment* and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.

j. In any instances that fall within the specific guidelines set forth in this Section VI(a) through (i), if **Tri-County Head Start's** Head Start Director or his/her designee determines the request is valid, s/he shall ensure that copies of the requested PII are delivered to the requesting Party through either a hand-to-hand transaction, first class mail, a courier, or other reliable method.

k. Notwithstanding the steps above, **Tri-County Head Start** retains the right to determine that such Disclosure is not in the best interest of the child and may choose to keep the requested PII confidential, so long as the nondisclosure is lawful.

l. **Parental Right to Copy of Record.** **Tri-County Head Start** must, upon Parental request, provide a child's Parent, free of charge, an initial copy of Child Records disclosed to third Parties, unless the Disclosure was for a court that ordered neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information furnished in response be disclosed.

m. **Written agreements.** When **Tri-County Head Start** establishes a written agreement with a third Party involving PII, such as a Subrecipient (Delegate) or Contractor (under VI(b) above), Auditor or Program Evaluator (under VI(c) above, or Researcher (under VI(d) above), **TCHS** will annually review the agreement and update it if necessary.

i. All agreements that involve the Disclosure of PII will include that if the third Party violates the agreement, then **TCHS** may either provide the third Party an opportunity to self-correct; or prohibit the third Party from access to records for one year, at **TCHS**'s sole discretion.

**n. Parental Right to Inspect Written Agreements that Involve the Disclosure of PII.** If a Parent requests, **Tri-County Head Start** shall allow him/her to come on-site and review a written agreement with a third Party that involves Disclosure of their child's PII. Any such review must happen on-site, and this right only allows the Parent to review the agreement, but not take any photos of it or make, or have copies made of the agreement. Prior to any such Parental review of an agreement, **TCHS** shall redact any parts of the agreement that contain business terms, Confidential information, or other trade secrets and shall work with **TCHS**'s local counsel to do so, if need be

**VI. Disclosure Requiring Only Parental Notice/Opportunity to Refuse.** Under the Head Start regulations, this type of Disclosure does *not* require Parental Consent.

- a. **Tri-County Head Start** can disclose PII from Child Records without Parental Consent *if the PII relates to a child's enrollment or transfer to officials at a program, school, or school district in which the child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled.*
- b. To do so, **Tri-County Head Start** shall notify a Parent about the Disclosure at least 3 weeks prior to the execution
- c. **Tri-County Head Start** shall provide the Parent *prior to any PII Disclosure to the other Party*, upon the Parent's request, a copy of the PII from Child Records to be disclosed, and give the Parent an opportunity to challenge and refuse Disclosure of the information in the records, before the program forwards the records to the other Party.
- d. If an entity or a Parent requests that PII be disclosed for enrollment or transfer purposes, **Tri-County Head Start** shall provide the Parent a Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form with the accompanying Parental Refusal of PII Disclosure to Program or School Form.
- e. The Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form allows the child's Parent to refuse the Disclosure by following the steps in the Form and completing and returning the Parental Refusal of PII Disclosure to Program or School Form.
- f. If the Parent does not follow the steps within the timeframe set forth in the Notice of PII Disclosure for Enrollment or Transfer Form to refuse Disclosure, **Tri-County Head Start's** Head Start Director or his/her designee shall make a determination that the request for Disclosure is legitimate and will ensure that copies of the requested PII are delivered to the requesting program, school, or school district through either a hand-to-hand transaction, first class mail, a courier, or other reliable method.
- g. Notwithstanding the steps above, **Tri-County Head Start** retains the right to determine that such Disclosure is not in the best interest of the child and may choose to keep the requested PII confidential, so long as the nondisclosure is lawful.

**I. Disclosure Requiring Parental Consent.** All Disclosures of PII from Child Records that do not fall in one of the other categories above (in Sections VI or VII) require written Parental Consent before Tri-County Head Start can disclose any data.

- a. Tri-County Head Start uses the PII Disclosure Authorization Form to document written Consent from a Parent. This Form: (a) specifies which Child Records may be disclosed, (b) explains why the records will be disclosed, and (c) identifies the Party/Parties to whom the records may be disclosed.

b. The written Consent must be signed and dated, as per the definition of Consent above. If it is not, a representative from Tri-County Head Start must contact the Parent to get the Form signed and dated prior to any PII Disclosure.

- c. While the PII Disclosure Authorization Form includes an explanation that giving Consent is voluntary by the Parent and may be revoked at any time, Tri-County Head Start's representative giving the Form to the Parent should also explain this point to them.
- d. If a Parent revokes Consent, revocation is not retroactive. Therefore, it does not apply to any action that occurred before the Consent was revoked.
- e. Upon receipt of the completed PII Disclosure Authorization Form, Tri-County Head Start's Family Services Administrator shall make a determination that the request for Disclosure is legitimate and will ensure that copies of the requested PII are delivered to the appropriate third through either a hand-to-hand transaction, first class mail, a courier, or other reliable method.
- f. Notwithstanding the steps above, Tri-County Head Start retains the right to determine that such Disclosure is not in the best interest of the child and may choose to keep the requested PII confidential, so long as the nondisclosure is lawful. In such instances, TCHS shall explain the issue to the Parent/legal guardian to help determine next steps.
- g. Parental Right to Copy of Record. Tri-County Head Start must provide a child's Parent, free of charge, an initial copy of Child Records disclosed to third Parties with Parental Consent.

#### **IX. Children Referred to or Receiving IDEA Services for Disabilities**

- a. Tri-County Head Start will follow the confidentiality provisions of IDEA Parts B and C (located at 34 CFR Parts 300 and 303) for any children that we serve that are referred to or receiving IDEA services. At any time or in any instance that those provisions are stricter than what Head Start/EHS requires, we will follow those stricter IDEA provisions.

#### **X. Parental Rights to Inspect Child Records.**

- a. A Parent has the right to inspect Child Records.
- b. If the Parent requests to inspect his/her Child Records, Tri-County Head Start shall ensure that the Parent gets an opportunity to come on-site to review the Child Records available within 7 days of the request to inspect. TCHS shall not allow Parents to take originals of their Child Records off-site, only copies.
- c. If some of the child's record is in a document that contain information on more than one child, Tri-County Head Start will ensure that the Parent only inspects information that pertains to the Parent's child. Specifically, the Family Services Administrator will review the requested child file prior to the Parent and will redact the copy of the file to be made available to the Parent.
- d. Additionally, Tri-County Head Start will not destroy a child record if there is an outstanding request to inspect and review the record under this section.

#### **XI. Parental Right to Ask to Amend the Child Record/Hearing.**

- a. Right to Ask to Amend.
  - 1. A Parent has the right to ask Tri-County Head Start to amend information in the child record that the Parent believes is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy.
  - 2. Tri-County Head Start must consider the Parent's request within 7 days. The Family Services Administrator is responsible for reviewing requests to amend Child Records.
  - 3. If the Family Services Administrator finds the Parent's request to be reasonable, the Family Services Administrator will note an amendment to the child file that includes the date of the

amendment, the content of the amendment, why the change is being made, and the name of the person making the amendment to the file. Any amendment to the child file of this kind will not erase the contents of the prior record, but will instead show where, what, and why changes are being made.

4. If, however, the Parent's request is denied by Tri-County Head Start, TCHS shall render a written decision to the Parent within 14 days of the denial that informs the Parent of the right to a hearing.

b. Hearing.

1. If the Parent requests a hearing to challenge information in the child record, Tri-County Head Start will schedule a hearing within 14 days of the request for hearing, and notify the Parent, in advance, about the hearing.

2. Person Conducting the Hearing. The person who conducts the hearing may not have a direct interest in its outcome. As a result, Tri-County Head Start will not allow the person who made the initial notation in the file, or the decision not to amend the file as per the Parent's wishes, to lead the hearing.

3. Content of Hearing. The hearing shall include a full and fair opportunity for the Parent to present evidence relevant to the issues.

c. Outcome of Hearing.

1. the person conducting the hearing program determines from evidence presented at the hearing that the information in the Child Records is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy, s/he will direct Tri-County Head Start to amend the information and notify the Parent in writing.

2. If instead, the person conducting the hearing determines from evidence presented at the hearing that information in the Child Records is accurate, does not mislead, or otherwise does not violate the child's privacy, s/he will inform the Parent of the right to place a statement in the Child Records that either comments on the contested information or that states why the Parent disagrees with the program's decision, or both.

3. Parental Statement in Record. If a Parent places a statement in the child record, Tri-County Head Start will maintain the statement with the contested part of the child record for as long as we maintain the record and we will disclose the statement whenever we disclose the portion of the child record to which the statement relates.

## **XII. Maintaining Records.**

a. Consistent with our "Need to Know" basis above (Section II), Tri-County Head Start maintains Child Records in a manner that ensures only Parents, and officials within TCHS or acting on behalf of TCHS have access to Child Records. Accordingly, we keep any paper records containing PII of children under lock and key and any electronic or online records containing child PII are password protected in the ChildPlus data management system. Users of the ChildPlus data management system have unique usernames and passwords, with access to PII of children according to job duties and necessity only.

b. As explained above in Section IV(g), we maintain, with the Child Records, for as long as the records are maintained, information on all individuals, agencies, or organizations to whom a Disclosure of PII from the Child Records was made, and why the Disclosure was made. (This does not apply to Disclosures made to program officials within our agency and Parents.)



- c. As explained above in Section XI(b)(5), if a Parent places a statement in the child record, we maintain the statement with the contested part of the child record for as long as we maintain the record and we will disclose the statement whenever we disclose the portion of the child record to which the statement relates.
- d. Tri-County Head Start follows our Record Retention Policy for how long we keep records, and we destroy Child Records within a reasonable timeframe after such records are no longer needed or required to be maintained. For more information on how long we keep records, please see the TCHS Record Retention Policy.