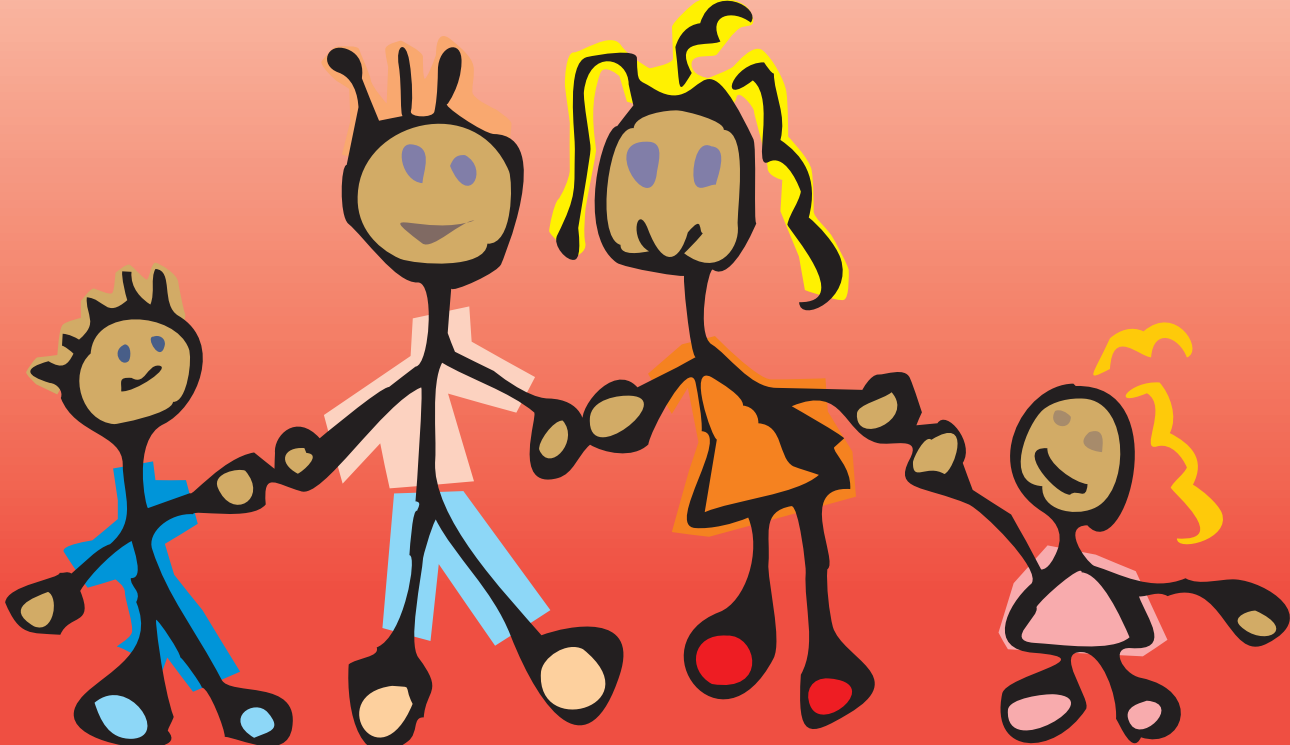


Head Start



Parent Handbook



Dear Head Start Parent

Thank you for enrolling your child in Head Start. As a Head Start parent, you will have many opportunities to participate in both policy and decision-making, as well as in the operation of the entire Milwaukee Head Start program.



We believe that you, as a parent, are the most important influence in your child's education and development. One of Head Start's goals is to support you in this role.

Head Start is one of the few programs that asks people receiving services to be involved in designing how those services will be delivered. We will make information, experiences, and other resources available to you throughout the year that will make your job a little easier. Parent involvement in every part of the program is necessary to assure the most benefit for Head Start children.

All of the SDC Head Start staff will be working to support your participation because we know that a solid partnership between Head Start and parents is the key to continued success of the program and the children we serve.

My door is always open to you, so please call me if I can assist you in any way. Again, thank you for enrolling your child, and we promise to make your participation both rewarding and meaningful.

Sincerely,

Gail M Porath

Gail Porath
Head Start Director

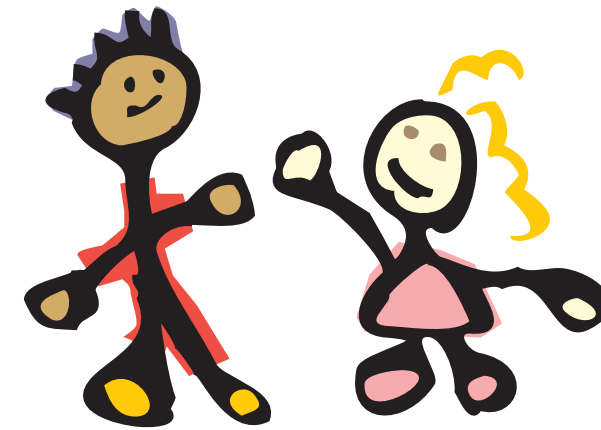


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Mission Statement

The mission of SDC Head Start, a family focused, parent driven, early childhood, social service program, is to provide comprehensive support and guidance to strengthen children, families, staff and the community; resulting in greater self-sufficiency, independence and productivity.

Beliefs

We believe that ...

- ☀ Support and guidance promotes growth in families.
- ☀ A well-trained and supported staff is essential to the effectiveness of the organization.
- ☀ Parents are our children's first and most important educators.
- ☀ People have worth and deserve to be valued.
- ☀ We respect and value the diversity within others and ourselves.
- ☀ Families can impact their communities positively.
- ☀ By acknowledging and developing the potential of each child, we are positively impacting their future.
- ☀ A safe and nurturing environment is essential for all.
- ☀ The effectiveness of an organization is directly related to the dedication and cooperation of its employees.

Times and Days of Classroom Operation

In order for your child to benefit from the Head Start program, he/she needs to attend regularly. We aim for 100% daily attendance in order to meet federal requirements. Head Start cannot assist children in their development, and parents will not see the results of a Head Start experience if the child has irregular attendance.


- 🕒 Parents must call the office for an excused absence. Excused absences include, but are not limited to; illness, death in family, court appearances, religious holidays, medical appointments and family emergencies.
- 🕒 Extended absences should be brought to the attention of your Family Advocate to ensure your child's continued placement in the program. **Your child may be placed on the waiting list if consecutive unexcused absences continue.**
- 🕒 Children absent will receive a follow-up call from Family Advocate staff.
- 🕒 Head Start classrooms operate on the following schedule:
 - Half-Day classrooms: Monday - Thursday
 - AM Session: 8:00 - 11:30
 - PM Session: 12:30 - 4:00
 - Full-Day classrooms: Monday - Friday(Times vary depending on location, parent's work or school schedule and may be modified as it relates to collaborations.)
- 🕒 Head Start teachers and staff are not available to take care of children that arrive before classes start; and NO CHILD can be left unattended in the building at any time.
- 🕒 You MUST stop in the office to sign an early release form if you arrive to pick up your child before the session ends.
- 🕒 Please contact your Head Start center in the event that you will be a few minutes late picking up your child.
- 🕒 You will be required to have a conference with a Family Advocate if you are late picking up your child three (3) times within a month. (Consistently picking up children late may, according to Wisconsin law, be considered child neglect. In such cases, Child Protective Services may be notified.)



When you make sure your child attends Head Start on time every day, you are establishing a positive pattern for school attendance early in your child's educational career.

Child Escort Policy

Every child must be dropped off in their classrooms and signed in and out by the designated escort.

 **The designated escort** must sign each child in or out by **printing their full name** and listing the phone number to be contacted in the event of an emergency, each time the child is escorted to the classroom for the day.

 **Please do not list relationship to child, we need the actual name of the escort.**

Example of correct way to sign your Child in to the classroom:

Child: Linda Williams

Escort: Mary Williams


Phone# for the day: 555-5698


Wrong way:


Child: Linda Williams


Escort: Cousin


Phone # for the day (blank)

 **Under no conditions** will a child be allowed to leave the building with a person who is not listed on the yellow escort card.

 **No child** will be permitted to leave with an escort under twelve (12) years of age.

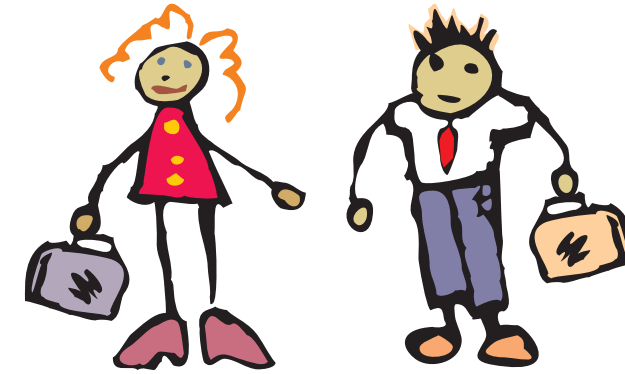
 Parents or guardians are to inform all escorts of the child's room number or names of teachers.

 As mandated by State Day Care Licensing, Head Start **must have** current names, addresses, phone numbers and relationship of designated escorts.

 A Family Advocate **must be** contacted about any changes in designated escorts' phone numbers or addresses. The parent or guardian must complete all changes on the "Yellow emergency card" and the child's cumulative file.

No phone calls or written notes will be accepted for release of children to anyone not listed on the escort "yellow emergency card."

If any escort is or appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the child will not be released. **Child Protective Services may be contacted if it appears as though the escort may place the child at risk of abuse or neglect.**



The Rights and Responsibilities of Head Start Parents

Head Start parents have the right and the responsibility to help Head Start employees plan and develop all services and activities for the program. This includes:

1. Taking part in making policy decisions affecting the planning and the operation of the program.
2. Helping to develop adult programs, which will help improve daily living for my family and me.
3. Being welcomed in the classroom.
4. Choosing whether or not I participate without endangering my child's progress in Head Start.
5. Being informed regularly about my child's progress in Head Start.
6. Always being treated with respect and dignity.
7. Expecting guidance for my child from Head Start teachers and staff which will help his/her total individual development.
8. Being able to learn about the operation of the program, including the budget and the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions.
9. Taking part in planning and carrying our programs designed to increase my skill in areas of possible employment.
10. Being informed about all community resources concerned with health, education, and the improvement of family life.
11. Being respected as a full partner in the total operation of the program, to walk with and not behind you.
12. Learning as much as possible about the program and to take part in major policy decisions.
13. Accepting Head Start as an opportunity through which I can improve my life and my children's lives.
14. Taking part in the classroom as an observer, a volunteer worker or a paid employee, and to contribute my services in whatever way I can toward enrichment of the total program.
15. Providing parent leadership by taking part in the elections, to explain the program to other parents and encourage their full participation.

Rights and Responsibilities cont.

16. Working with the teachers, staff and other parents in a cooperative way.
17. Guiding my children with firmness which is both loving and protective.
18. Offering constructive criticism of the program, to defend it against unfair criticism and to share in evaluation.
19. Taking advantage of programs designed to increase my knowledge about child development and my skills in areas of possible employment.
20. Becoming involved in community programs, which help to improve health, education and recreation for all.

What is Head Start?

Head Start is a federally funded program sponsored by the Social Development Commission (SDC) of Milwaukee. SDC sponsors several Head Start programs throughout the city.

Head Start is a comprehensive child development program for low-income children and families. The basic elements of Head Start are regulated through Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards, which are divided into three major Sub-Parts (B, C and D) and incorporate the following:



Social Service
Parent Involvement
Education
Health
Mental Health
Nutrition
Transportation
Services for Children with Disabilities
Transition Services

Since its inception in 1965, Head Start has been a pioneer in the movement to address the needs of the “whole child,” including the educational, vocational and material needs of the entire family.

The Head Start philosophy holds that parents are the primary educators of their children and that successful child development programs must involve and empower parents in order to have a lasting impact on the lives of low-income children. This philosophy is reflected in the administrative structure, which includes the City Wide Policy Council (CWPC) that shares decision-making power with the Head Start Director and the SDC Board of Commissioners.

Head Start offers a variety of informational and educational opportunities for parents. These opportunities are announced at Center Committee meetings and in monthly newsletters.

How Your Head Start Center Operates

Every Head Start center has procedures designed to protect everyone involved in the program, and to meet federal and state government requirements.

As a parent or guardian of a child attending Head Start, you need to be aware of these procedures and guidelines so your child gets the maximum benefits from the program.

(Please keep this Parent Handbook for reference.)

Head Start Sub-Part Areas

Sub-Part B Early Childhood Development, Education & Health Services

Sub-Part C Family & Community Partnerships

Sub-Part D Program Design, Management & Program Governance



Sub-Part B: Early Childhood Development, Education & Health Services

Children will be involved in play activities that will help them to develop and grow socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. Children will receive individual attention.

Outdoor play occurs daily. However, children will not be allowed to go outside when it is raining, snowing or when the temperature or wind chill factor is below 20 degrees. All children are encouraged to have appropriate clothing for inclement weather such as coats, hats, boots and mittens.

Parents will be able to work with teachers to meet the individual needs of their child and at the same time learn about child growth and development, child self-discipline and the developmental needs of young children.

Developmental assessments are done on all Head Start children. A developmental assessment is a tool used throughout the school year, to plan an individual program for your child. Results of all assessments are shared with parents and guardians at home visits and conferences.

Discipline in the Classroom

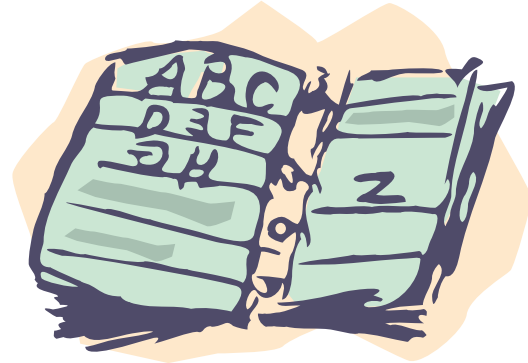
Everyone needs discipline at one time or another. Head Start uses the “redirection” method as a primary discipline procedure. Redirection is used when a child is behaving in a manner that may harm themselves or another child. The teacher moves the child away from the other children until the child decides they are ready to return to the activities. The safety of each child is observed throughout the program.

Parents and guardians are consulted about their child’s continued inappropriate behavior and a joint management plan is developed. Mental health professionals are available for program planning and interaction.






The Curriculum

Head Start has recently adopted the use of an adapted version of the High Scope Curriculum. This curriculum is based on five (5) basic beliefs:

1. Children learn through active involvement with people, materials and ideas.
2. Children learn best when their choices and interests are respected and validated.
3. Teachers can best help children learn by careful observations of their behaviors and choices.
4. Adults can help support children's learning through positive interactions by talking with them about what they're doing, by playing with them and by helping them to be problem solvers.
5. Parents and teachers are essential partners in the educational process.



Therefore you will see:

-  Teachers and children planning activities based on children's individual interests.
-  Children planning, doing and reviewing play activities daily.
-  Children working in small groups with their teachers on a variety of projects.
-  Teachers taking notes on each child detailing their individual choices and activities and maintaining an on-going assessment of their skill levels.
-  Teachers contacting you at every turn to enlist your ideas and participation in the curriculum through home visits, conferences, letters and daily conversations.

We believe that the adoption of the High Scope Curriculum constitutes a positive change for SDC Head Start. We look forward to your support in helping us make it a success.

General Health for Children

Children will receive health services that include vision, hearing, growth, blood pressure, and height/weight screenings.

As required by the State of Wisconsin, we keep a medical log of **all** accidents and/or injuries and the administering of medication to children, both on and off the Head Start premises. If you wish to see any entries made on your child, please contact your family advocate.

Children will have an initial medical and dental examination and needed follow-up care before completing the program.

Health Checks

Health checks are required for all children entering the program. A complete health check includes the following information:

- + Review of body systems
- + Doctor's signature
- + Date of exam
- + Immunizations
- + Results of all blood work (numbers)
- + Height and weight
- + Hearing and vision screening
- + Blood pressure
- + Doctor's comments about the child's general health such as asthma, hay fever, lead, and mental health

Within 90 days of enrollment, parents must arrange for a complete physical (and dental) exam for their child. Family Advocate staff will assist any parent who requests help in meeting this requirement as well as parents needing help getting follow up care.

Immunizations

State law now requires children to receive Hepatitis B (HEP), Chicken Pox (Varicella) and Pneumonia (PVC) vaccinations.

Children ages 3 - 4 should have 4 DTP, 3 OPV, 1 MMR, 3 HEP B and 1-4 HIB depending on start date.

When your child turns 5 and is ready to enter kindergarten, Wisconsin State Law requires he/she must have 4 DTP, 4 OPV, 2 MMR, 3 HEP B, 1-4 HIB, and 1 Varicella or history of disease.

Note: Chicken Pox vaccination is required as of fall 2001. PVC required as of fall 2008.

If you are not sure if your child is completely immunized or if your child receives immunizations during the school year, please report information to the Family Advocate Staff.

Dental Exams

Head Start requires that all children entering the program have a dental examination. This exam can't be more than six (6) months old prior to your child's enrollment and is good for only one (1) year. Should your child need a follow-up visit, Head Start requests that you bring in all completed forms from any returning dental visits.





Mental Health/Disabilities for Children and Parents

Children will feel good about themselves and proud of their community. The child's social/emotional development is very important at this stage of their lives and a major part of all curriculum areas.

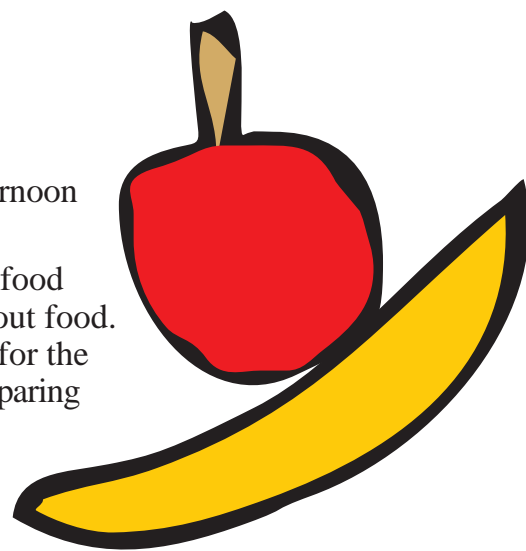
Parents will learn about community mental health resources available to help them and their families cope with life's problems.

Parents will receive ideas and suggestions helping them to understand their children's behavior and special needs. Resources and assistance to access therapy will be offered. Children will receive all services entitled to them according to their Individual Education Plans (IEP's).

Nutrition for Children and Parents

Children will have a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack daily.

Children will experience new foods and be involved in food preparation activities that will help them learn more about food. Parents will have opportunities to learn about nutrition for the whole family and have an opportunity to be involved in preparing the foods for their children at their center.



Sub-Part C: Family & Community Partnerships

SDC is committed to providing comprehensive, professional, and confidential services to all Head Start Families. Parents have the opportunity to work individually and confidentially with their Family Advocate to participate in a goal-setting activities through the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA). Teachers also seek to partner with parents through conferences and home visits. SDC also partners with community agencies, school districts, and area colleges and universities to help us to meet the needs of children and families. Our partnerships with families and the community cross all component areas and offer a breadth and depth of service to the families in our SDC sites that is both unique and powerful.

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is the responsibility of Head Start staff to help keep children safe. According to Wisconsin law a Head Start staff that suspects a child has been abused or neglected **MUST REPORT** the incident to the proper authorities.

Please refer to the Behavior Guidance and Wellness Plan (Sub-Part B) posted at your center for more information about SDC Head Start's Child Abuse and Neglect Policy.



Sub-Part D: Program Design, Management & Program Governance

Every Head Start program has several groups composed of parents to help in the program's development and overall operation. This Head Start program, like all the others in the country, has federal guidelines that require the involvement of parents in the classroom and on various committees.

Parent Involvement

Children will be given the opportunity to see their parents as the most important teacher. Parents will receive the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect all the families and children in the Head Start Program.

Parents will be welcomed into the program and classroom as a volunteer, visitor or paid staff.

As the premier advocate for low-income families, we not only listen closely to the needs and aspirations of the families we serve to provide better direct services and to understand and encourage utilization of other community services, but we also join our voices with theirs in advocating for changes in the broader community. We invite our parent partnerships to grow from the level of individual families in Head Start to the larger community.

- 😊 Children, at an early age, get the opportunity to see their parents in leadership roles as teachers and decision-makers.
- 😊 Staff have an opportunity to get to know parents better and to learn from each other.
- 😊 Parents give input and participate in the process of making decisions about the nature and operation of the program.
- 😊 Parents can learn new skills for working with their own children and within the community.

Each center has a designated parent board, which includes information on upcoming workshops, trainings, employment opportunities and a calendar of events for the center and for the community.

The following is a brief description of the groups you are invited to attend.

Center Committee

Parents are encouraged to be active on the Center Committee, to participate in self assessment with the Subpart BCD Committee, and to stand for election to the SPPC and CWPC. Parents involved in the program receive many benefits for their family and their community when they participate.

SDC Parent Program Committee (SPPC)

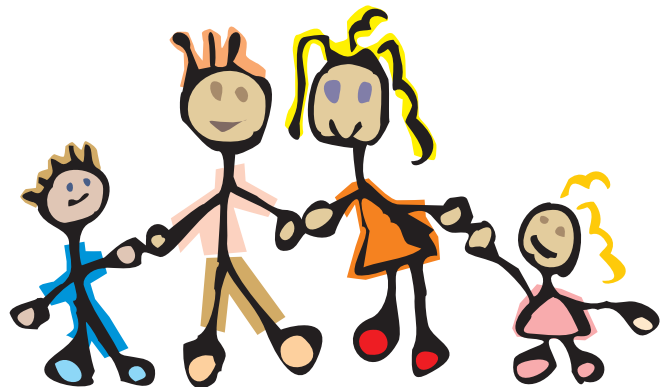
The SPPC is an elected subcommittee of the City Wide Policy Committee (CWPC). Two representatives are elected to the SPPC by each SDC Head Start site. This committee meets monthly and works closely with the Program Coordinators and the Program Manager to make recommendations to the CWPC. They are also invited to take part in program planning and the self assessment process through the Subpart BCD Committee. The SPPC in turn elects 9 Delegates to represent SDC Site Operations at the CWPC. SPPC and CWPC meeting minutes are available in the center office.

City-Wide Policy Council (CWPC)

The City-Wide Policy Council meets each month, and is composed of elected representatives from each of the Head Start programs funded through the Social Development Commission. They are:

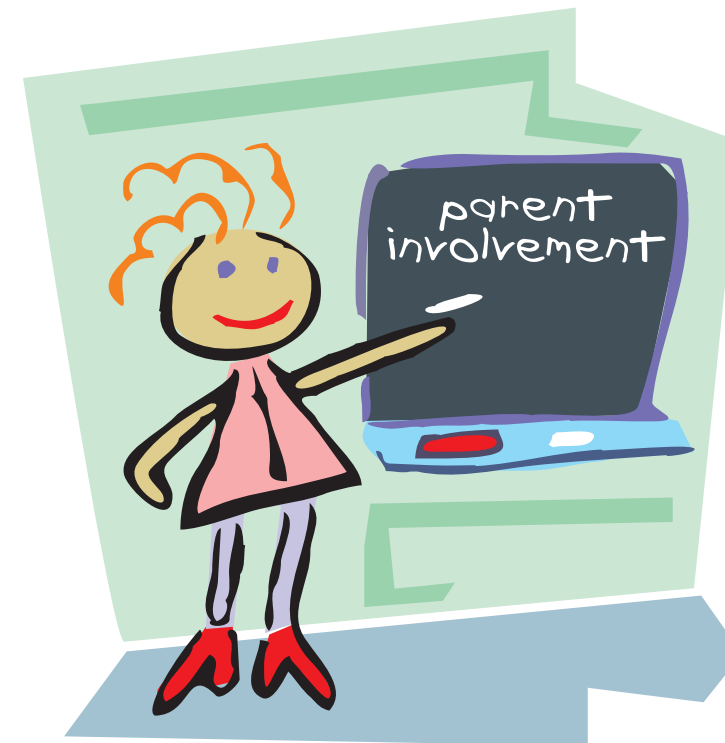
1. SDC Head Start
2. Council for the Spanish Speaking - Guadalupe
3. Day Care Services for Children
4. Next Door Foundation
5. Northcott Neighborhood House
6. Urban Day

The City-Wide Policy Council (CWPC) approves policies and develops plans that affect the entire program. Other CWPC responsibilities include, but are not limited to, participation in the selection and approval of hiring and termination of all SDC Head Start staff, approval of all budgets, funding applications, and program policies.



Other Groups for Parents

Head Start has many other groups that provide parents the opportunity to participate and help in the continued development of the program. You will learn about these groups and how to join at your center committee meetings. The Center Committee is the best place to learn more about your site, workshops, training and classroom. Be sure to come to the parent meetings!



Medication Policy

In the event that your child will need medication during class hours, you should contact your Family Advocate for an "Authorization to Administer Medication" form.

If your child is ill, please do not bring him/her to school. You must call the center and report that your child is ill. If your child has a communicable disease such as chicken pox, we will need to alert all parents and staff. Please remember to give that information to the office. Upon returning to school, teachers are requested to do a head to toe visual screening of your child. If your child yet appears to be ill, you may be asked to take him/her home.

If a child becomes ill or injured while at the center, a staff person will call you and request you or a designated escort pick up the child. **Please remember to keep the emergency contact card updated.**



School Closings - Bad Weather

If school is closed due to weather conditions, please tune in to local radio and television stations for announcements.

You may decide that the weather is too severe to send your child to school. Please call the center or send an excuse when the child returns to report their absence. Your decision in this matter is respected by the center.

As a rule of thumb, when Milwaukee Public Schools are closed due to weather, Head Start is also closed.



Fire and Tornado Drills

All SDC Head Start Centers have regular fire and tornado drills. If you are in the building when the alarm sounds, you will be required to participate without exception.

Transportation Services

The Head Start Transportation Program is an **opportunity** for families **living in** the transport target area who meet one of the following criteria:

- ☉ Children with documented diagnosed physical disabilities.
- ☉ Parent/Guardian has documented diagnosed physical disabilities.
- ☉ Child was referred by a social service agency, which provides documentation of special needs and/or circumstances.
- ☉ Parent/Guardian is working and/or in school full-time with no means of transportation (work and school documentation is required).

Special Note: Transportation services do not carry over from year to year. All children will go through the enrollment process each program year. Transportation opportunities are extremely limited.



Educational Opportunities for Parents

By taking an active role in Head Start, parents receive an opportunity to enhance job skills through training, leadership and career development.

Various workshops and trainings are offered during the year based on the Parent Interest Survey completed during enrollment and during the school year.

Check the parent board at your site for job postings and listings of current workshops.

Some of the **free** trainings/workshops offered throughout the year include:

First Aid4 hours

CPR8 hours

Child Development 1 and 2....40 hours

GED Classes

