

Center Based Supplement for the Easterseals Early Learning Services Parent Handbook

Easterseals and partnership sites work together to deliver comprehensive, quality services. Our collaboration model means that different services are brought together to make a greater impact on children and families. The Early Learning Teams and their services are listed below.

Our Partner Centers

Our partner centers bring together Child Care, Head Start, Preschool for All, Early Head Start, and Prevention Initiative services to provide your child the highest quality services possible. Without these blended services, the quality would be less. We encourage all parents to apply for and continue enrollment for all funding sources, including Child Care Assistance (also called childcare subsidy).

Center Based Services

In our suburban programs Head Start, Early Head Start, and Prevention Initiative services are provided 7 hours a day year-round. There are some days off throughout the year for holidays, professional development and other days decided by the program or the partner centers. Preschool for All services are 2.5 hours per day for about 10 months of the year (see PFA Supplement for more details).

In our Chicago programs Head Start and Early Head Start are 7.5 hours daily year-round while Early Head Start Child Care Partnership is 10 hours per day year-round.

Each site designates a daily schedule identifying which are the HS/EHS/PI/PFA hours. During those hours, partner centers are providing the services outlined in the Parent Handbook and supplements for each program, including enhanced ratios, teacher qualifications, nutrition services, and safety procedures. Many families need additional care at the center beyond these hours and make arrangements directly with the center. Centers maintain services based on Illinois licensing standards during any additional childcare hours. If a HS/EHS/PFA/PI parent loses their childcare eligibility (for instance, due to loss of employment), the child remains enrolled in HS/EHS/PFA/PI. The child may still attend the HS/EHS/PFA/PI hours at the center, but parents must pick up their child at the end of those hours. The Family Health Advocate will help the parent with their goal of finding new employment, entering a job training program, or enrolling in school to become childcare eligible again.

Family and Health/Nutrition Team

This team works with sites and families to promote parent and family engagement. Family Health Advocates (FHA) meet with each family at the beginning of enrollment to complete the family strengths and needs assessment and to set goals. The FHA and family work together to accomplish these goals through referrals. The Family Assessment and goals will be reviewed regularly throughout enrollment.

Families also have opportunities to take leadership roles at the center. They can attend Parent Committee meetings to learn what is happening at the center. They can also run for leadership roles. Parents elect officers to help run the meetings. We have chairpersons, vice-chairpersons and secretaries for each center parent committee. Parent Committees also elect a representative from Head Start and from Early Head Start to the program wide Policy Council (or Policy Committee in Chicago).

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Family & Community Engagement & Partnership

- Family Health Advocates (FHAs) begin to build a relationship of respect and trust from the first contact with each family
- Staff and parents review a family strengths and needs assessment and talk about the family's goals. (We call this a Family Partnership Agreement.)
- Baby TALK parent curriculum is research-based and designed for parents of children ages 0-5. It is individualized to meet parents' interests. We supplement this parent curriculum with a video based curriculum called Ready Rosie.
 - FHAs and parents will meet at least twice in a year at the family's home, using the Baby TALK curriculum to talk about parenting issues of interest to the parent and do activities planned specifically for your child.
- Staff provide appropriate referrals and resources (housing, job training, free activities, workshops, behavioral health counseling) for each unique family
- We recruit for new children and families all year and parents can help by referring friends and family
- Family Health Advocates work with the parents and centers to offer family engagement activities (workshops, parent socials, parent meetings and other community activities)
- Staff collaborate with schools and families on transition to kindergarten activities



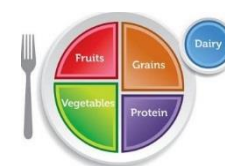
Health

- Family Health Advocates track and support families in obtaining physicals, dentals, immunizations, and all health screenings according to the state of Illinois EPSDT schedule
- Children's height and weight will be measured at least twice a year
- Reinforce family style meal services and dental hygiene (**Family Style Meals and toothbrushing are temporarily suspended until further notice**)
- Staff will work with families on nutrition and alternate food plans
- Develop cooperative relationship with local health professionals



Nutrition Services

- Certified/licensed nutritionist reviews site menus to ensure nutritious foods are offered to Head Start/Early Head Start children
- Family Health Advocate connects parents with the nutritionist when they have questions about nutrition services
- Nutritionist offers alternate food plans to children who need a special diet, and assists any child with nutritional needs
- A nutrition action plan is offered to children with weight issues
- Nutrition workshops are provided for staff and parents
- Breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack or supper are provided daily
- Breastfeeding is supported and encouraged
- Easterseals HS/EHS sites use funds from the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP), a program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), as the primary source of payment for meals for all ages of EHS and HS children.



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Education, Inclusion, and Social Emotional Support Team

This team partners with teachers, parents/guardians, and directors to ensure that classrooms are safe, nurturing, and engaging learning environments for children. The team's role is to coach and mentor teachers in the classroom through relationship building, modeling, offering recommendations and ideas and providing professional development. The Education/Inclusion team also plays a vital role in ensuring all children, including children with diagnosed disabilities, are fully included in program activities. This is implemented through individualization, referrals to outside resources, trainings, and transition planning with teachers and parents.

Defining School Readiness

- Head Start defines its approach to School Readiness as meaning that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.
- Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.
- Programs must establish school readiness goals that are appropriate for the ages and development of enrolled children.
- Measuring progress toward school readiness goals helps programs individualize for each child and ensure that children know and can do what is needed to be ready for kindergarten.
- Head Start respects parents as their children's primary nurturers, teachers, and advocates. Programs are required to consult with parents in establishing school readiness goals
- As children transition to kindergarten, Head Start programs and schools work together to promote school readiness and engage families.



Education

- All classrooms use the Creative Curriculum, which is research-based and aligned with state early learning standards
- Assessments are ongoing and utilize observations, pictures, videos, audio recordings, and examples of children's work to demonstrate children's competencies in a variety of learning domains determined essential for school readiness
- After each of four checkpoints a year, the results are analyzed and used to guide planning, individualization, and professional development.
- In Center based there are two home visits and two parent-teacher conferences per year.

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Inclusion

- All children receive regular developmental screenings to look at overall development, social-emotional development, and hearing/vision and to determine if further evaluation is needed
- If there are any concerns identified, children are referred to the appropriate agencies and supported through the evaluation process
- Children with pre-diagnosed disabilities are included in the classroom along with typically developing peers.
- At least 10% of enrollment will be children with disabilities

Social Emotional Support

- A qualified social emotional specialist/ consultant is assigned to each site.
- The specialist/ consultant performs general classroom observations and provides training and guidance to staff on supporting children's social and emotional development.
- The specialist/consultant also conducts individual observations of children with parent consent and offers suggestions on strategies for working with the child in the classroom and at home.
- Each family has access to 3 crisis-counseling sessions and can be referred for additional outside services when needed.

Attendance

- We offer full year services for both Head Start and Early Head Start! The center staff will tell you about any planned breaks so that you can prepare.
- Attendance is very important to your child's success in Early Learning as well as future success in school. We ask that you bring your child every day that school is open unless he or she is sick. Please dress them appropriately for the weather so they are prepared for cold or inclement weather as children will go outside most days.
- Missing only two days per month may place your child at less than 90% attendance and at risk of chronic absence. After 60 days in the program, staff will review each child's attendance to see if the child is at risk of chronic absence. We will develop a plan to work with those parents to improve the child's attendance.
- If your child must be absent, let us know ahead of time or call the morning of the absence. If we don't hear from you, we will call you. We must check in with the parent/guardian or caregiver of a child who is absent within 1 hour of the child's expected arrival time to check on the child's wellbeing.
- If your child must be absent for an extended time, parents must request in writing that we continue the child's enrollment. The request must state the date that absence will begin, the reason for absence, and when the child will be back. Requests for over two weeks must be approved by both the center and Easterseals. We will carefully consider each request.
- Children who are out for two weeks (10 school days) or more without prior approval may have the spot considered vacant, so they would need to reapply upon return. This means that eligibility will need to be determined again and the child might end up on the waitlist.
- We are responsible for making sure that Head Start services are provided to our funded enrollment every month. **We support parents in making attendance in school a family priority.**

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USDA (CACFP)

All our centers partner with the USDA to provide nutritious meals. The USDA establishes minimum serving sizes to meet the nutrition needs of children at each age. Our Head Start and Early Head Start Standards require that at least half of a child's nutrition needs are met while at the center.

Nondiscrimination Statement

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To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form.

To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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