Family Handbook
2026-27

HEAD START
A Program of New River Community Action

NEW RIVER COMMUNITY ACTION

Welcome to Preschool!

Blacksburg Head Start **(540) 552-0490**

Christiansburg Head Start	**(540) 381-7559**
Early Learning Center @NRCC	**(540) 674-3600 ext.4246**
Floyd Head Start	**(540) 745-2120**
Pearisburg Head Start	**(540) 921-2355**
Project Grow & Learn	**(540) 217-9426**
Pulaski Head Start	**(540) 994-5740**

New River Community Action, Inc. Head Start Preschool
Administrative Office
206 3rd Ave., Radford, VA 24141
(540) 633-5133

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Welcome to Head Start

Head Start's Mission: Head Start is a comprehensive early childhood education program for children from qualifying families from birth to age five. From academic skills to social-emotional skills, the Head Start staff and curriculum helps children build the abilities they need to be successful. Each program engages parents as partners with their child's teacher and works closely with the local community to adapt to what each area needs. Every child has the ability to succeed, and Head Start provides the supports to help each child reach their potential.

WELCOME to Your Preschool Experience!

This handbook is a resource for your family and includes important information about your child's Head Start experience. Head Start recognizes that you are your child's first and most important teacher. **YOUR CHILD NEEDS YOU!** Research shows that parent/guardian involvement is strongly connected to children's academic success.

Our Head Start program offers many opportunities for families to be actively involved, from participation in Policy Council to volunteering with classroom activities. Our staff offers a variety of supports to your child and family. In addition to classroom teachers, each Head Start family has the opportunity to work with a Family Wellness Coach to support family and child goals. We are committed to building and sustaining a collaborative partnership with all Head Start parents and guardians.

We are pleased to share this school year with your child and family.

Head Start enrollment <u>requirements</u> include the following:

- □ Proof of Birth
- □ Current Physical Exam with up-to-date immunizations
- □ Dental Exam completed within the past six months

Talk to your Family Wellness Coach if you would like assistance in meeting these requirements.

NRCA's Head Start Preschool Partnership Promise

NRCA's Head Start program embraces the following expectations for our staff and the families and children enrolled in our classrooms.

We will strive at all times to **BE SAFE, RESPONSIBLE, and RESPECTFUL.**

As part of our Partnership, our program promises the following:

Staff will…

- Place the safety of children as the top priority of our program
- Recognize parents as their child's primary educator
- Create an environment that welcomes families to our offices, classrooms, meetings, and special events
- Inform parents regularly about both their child's progress and challenges
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Use positive methods of guidance while providing children with the opportunity to ask questions, make decisions and solve their own problems, and use their words
- Utilize STREAMin3, and evidence-based curriculum designed to provide a preschool experience that supports their academic and social-emotional success

Parents will...

- Treat Head Start staff with dignity and respect
- Respect the confidentiality of families and staff
- Model appropriate behavior to our children
- Engage with their child's education team to share educational goals and information to help us create the best experience for their child
- Follow program policies ensuring the safety of their child and other children

It is the role of EVERY person at Head Start to treat staff, families, and children with respect.

ANY person who engages in any of the following may be asked to leave the Head Start program:

- Any physical or abusive verbal punishment of children (including siblings or any other non-enrolled children
- Threats to staff, children, or families

- Verbal or physical fighting, shouting in the presence of children, parents, or staff
- Bringing drugs or alcohol or weapons to NRCA property or events
- Violations of the Confidentiality policy, including social media posts involving our school's children, families or staff

Policy Council and Parent Committee

Head Start Policy Council:

Head Start Federal Performance Standards state that families are important partners in decisions about how the program works. Families have the opportunity to represent their Head Start Center on the Head Start Policy Council.

The Policy Council is:

- A group of parents and community members who help make important program decisions.
  - New Policy Council representatives receive yearly training to help them understand their role and responsibilities.
  - Representatives from each center meet once a month.
  - Meetings may be held virtually when needed.
  - Child care and transportation are provided for meetings.
- The Policy Council helps review and approve important program decisions, including:
  - Program goals and ways to achieve them.
  - Requests for funding and how funds are used.
  - The hiring of staff.
- The Policy Council also takes part in the program's yearly self-assessment.

Parent Center Committees:

Every parent or guardian with an enrolled child is a member of the center's Parent Committee. The Parent Committee helps plan, support, and participate in activities and events for families and staff.

Board of Directors:

The New River Community Action Board of Directors provides oversight for the Head Start program. Meetings are held monthly and are open to the public.

Joining Policy Council is not required, but we hope you will consider getting involved and becoming an active member.

Good nutrition today means a stronger tomorrow!

Building for the Future with CACP

This childcare receives support from the Child and Adult Care Food Program to serve healthy meals to your children. **Meals served here must meet USDA's nutrition standards.**

Questions? Concerns?

State Administering Agency:	***Center/Sponsoring Organization:***
Special Nutrition Programs: CACFP Virginia Department of Health Division of Community Nutrition 109 Governor Street 9th Floor Richmond, VA 23219 1-877-618-7282	New River Community Action, Inc. Head Start Program 206 3rd Ave. Radford, VA 24141 1-540-633-5133

Learn more about CACFP at USDA's website:
https://www.fns.usda.gov/

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service FNS-317
November 2019

LICENSING INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Virginia Department of Education licenses child day centers and enforces the standards through announced and unannounced visits. Every effort is made to protect the rights of children in care and licensees by enforcing the standards using discretion and judgment. When appropriate, technical experts may be consulted to ensure accurate compliance with the standards. Child day center operators regulated by these standards may request an exception (allowable variance) for any standard that creates a special hardship unless the standard is required by law or another agency's regulation. Licensees are encouraged to discuss any concerns about licensing procedures, interpretation and application of standards, or the actions of licensing personnel with the licensing inspector and, if necessary, supervisory personnel at the field or home office level. If you would have questions regarding these standards, please contact:

Office of Child Care Health and Safety (Western)
Virginia Department of Education

190 Patton Street, Suite 100
Abingdon, VA 24210

Phone: 276-608-3758

Email: western.cclicensing@doe.virginia.gov

Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education licensing standards:

Child Supervision

As a reminder and clarification, ***no child is left unattended at any time during the Head Start day.*** This includes when the child arrives or leaves and during bathroom breaks.

8VAC20-780-340. <u>Supervision of children:</u>

1. Children under 10 years of age shall always be within **<u>actual sight and sound</u>** supervision of staff, except that staff need only be able to hear a child who is using the restroom provided that:

1. a. There is a "system" to assure that individuals who are not staff members or persons allowed to pick up a child in care do not enter the restroom area while in use by the children; and
2. b. Staff will check on a child who has not returned from the restroom after five minutes.

Acceptable and Unacceptable Discipline Methods:

We are required by the Virginia Department of Education Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers to inform parents of acceptable/unacceptable discipline methods. The following guidelines are taken from those standards.

8VAC20-780-400e. <u>Behavioral Guidance:</u>

1. In order to promote the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being and growth, staff and volunteers shall interact with the child and one another to provide needed help, comfort, support and:

2. Respect personal privacy;

3. Respect differences in cultural, ethnic, and family backgrounds;
4. Encourage decision-making abilities;
5. Promote ways of getting along;
6. Encourage independence and self-direction; and
7. Use consistency in applying expectations.

Behavioral guidance shall be constructive in nature, age and stage appropriate, and shall be intended to redirect children to appropriate behavior and resolve conflicts.

8VAC20-780-410. Forbidden Actions:

The following actions or threats thereof are forbidden:

1. Physical punishment, striking a child, roughly handling or shaking a child, restricting movement through binding or tying, forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position, or exercise as punishment;
2. Enclosure in a small, confined space or any space that the child cannot freely exit himself; however, this does not apply to the use of equipment such as cribs, play yards, highchairs, and safety gates when used with children preschool age or younger, for the intended purpose;
3. Punishment by another child;
4. Separation from the group so that the child is away from the hearing and vision of a staff member;
5. Withholding or forcing of food or rest;
6. Verbal remarks which are demeaning to the child;
7. Punishment for toileting accidents; and
8. Punishment by applying unpleasant or harmful substances.

Your Child's Classroom

STREAMin3 Curriculum

Our program uses the STREAMin3 curriculum. STREAMin3 provides a comprehensive set of integrated practices, routines, materials, assessments, and professional development to equip our teachers with the skills needed to provide children with a preschool experience that supports their academic and social-emotional success. STREAMin3 provides children with opportunities to develop skills in Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, and Math through INtegrated activities with INtentional learning objectives, and a focus on positive INteractions between educators and children.

The STREAMin3 curriculum identifies 5 Core Skills that form the building blocks for later learning:

1. Relate-with peers and adults
2. Regulate-their emotions, attention, and behavior
3. Think-deeply about the world around them
4. Communicate-with others productively
5. Move-their bodies to achieve goals

Curriculum Design

The first 3 weeks of the curriculum guide are introduction weeks, which include daily activities that help children learn the Core Skill Routines. These 3 weeks give children the opportunity to get to know their school, get used to daily routines, and give children, teachers, and families a chance to form relationships. After the introduction weeks, the first Big Idea, or unit of STREAMin3 is "How Things Grow." Each week within the unit of study has a Core Skill Focus (see #1-5 above). This focus allows teachers to plan intentional activities to support that specific skill. Throughout the day, children will engage in choice time (learning through play), small and large group activities, listening to stories, and through their interactions with their teachers and with each other will learn social skills and about the world around them.

Learning Content

The focus each week is on one Core Skill; however, activities are provided in all areas of development. These developmental areas are aligned with state (ELDS) and Head Start (ELOF) standards and address development and include: Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Language & Literacy, Cognition, and Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development.

Special Support

STREAMin3 allows teachers to individualize and support every type of learner including dual-language learners, children with disabilities, and children who may have additional challenges.

Interactions, Play, and Hands on Activities

Through thoughtful and positive interactions, lots of play-based activities that support thinking and creativity, and hands-on exploration, STREAMin3 supports your child in building lifelong critical thinking skills. Our teachers support this by playing with children, having intentional conversations, and by providing thought-provoking and interesting materials. Teachers within our program do not use workbooks, worksheets, flash cards, or lecture-based strategies to support learning.

What is the Pyramid Model?

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development of children. Our teachers use Pyramid Model Practices. These practices include providing an environment where children enjoy school, building positive relationships with children and staff, teaching children social skills, and individualizing instruction to ensure every child receives the support they need to be successful. The STREAMin3 curriculum utilizes resources from the National Center for Pyramid Innovations (NCPMI) including the Solution Kit, Super Friend, Feelings Chart, and the Turtle Technique. Additionally, our program uses a cozy space, which is a safe space for children to de-escalate if they are experiencing big emotions.

Positive Solutions for Families Parenting Curriculum

Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.51(b): A program must, at a minimum, offer opportunities for parents to participate in a research-based parenting curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge and offers parents the opportunity to practice parenting skills to promote children's learning and development.

Our Head Start program has implemented the Positive Solutions for Families parenting curriculum to meet this Head Start Performance Standard. Positive Solutions for Families information can be found at https://challengingbehavior.org. Positive Solutions for Families provides evidence-based, user-friendly lessons to help professionals working with parents and caregivers to promote positive and effective parenting behaviors, which will, in turn, promote children's social and emotional development and address the challenging behavior of children ages 2-5 years.

Talk with your Family Wellness Coach about taking part in this opportunity.

Parent Rights and Responsibilities

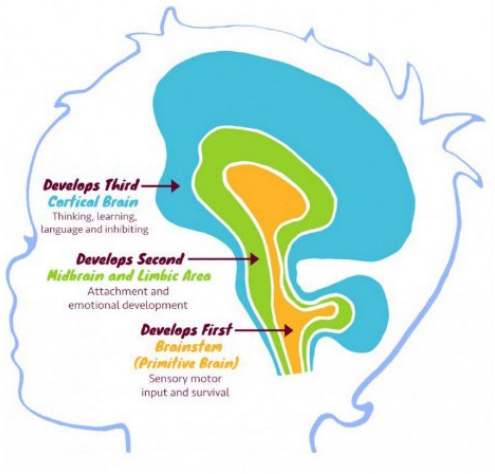
My rights as a Head Start parent/guardian include:

- to be recognized as my child's primary educator
- to participate in Policy Council and Parent Committee meetings which affect the planning and operation of the program
- to be welcomed in the office, classroom, meetings and special events by all staff
- to be informed regularly about my child's progress
- to always be treated with respect and dignity
- to receive information and guidance from the program that will help my child's development
- to have opportunities to learn about the total operation of the program, including the budget and the level of education and experience required to fill various staff positions
- to be informed about community resources that will assist in improving my family's quality of life
- to offer constructive criticism of the program and to participate in annual program evaluations
- to access my child's file during regular business hours

Class Schedule

Each classroom has its own schedule. Please refer to the schedule posted in your child's classroom.

Screenings and Assessments



During the first few months of school, teachers will complete a Brigance developmental screening, a social/emotional screening, and a speech/language screening for each child when they enroll in our preschool program. Child educational gains are measured using ongoing assessments of what children can do in the classroom, based upon teacher and family observations. This data is put into our program-wide system called GoEngage. This data is reviewed 3 times each year and is used to measure individual child, classroom, and program-wide educational progress. These reports help us set individual and program goals. The VKRP (Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program) is used to measure school readiness in Math, Self-Regulation, and Social Skills. The Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLS) is used to evaluate preschool literacy concepts. These assessments are required in our blended Head Start classrooms in the public schools, Mixed Delivery sites, and any additional state funded preschool classrooms.

Parents will be provided with score reports from all screenings and assessments. Families who wish to opt their child out of any screenings and/or assessments should contact the center's site administrator for information.

Successful Transition

Head Start provides individual and group adjustments to ensure children transition into their preschool setting successfully. The first days of school are shorter days to allow teachers to transition children to school in smaller groups. Our classroom staff teach children the schedule, routines, and expectations of their classrooms. After the first few days, teachers and administrators will evaluate each child's needs to determine if the child and family are ready for a full day of school, or if a longer period of shorter days could be useful to build skills and strengthen routines. Transitions will be evaluated on an individual basis.

Outside Play

When weather permits the Head Start children will go outside for an hour each day. Children will not be permitted to go outside if the temperature or wind chill is below 20 degrees, or when the heat exceeds 95 degrees. Teachers will use best practices to shorten the length of time depending on weather situations and how the children are dressed. ***Flip flops are not appropriate footwear and are not acceptable during outside play.*** **If you believe your child is too sick to go outside with the other children, you must keep your child home until he/she is completely able to take part in all activities**. Due to licensing requirements and staff demands, we are unable to keep one staff person inside with children not participating in outside activities.

Homework for School Readiness

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Children have many opportunities to learn while at home. If your child is helping you during everyday tasks like matching socks when you are folding laundry,

clearing dishes from the table, washing their hands, brushing their teeth, making a snack, or going on a walk, these are all valuable learning experiences for your child. Children learn through watching you and through interacting with you and the world around them. To support your efforts at home, teachers will be sending home weekly Homework for School Readiness activities. These activities do not have to be followed exactly. They are to give ideas about how you can support your child's learning at home. On the back of each homework activity is a book log for you to fill out anytime you read to, or read with, your child. When you fill out these homework sheets and turn them in to your child's teacher, Head Start receives something called, "in-kind". In-kind turns the time you spend with your child into dollars for our Head Start program. **Please help your child prepare for kindergarten and keep Head Start funding available for future families and children.**

Holidays and Celebrations

Conversations about holidays in the classroom are guided by children's interests and questions. Because parties and celebrations can interrupt routines and may not reflect every family's tradition, we keep holiday-related activities and discussions limited, age-appropriate, and aligned with our curriculum and program standards.

Head Start Performance Standard 1302.44 2(iii) states that meals and snacks for children ages three to five must meet USDA guidelines and be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt. In keeping with this standard, as well as our nutrition and food safety policies, families may not bring treats to celebrate birthdays or other special occasions during school hours.

Please talk with Head Start staff about simple, no-cost, non-food ways to celebrate your child's birthday during school hours.

End of the Year Celebration

Preschool graduation events with caps, gowns, and similar activities are meaningful in many communities. At the preschool level, however, these events can sometimes feel stressful for children and may create added costs and preparation time for families and staff. As children grow older, they will have many opportunities to take part in these traditions. Each year, we will plan developmentally appropriate End of Year Celebrations that honor children's growth, learning, and accomplishments.

Cultural holiday attendance exemption

Your child may be excused to celebrate holidays and traditions that are important to your family. Our school calendar includes scheduled breaks, but if your family observes holidays that fall outside of those dates, your child may be excused to participate. Please let your Family Wellness Coach know if your child will be absent for one of these celebrations.

Rest Time & Naps

Licensing requires centers operating 5 or more hours each day to provide a designated rest period of at least 1 hour. Rest time is an important part of your child's day because it gives children time to relax, recharge, and reset for the rest of the day. Teaching staff create a calm and comfortable environment for naptime. Children have the opportunity to nap or rest each day, typically between 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Children rest on cots with sheets and blankets. If a child does not fall asleep, they will be offered quiet activities after about 30 minutes.

- Your child may bring a small soft toy from home if it helps them feel safe and comfortable during rest time.
- The toy should stay in your child's cubby during the rest of the day.
- Please take the toy home regularly to be washed.

Bathroom & Toileting

As part of our comprehensive early childhood program, we support children who are still learning to use the toilet. Classroom teachers will assist your child and help them build toileting skills while participating in the Head Start program.

- Classroom staff will respond promptly when a child requests help using the toilet.
- Classroom staff will not show disapproval or punish children for toileting accidents. Children are never degraded by harsh words or expressions of disgust.
- Teachers and parents may conference together to establish shared toilet-training goals and methods.
- A child's clothing will be changed immediately after a toileting accident. Soiled clothing will be sent home so a fresh change of clothes can be returned to the center.
- Families must provide full sets of extra clothing for school.

Staff members are required to wash their hands with soap and water after each toileting and to assist children with handwashing using soap and water.

Classroom Adults

You may see interns, volunteers, and public-school personnel working in classrooms. We welcome their involvement and encourage families to get to know the adults who support children during the school day. Please feel free to ask classroom adults who they are and how they support the program.

TB Screening/Test for Volunteers

To help keep children safe and healthy, volunteers who help in our program on a regular basis, at least once a week, and anyone who assists with meal service must provide proof of a current TB tuberculosis test or TB screening before volunteering and before having contact with children.

- TB documentation must be dated within 30 calendar days of the volunteer start date.
- Returning staff and volunteers must provide an updated TB test or screening every two years from the date of the initial screening or test.

Services to Children with Disabilities

Head Start has always had a national policy of open enrollment for all eligible children, including children with disabilities. Since 1974, each program has been required to reserve at least 10% of its enrollment opportunities for children with disabilities.

Our program can be an effective environment for children with special needs. Children often learn readily when they are included in a group with children their own age and supported by classroom staff and specialists.

Assessment and Referral

Within 45 days of a child's enrollment in Head Start, developmental screenings and most health screenings are completed. If a child has a low score on a speech and language screening or developmental screening, or if a parent or teacher has a concern in any area, Head Start staff will meet with the family to discuss whether a referral to the local school system may be helpful for further assessment.

A referral will not be made without prior parental consent. If parents agree, the referral is written, signed by the parent, and shared with the local school system.

The local school system will complete any additional assessments needed to determine whether the child qualifies for services. If the child is eligible, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will be written to describe the services the child will receive and how often those services will be provided.

Throughout the referral process, Head Start staff support families in understanding the process, following through with next steps, and advocating for their child. Head Start staff, including the Disabilities Services Specialist, may attend eligibility and IEP meetings with parents to provide support, share information about the child's skills and abilities, offer goal-setting ideas, and advocate for the child and family.

Children may be referred when there is a delay or concern in any of the following areas:

- **Physical/motor skills:** movement, balance, or coordination
- **Cognitive skills:** learning, problem-solving, play, or pre-academic skills
- **Communication skills:** language use or understanding, including the ability to be understood by others
- **Social/emotional skills:** behavior, relationships with others, or responsibility
- **Adaptive/self-help skills:** eating, dressing, toileting, or attending to tasks

In most cases, a child enrolled in Head Start will receive IEP services at the Head Start center if they are found eligible.

Some children may need extra supports to be successful, such as fidget toys, special seating, or visual supports like sand timers, social stories, or individual picture schedules. These supports may help children focus during group activities or understand what will happen next. Supports may be used with all children or individually, depending on each child's needs.

Some children may benefit from more individualized sensory supports, such as a weighted blanket, lap pad, or chewy. Because these supports are individualized, staff will discuss them with parents and obtain written parent permission before using them as an ongoing intervention.

Mental Health Services

Head Start staff, Mental Health Consultants, and Case Managers work together to provide mental health services for children and families. These services focus on prevention, positive mental health, and the well-being of both children and adults. Crisis intervention and connections to additional services are provided as needed. All staff work together to understand each family's needs and build on each child's and family's strengths. Monitoring emotional health is as important as scheduling an annual physical. Mental health services are contracted through New River Valley Community Services (NRVCS), and additional services are available to families and children when needed.

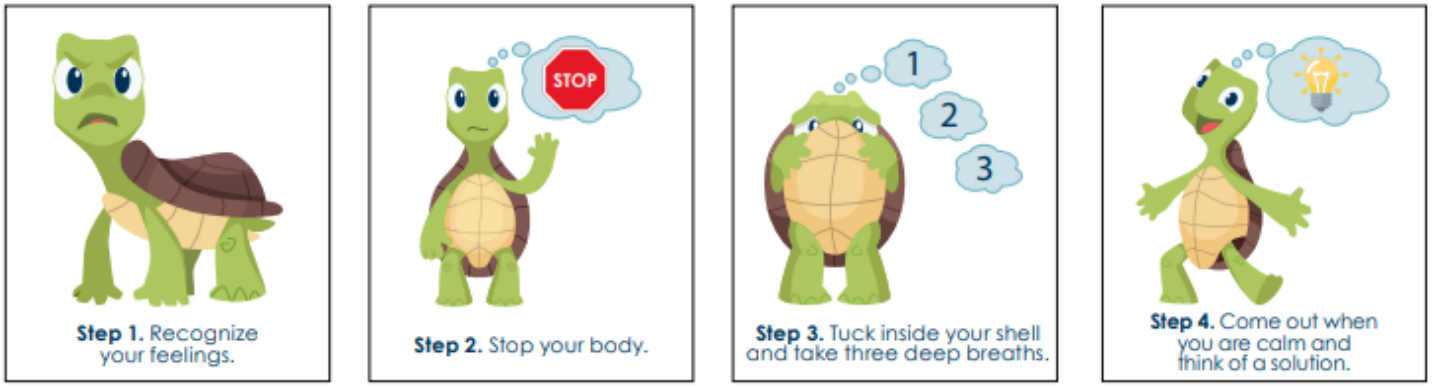
Mental Health Consultants provide contracted services in classrooms and homes, connect families with Case Management Services, and support teachers and Site Administrators with classroom strategies and resources. Consultants observe classrooms at least monthly and may meet with parents at any time.

Mental Health Consultants do not work individually with children unless the child has been enrolled by their parent or guardian in Case Management Services.

NRVCS Preschool Case Managers help children and families connect with needed medical, psychiatric, social, educational, and community services. This may include help with referrals, appointments, communication with school staff, physicians, and other agencies, and parenting support for families.

Case Managers also work with teachers to provide classroom supports for children on their caseload.

Safe and Successful Meetings



Safe and Successful (S&S) meetings support the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and informed classroom practices.

S&S meetings are held when a child may need extra support to be safe and successful at school. These meetings bring together teachers, Mental Health Consultants, Family Wellness Coaches, parents, and specialists to develop individualized supports for the child.

- The team develops specific teaching strategies for the classroom.
- The team identifies home strategies that support the learning happening at school.
- Family Wellness Coaches may provide parenting resources through PBIS and Positive Solutions for Families lessons.
- Staff may help families connect with referrals and other community resources.

The goal of these meetings is to teach appropriate behavior, respond early, and prevent concerns from escalating.

Family-Focused Services

Child Attendance

Regular attendance helps your child build relationships, feel comfortable with classroom routines, and take part in learning experiences planned to support their growth. We understand that children may need to miss school because of illness, family emergencies, or other important family needs.

When your child will be absent, arrive late, or leave early, please contact the school as soon as possible so we know your child is safe and can plan accordingly.

A child is considered tardy when they arrive 30 minutes or more after the classroom start time.

Please notify the school by 9:00 a.m. if your child will be absent or arriving late.

If attendance concerns begin to develop, the Family Wellness Coach and/or Site Administrator will partner with your family to understand what is getting in the way and identify supports that may help.

Absence Procedure: If a child is absent and we have not heard from the family, staff will contact the family within one hour of the classroom start time. If staff are unable to make contact, a home visit will be completed to help ensure the child and family are safe.

The Family Wellness Coach will meet with the family to talk through the reasons for absences and review the attendance report together when any of the following occur:

- A child is absent for 3 consecutive days.
- A child is tardy five times.
- A child has been absent 10% of the time during any month.

An Attendance Action Plan will be developed with the family to identify helpful supports and next steps.

In situations where absenteeism is chronic, consistently undocumented, unrelated to illness or similar reasons, or continues after multiple attempts to support the family, the program may choose to drop the child from the program. This step is used only as a last resort after Head Start staff have made every effort to keep the family engaged in and benefiting from the program.

Thank you for partnering with us to support your child's regular attendance.

The more children are able to attend, the more opportunities they have to learn, grow, and feel connected at school.

Arrival & Departure

To help keep every child safe during arrival and departure, please follow these procedures each day:

- A parent, guardian, or approved adult must accompany the child to and from the classroom during drop-off and pick-up.
- Children may not be dropped off or picked up during bus loading or unloading times.

- Children must be signed in at drop-off and signed out at pick-up.
- Children must be picked up promptly at the program's closing time, according to the full-day or part-day schedule.

If a child is picked up late on a consistent basis, the parent or guardian will be required to meet with the Family Wellness Coach and/or Site Administrator to develop a successful plan of action and follow-up.

Release of Child

Our program is deeply committed to the safety of every child we serve. The following release procedures will be strictly followed.

- Children will be released only to parents, guardians, and people listed as "Authorized Contacts" on the child's Emergency Contact Information form.
- The program recommends that Authorized Contacts be adults age 18 or older. If a family needs someone younger than 18 to pick up a child, the request will be considered case by case and Virginia Child Care Licensing guidelines will be followed.
- Anyone picking up a child, including parents and guardians, must have proper identification available at all times. Staff will check the child's Emergency Contact Information form and may request photo identification as needed.
- Changes to pick-up plans must be provided in writing or by text from the primary phone number on file.
- If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access by a court order, a copy of the court order must be submitted and kept on file. The school will follow the terms of the court order.
- If a parent or authorized contact does not pick up a child at the end of the full-day or part-day Head Start school time, center staff will follow the Child Release Contingency Procedures below.
- If staff determine that a parent or authorized pick-up person is physically and/or emotionally impaired and releasing the child would place the child at risk of harm, the child will not be released to that person. Staff will attempt to contact the child's other parent or guardian, or another authorized person. Law enforcement may be called to assist if needed.

Child Release Contingency Procedures

If a child is not picked up by an authorized person or at the appropriate time, Head Start staff will follow these procedures:

1. Staff will call the parent or guardian and the people listed on the Emergency Contact Information form in 15-minute intervals.
2. Center staff will ensure the safety and well-being of the child until the situation is resolved.
3. One hour after the designated school session ends, the Head Start program will contact the state 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child.

Thank you for your cooperation. For children's safety and well-being, it is essential that they are picked up on time by the appropriate people and that a responsible adult is available to receive them from the center. **At no time will Head Start staff hold the child responsible for the situation or discuss the issue with the child.**

For your child's safety, please keep your contact information and your emergency contacts' information updated at all times.

Late Pick-Up Policy

It is essential that parents/guardians pick their children up on time from our program. If an emergency occurs, parents/guardians should call the school and inform the staff of the emergency and provide a time when a parent/guardian or person from the "Emergency Contact Information" form will be able to pick up the child. If outside situations or challenges are affecting you picking up your child on time, please speak with your Family Wellness Coach.

Guidance for Inclement Weather

We often follow the public-school systems schedule but **NOT** always. For closings due to inclement weather and/or we cannot meet licensing requirements for heat and water; NRCA Head Start will attempt to broadcast closings on: **Facebook as well as our GoEngage system of closings and delays. For your child's safety, it is very important to keep your information as well as your emergency contact information updated at all times.** When school is one hour delayed classes will begin one hour later than the usual start time. When there is a two-hour delay, classes will begin two hours later than usual. Drop off and pick up will reflect the delay.

Staff who have scheduled home visits will call if the weather is too bad to travel. If the road to your house is clear enough to travel safely, staff may decide to make your home visit at the scheduled time. If the roads seem unsafe, the home visit will be cancelled and rescheduled.

When a two-hour delay falls on an Early Release Day, the Early Release will be cancelled.

Health Services

Ill or Injured Child Procedures

If a child becomes ill or injured at the center:

1. Every attempt will be made to keep the child away from other children to avoid the spread of disease, if necessary. This will be in a quiet area designated for this purpose. A mat and blanket should be kept for this purpose.
2. Staff will use Universal Precautions and First Aid/CPR knowledge, if necessary, while helping a child who has become ill or injured.
3. If a child is injured or in emergency situations, see Head Start General Medical Emergency Procedure and refer to First Aid Guide for School Emergencies, Steps for Choking Emergencies and/or Life Saving CPR Steps posted in each classroom.
4. Center staff or another appropriate official shall notify the parent immediately if a child requires emergency medical attention or sustains a serious injury.

5. If staff are unable to contact the child's parents, the emergency contacts provided by the parent on the child's Emergency Information Form will be contacted. If an emergency contact arrives to take the child, identity will be verified, and a message will be left at the parent's preferred telephone number indicating the situation to the parent. If no one can be reached, the child will remain at the center unless transport to an emergency medical facility is warranted. If the child is transported to an approved caretaker by Head Start staff, a note will be sent home with the child informing parents of the illness or injury.

If the child needs to be transported to the emergency room, a familiar staff member will accompany the child to the hospital, taking that child's Head Start medical and emergency contacts information.

1. For child accidents which result in an emergency room visit, staff contact NRCA finance department for insurance guidance: primary contact: finance director, secondary: accountant. The primary witness to the accident will complete the Enrolled Head Start Child's Accident Report Form as soon as possible after the accident yet by the end of the educational day for children. Provide parents with a copy of the completed accident form.
2. In the event of a communicable illness, staff will consult the VA State Dept. of Health Communicable Disease chart to determine when the child may return to school; and report the communicable disease to the local health department if the disease is listed on the Virginia Reportable Disease List.
3. In the event of an injury which requires outside medical treatment, the VDSS (Virginia department of Social Services) protocol for Injury Requiring Outside Medical Treatment (IROMT) must be followed and the report made using the form provided by VDSS.

   Ill/Injured Child Procedures, reviewed & changes made as needed by HS Health Advisory Committee: 4/22/16, 4/17/17, 4/13/18, 4/5/19, 4/8/22, 4/14/23, 5/7/24, 4/10/25, 4/9/26 previous editions obsolete

When Is Sick Too Sick for School?

As a parent, you can help to keep your child healthy as well as any other people your child may come in contact with while participating in the Head Start Program. We ask your help in the following ways:

Call the center to let an employee know that your child is sick and will not be attending. We ask that you let us know of any contagious/communicable disease, such as head lice, flu, or pink eye, your child may have or to which your child has been exposed.

1. Contact your doctor if your child has a high fever or a fever that has lasted several days, a severe sore throat, vomiting which has persisted for more than 24 hours, or if you're in doubt.
2. If your child shows any of the symptoms on the Communicable Disease Chart while at the Head Start center, you will be called and asked to come as quickly as possible and get your child. Please help us protect your child and the other children by responding promptly.
3. If your child is sick and you cannot be reached, one of the emergency contacts you have listed for your child will be called. It is important that you let Head Start staff know of any changes to your emergency contact list throughout the year.

4. In some situations, children may be required to be excluded from Head Start group activities for longer than listed in the Communicable Disease Chart. The Site Administrator will make that determination on a case-by-case basis. The local health department or child's physician may be contacted to assist in making that decision.

5. **If you believe your child is too sick to go outside with the other children, you must keep your child home until he/she is completely able to take part in all activities**. Head Start children go outside daily, weather permitting, and due to licensing requirements and staff demands, we are unable to keep one staff person inside with children not participating in outside activities.

6. For some illnesses we may require a doctor's excuse for your child to return to the classroom or group activities. The Site Administrator will make that determination on a case-by-case basis.

    3. If your child has any of the symptoms listed on the Communicable Disease Chart, before they are to come to the center, you must keep him or her at home until the symptoms are gone or until your doctor says your child may return to the Head Start Center.

7. Your child, as well as any adult, may be excluded from the Head Start Center if not age appropriately immunized against a communicable disease or if immunocompromised. This exclusion is in effect to protect all individuals. The diseases which can be particularly threatening to the immunocompromised and those inadequately immunized are Fifth disease, Coxsackievirus, Chicken Pox, and Rubella.

Center and Classroom Safety During Contagious Diseases

NRCA Head Start will create a safe and healthy environment for children, staff, and approved visitors. We will follow our Mitigation Policy for Contagious Diseases. This contagious disease mitigation policy is subject to change as the situation surrounding COVID-19 and other contagious disease outbreaks shifts based on local, state, and federal guidelines and requirements, with particular attention to what's happening in our local communities. The full policy is available at your Head Start center. We will use a layered system to reduce the spread of any illness. A layered system includes:

1. Follow the VA Department of Health's guidance for preventing respiratory viruses in K-12 schools and childcare programs.
2. Monitoring for signs of illness with all individuals who enter the Head Start facility.
3. Improved ventilation in the facility.
4. Proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
5. Cleaning the facility according to a specific schedule and more often during an infectious disease occurrence/outbreak.
6. More outdoor learning opportunities will take place for the children: being outside reduces the chance of spreading infectious diseases.
7. Staff participate in the required trainings to better equip them for handling and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Medication at the Head Start Center

In order to ensure your child's safety during school hours, prior to school entry, you must notify Head Start staff of any allergies and medications that pertain to your child. The Medication Authorization Form must be

completed and signed by you, the parent or guardian for medications given less than 10 days. For medications given 10 days or longer the child's physician needs to sign also.

- ♦ You are encouraged to discuss with your child's doctor a plan that will allow your child to take medicine only during hours at home.

- ♦ Prescription medication must be in its original container with your child's name, the name of the medication, date of the prescription, and instructions for time and dosage.
- ♦ Non-prescription medication (Children's Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.) must be recommended by your child's doctor. It must be labeled and accompanied by written instructions from his/her doctor.
- ♦ General over-the-counter skin care products (sunscreen, diaper ointment, bug repellant) do not require a doctor's prescription, unless prescribed by doctor. You as the parent still have to give permission to have the skin care product applied. Staff will keep a record of the date and time each dose is given. When the medication is no longer needed, the Medication Authorization Form will be kept in your child's file and unused medication will be returned to you or disposed of properly if you can't be reached after five business days.
- ♦ You will be notified immediately by staff should your child experience an adverse reaction to medication.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES CHART: (*Summary* of contagious diseases from VDH Communicable Disease Chart and the VA DOE Child Care Licensing Standards)**	
If the Disease or Illness is . . . . and the Symptoms are	**Then Child Remains Home……..**
Chicken pox – Fever, runny nose, cough, rash of pink bumps, blisters, and scabs.	Until all sores have dried and crusted; or immunized patients without crust: no new lesions appear within a 24-hour period.
Coughing – child makes high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after the cough.	Until the symptoms are gone. Follow up with doctor as needed especially if lingering cough as may be a serious illness.
COVID-19 – May be without symptoms. Or have a variety of symptoms: fever, cough, fatigue, sore throat, diarrhea, etc.	Please refer to the VDH Preventing Respiratory Viruses in K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs Guidance. Depending on severity of illness, refer to a healthcare provider, urgent care center, or emergency department for further evaluation and treatment.
Diarrhea - increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form that is not contained.	Until diarrhea stops for a full 24 hours. Also see below specifically for Norovirus.
Fever – A child shall not be admitted to the center, or allowed to remain at the center, if he or she has a fever. A fever is an oral (by mouth) temperature over 101°F. For an armpit temperature, add one degree to the result to get what the corresponding oral temp would be. The temperature used to determine a fever is subject to change according to childcare licensing standards.	Child may return after 24 hours being fever-free without use of medicine. If fever is COVID-19 related, refer to VDH Preventing Respiratory Viruses in K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs Guidance.
Fifth disease – Headache, body aches, sore throat, fever, chills, rash on face, rash on body that makes a "lacy" pattern	Until fever-free, as defined above, for a full 24 hours and the child feels well enough to participate.
Flu (influenza) – fever, chills, headache, sleepiness, muscle aches, cough, sore throat, nausea, vomiting.	Until fever-free, as defined above, for a full 24 hours and the child feels well enough to participate.

Hand, Foot and Mouth disease (Coxsackievirus) – fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, tiny blisters in mouth, on palms of hands and soles of feet, sore muscles, diarrhea, and stomachache, pink eyes.	Until fever-free, as defined above, for a full 24 hours and the child feels well enough to participate.
Head Lice – Sesame seed size insects on scalp or hair, eggs (nits) deposited on hair strands near scalp on top of head, behind the ears, nape of neck, excessive itching of the head.	NRCA Head Start follows a no-live head lice policy. Parent or guardian is required to treat child with appropriate head lice treatment and work toward removing nits. Child may return to the center after a full 24 hours has passed since the treatment was completed.
Impetigo – Red, cracking, oozing, blister-like bumps which often occur on the face but may be anywhere on the body.	Until at least 12 hours after antibiotic treatment has been started and all sores on exposed skin are covered. Close contact with other children should be avoided during this time.
Norovirus - Sudden onset of vomiting and/or diarrhea, abdominal cramps and nausea.	Until 48 hours after symptoms resolve.
Pink Eye – White or yellow discharge from eyes, often with matted eyelids after sleep; itchy, painful, watery eyes.	Until symptoms have resolved or until cleared to return by a healthcare provider.
Rash – With fever, behavior changes, child is unable to participate, oozing open wound, rash is not healing	Until a doctor determines that the rash is not a contagious disease and is fever-free as defined above.
Scabies - Extremely itchy, red bumps or blisters in a thread like line. Commonly found between the fingers and toes but can appear anywhere on the body.	Until the first course of appropriate medication treatment has been completed.
Strep throat (streptococcus) – Sore throat that is red and painful, fever, swollen glands in the neck.	Until a full 12 hours of antibiotic treatment has been completed and fever is gone.
Ring worm (Tinea Corporis) - Skin has reddish scaling, circular patches, with raised edges. The center of the circle is smooth. Cracking, peeling of skin between	Sores must be covered and/or child is receiving medical treatment.

toes. Scalp has redness, scaling with broken hairs or patches of hair loss.	
Vomiting – two or more episodes of vomiting within 24 hours.'	Until vomiting stops completely for a full 24 hours.

Revised: 8 January 2013 as approved by HS Health Advisory Committee in November 2012; 7/27/23; 7/22/2024; 4/10/25; 4/9/26

For communicable diseases, our HS Program will follow the current version of the Virginia Department of Health's **Communicable Disease Reference Chart for School Personnel and DOE Child Care Licensing Standards except in decisions made by the HS Health Advisory Committee for individual diseases. Parents are to be notified when children at the Head Start Center have been exposed to a communicable diseases listed in the above chart. Parents shall be notified within 24 hours or the next business day of the Head Start Center having been informed of a communicable disease, unless forbidden by law, except for life threatening disease, which must be reported to parents immediately. [8VAC20-780-490, C. Preventing the spread of disease. From Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers]

General Medical Emergency Procedures:

1) Keep cool. Do not panic**.**
2) Follow OSHA Blood Bourne Pathogens Universal Precautions
3) Follow the First Aid Guide for Child Care and School Emergencies for specific situations.
4) Give a child immediate attention—check the scene for potential dangers.
5) **Call 911** if immediate help is needed.
6) If child is bleeding seriously, is unconscious, has broken bones, head injury, or breath stoppage, do the following:
   A) Do not move the child.
   B) **Call 911** immediately
   C) In case of poisoning, dial 1-800-222-1222
   D) Do not give liquids or medication.
   E) Cover child with blanket, cloth, or any available covering.
   F)Trained staff should administer First Aid/CPR if necessary.
   G) Refer to emergency information posted in classroom.
   H) Notify Site Administrator
   I) Notify Parents
   J) Notify the child's physician if needed. (doctor's name is on Emergency Information Form in child's file)

7) If a child needs to be transported to the emergency room, a familiar staff member will accompany the child to the hospital, taking that child's Head Start medical and emergency contacts' information. A Hartford Insurance Co. form is to be taken if a child has incurred an accident/injury.

8) If a child suffers from an ailment not mentioned above, proceed with emergency first aid, **call 911** if necessary, and notify the Site Administrator and child's parent or emergency contact when parent not available.

9) In the case of an accident/injury, the primary witness to the accident will complete the Enrolled Head Start Child's Accident Report Form as soon as possible after the accident occurred yet by end of educational day for children. Provide the parents with a copy of the completed accident form.

10) Refer to the Instruction page for NRCA Head Start Enrolled Child's Accident Report Form for additional protocol.

Medical Emergency Procedures, reviewed & changes made as needed by HS Health Advisory Committee: 4/22/16; 4/17/17; 4/13/18; 4/5/19; 4/8/22; 4/14/23; 5/7/24; 4/10/25; 4/9/26 previous editions obsolete

Measles information: see graphic

Family & Community Services

The Virginia WIC Program

WIC stands for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. (www.vdh.virginia.gov/wic/about) The Program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, supplemental nutritious foods, counseling at WIC clinics, and screening and referrals to other health, welfare, and social services. The goal of the Program is to improve the health of pregnant women, infants and children (under 5 years) through better nutrition and access to health care. To be eligible for the WIC Program, applicants must meet categorical, residential, income, and nutrition risk requirements. You may call your local health department for the WIC food program.

INSURANCE POSSIBILITIES

1-855-242-8282 or visit https://coverva.dmas.virginia.gov/
Or call your local Department of Social Services.

Welcome to Cover Virginia

Virginia Medicaid has low-cost and no-cost health coverage programs. There are programs for children, pregnant women and adults, including those with disabilities. To learn more about each program, call the phone number or visit the website listed above.

If you have questions about insurance, please talk with your Family Wellness Coach to obtain assistance with locating resources.

Community Disaster Plan

Every Head Start Center has its own individual "**Emergency Preparedness Plan"**. This plan is posted at each Head Start center. Please ask a staff person about the plan and its location.

In the event public schools go on lock down, NRCA Head Starts will follow the same protocol.

Head Start will adhere to the same procedures public schools are enforcing.

In the event of an emergency (fire, earthquake, flood, bomb threat, hostage situation, power outage, tornado and/or hurricane), please follow these procedures:

1. Remember that the center staff's main priority is to get everyone to a safe place as quickly as possible. Be assured they are giving your child any emergency care that may be needed.
2. **Do not** call the center. When possible, the center staff will contact you by telephone to arrange pickup of your child.
3. **Do not** come to the center unless you have been contacted by the center or you are close and radio reports indicate there is no danger in traveling local streets.
4. Community disasters will be reported on the radio. Listen to it for directions. The safest place in case of a disaster is off the local streets, out of the way of emergency and rescue equipment. All centers have posted emergency procedures to follow that apply to each jurisdiction.

5. In the event the center must close due to a community disaster, NRCA, Inc. Head Start will attempt to broadcast closings on: WPSK (107.1) and Q-99 radio stations and WSLS (Channel 10) television station. Please listen to your local stations for announcements of closings.

Program Policies

Behavior Guidance Policy

At New River Community Action Head Start, we believe that social-emotional learning during the early years of a child's life sets a positive foundation for their future growth and learning. We use the Pyramid Model for promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Young Children to achieve this. The Pyramid Model provides a framework of evidence-based, developmentally, and culturally appropriate practices to promote young children's social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes from birth to five years old. These practices are embedded throughout the daily activities.

Our Commitment to Families

Our program is dedicated to nurturing each child's unique identity while fostering a deep respect for others. We recognize that families play a crucial role as the most significant adults in a child's life. We actively promote mutual respect between families and teachers. Daily communication between families and our staff is highly encouraged, and our doors are always open to welcome and engage with families

Our Commitment to a Nurturing Learning Environment

The foundation of the Pyramid Model is nurturing and responsive relationships with children and positive relationships with families. We believe relationships are essential for promoting children's learning. The Pyramid Model also provides practices to establish a predictable environment, a balanced schedule of child-directed and teacher-directed activities, and strategies for supervising and guiding children to promote their engagement in learning.

We Believe Behavior Has Meaning

We know that young children might engage in behavior that challenges adults. These behaviors are a form of communication. The behavior might communicate a variety of messages, such as wanting an object, wanting attention of adults or other children, or because they want to avoid an activity or situation. Children often engage in challenging behavior when they don't know how to communicate a complex emotion like frustration or anger. We can understand and address their needs when we identify what children are trying to communicate.

In the use of the Pyramid Model, our teachers implement practices to prevent challenging behaviors and promote social-emotional development for all children. Teachers commonly respond to children's difficult behavior by providing reminders of the classroom rules, redirecting them to an acceptable behavior, teaching them to express their needs, and guiding children to use problem solving skills to cope with their strong emotions. At Head Start, teachers are prohibited from verbally shaming, humiliating, or threatening a child, isolating children, and using food as a punishment or reward.

Our Commitment to Supporting All Children

Some children will need additional help in learning social-emotional skills. When that happens, we will meet with the family to discuss how we can provide additional instruction (e.g., using special materials, structuring children's play with each other, using intentional teaching techniques). To understand each child's development, we use the Brigance developmental screening tool that includes a social-emotional screener and collaborate with families on filling out a Transition into Head Start form identifying each child's strengths and needs. If a child needs additional support in learning social-emotional skills to correct challenging behavior, we will collaborate with the family to develop strategies and interventions.

For children with persistent challenging behavior that is impacting the safety of the staff, other children or themselves, we will team with the family to develop a ***Safe and Successful plan***, which is an individualized intervention plan to ensure each child is developing the skills they need to be safe and successful in a large group. The development of the Safe and Successful plan will involve a collaborative team including the parent and will include child observations to identify the meaning of the child's behavior. The team can also develop a behavior support plan for families who want assistance addressing behavior at home or in the community. The team regularly meets to assess the effectiveness of the support provided and the child's progress in the program and at home.

Our Commitment to Continuous Improvement

An important aspect of the implementation of the Pyramid Model is the use of data in decision-making. We use data to improve our understanding of children's needs, how well we implement the Pyramid Model, and to ensure that children with additional intervention needs make progress. We also collect data on how teachers respond to children's behavior incidents and the factors that might be related to the behavior. By tracking teacher responses to behavior incidents, we can analyze those data to see if changes might be needed to strengthen our prevention and intervention practices. We also review our child guidance policy annually to determine if any revisions are required.

Our Commitment to Supporting Program Staff

At Head Start, all staff members will receive training on the child guidance policy and procedures when hired and annually after that as part of our pre-service training. Our program is committed to providing continuous professional development to our teachers so that they can effectively implement Pyramid Model practices in the classroom. All program staff will regularly participate in training in Pyramid Model practices, and teachers will receive ongoing professional development to ensure that they are supported in implementing Pyramid Model practices with fidelity.

Our Program's Behavior Expectations

At NRCA Head Start, we have three program-wide behavior expectations that are taught to children and expected of all adults.

These expectations are:

- We are SAFE

- We are RESPONSIBLE
- We are RESPECTFUL

There are often behaviors that occur in a preschool setting while children are learning how to be part of a group and follow the classroom routine. Typical preschool behaviors could include hitting, pushing, screaming, biting and running from adults. Teachers in our classrooms establish rules aligned with these expectations and appropriate for the needs of the children in their classrooms. These rules help children know how to meet the program-wide expectations by clearly defining what children should do (versus telling children what not to do) within activities and routines. Our goal is for children to learn emotional regulation skills as they engage in behaviors that meet these expectations.

Safety is our number one priority and essential to your child's success. To provide a safe pre-school setting for ALL children, families and staff our program has a policy regarding reoccurring behaviors that create safety concerns.

- Angry outbursts that cause harm to self or others
- Physical or verbal abuse of staff or other children
- Excessive biting
- Disruptions in the classroom that continues to require one-on-one attention for a major part of the day
- Repeated attempts to leave the classroom or other supervised areas, thus endangering self or other children.
- Prescribed medication is not available to meet a medical condition

Parents will be notified if their child is demonstrating behaviors that impact classroom safety. If these behaviors occur, you will receive a call from your Site Administrator which may require you to pick your child up and/or meet with us to develop a Safe and Successful plan to ensure your child's safe return and safe participation in our program. During our conversations we will not discuss and/or name a child who is in need of extra support services with any other parent. We will, however, let a concerned parent know that we are addressing issues as a team and refer them back to the Family Handbook to review our program steps. The Head Start Director will be the primary decision-maker on all issues related to long term exclusion of children with behavioral concerns.

Parental actions that may impact enrollment of the child include:

- Failure to support the Safe and Successful plan where parent support is indicated.
- Failure to meet with the mental health consultant for family support.
- Physical or verbal abuse or harassment of the staff.

If after exploring and documenting the progress of the individualized behavior plan, the program in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the

most appropriate placement for the child, we will work with families to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality is of utmost importance at all times!

When I volunteer my time with New River Community Action, Inc. Head Start Program,

I understand I am responsible for maintaining the privacy of any information to which I have heard, have observed, or is shared with me. This information: whether it involves staff, other volunteers, and/or families, will not be the topic of conversation either inside or outside of the program or shared on social media.

Weapons Policy

NRCA and the Head Start Centers are "Weapon Free" zones. Children, staff, parents, and volunteers are not permitted to bring a weapon of any kind onto school vehicle, property or to any school sponsored activity without the permission of the agency or school personnel. If a child is found in possession of a weapon, it will be confiscated, and the parent/emergency contact will be called to pick up the child. The child will not be able to come back to school until they have received permission from the Site Administrator or Main office staff. Staff may insist that a home visit occur before a child returns to school.

If a parent is found in possession of a weapon while on school property, they will be asked to leave immediately and may return without the weapon on their person.

A weapon includes:

- Any pistol, revolver, or gun of any kind
- Any knife or razor with a metal blade
- Any flailing instrument such as nun chucks or fighting chain
- Any disk with pointed blades designed to be thrown or propelled
- Any other toy that may resemble the above items at the judgment of center staff

Tobacco Free Policy

NRCA and the Head Start Program have a "Tobacco free environment" policy. Smoking or vaping is not permitted during Head Start activities, during home visits with staff or at or on any Head Start center grounds. **Smoking or vaping is also not allowed at bus stops.**

If you choose to use tobacco, you must be off Head Start center grounds and always out of sight of the children. During outside functions, such as picnics, field trips, etc., you must be out of sight of the children and at least one hundred feet away from the activity area. You must pick up and dispose properly of all cigarette butts and trash when you leave the area. We ask that you please not smoke while assisting your child to get on the bus in the morning and when you are getting your child off the bus in the afternoon. Failure to abide by these rules may result in you being asked to leave the premises.

Child Abuse and Neglect

All Head Start staff members are mandated by Virginia State Law to report suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. Head Start maintains a role not only in reporting cases, but also in working to prevent and identify child abuse and neglect situations.

The laws of Virginia state that any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected shall report the matter immediately (within 24 hours).

The child abuse and neglect plan calls for a strategy to inform parents of what state and local laws require regarding child abuse and neglect. It is for this reason that the above information is included in this handbook designed for parents. You, as a parent, can help protect children by contacting your local Social Services or calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-552-7096, if you suspect child abuse or neglect.

Commonwealth of Virginia law considers leaving a child unattended in a vehicle for any time at all to be grounds for child abuse/neglect. Please do not leave your children alone in your car. Head Start staff are mandated to report any person leaving a child in the car.

Registered Sex Offenders Information

Each center will follow **Virginia code 18.2-370.5, Sex offenses prohibiting entry onto school or other property;**

Every adult who is convicted of a sexually violent offense, as defined in 9.1-902, shall be prohibited from entering or being present (i) during school hours, and during school-related or school sponsored activities upon any property he knows or has reason to know is a public or private elementary or secondary school or child day center property; (ii) on any school bus as defined in 46.2-100; or (iii) upon any property, public or private, during hours when such property is solely being used by a public or private elementary or secondary school for a school related or school-sponsored activity, https://vacode.org/2016/18.2/8/4/18.2-370.5/

If you are a registered sex offender, every effort will be made to accommodate you and your child's needs when dropping off and picking up of your child. If you have no one else to drop or bring your child to school, staff may arrange pick-up and drop off at a location other than Head Start or school property when there is staff availability to do so.

NRCA Head Start Community Grievance/Complaint Policy 1304.50(d) (2) (v)
This policy applies to Head Start only and outlines the steps to follow if a parent of a Head Start child or a concerned citizen has a complaint/grievance concerning a Head Start matter.

Step #1 Notify the Site Administrator at the local center involved.

If you still have concerns or the issue has not been addressed:

Step #2 Notify the appropriate Main Office Specialist (listed below):

Radford Main Office Head Start Administrative Staff:

Director of Early Childhood and Family Services	Veronica Fitch ext. 445
Early Education & Program Planning Specialist	Sarah Rodden ext. 446
Family Services and ERSEA Specialist	Beth Rodriguez ext. 503
Individualized Services Specialist	Jodi Roop 540-357-0523
Nutrition & Health Specialist	Trina Porterfield ext. 448
Teaching Practices and Coaching Specialist	Alison Harris ext. 434

If you still have concerns

Step #3 Notify the Director of Early Childhood and Family Services **or**

Step #4 Address your concerns with the Head Start Policy Council **or**

Step #5 Notify the NRCA Board of Directors Chairperson.

At any time during this process, the complainant has the option to speak individually with any staff, Policy Council member, Director of Early Childhood and Family Services, NRCA Chief Executive Officer, or the Board of Directors Chairperson.

Once enrolled, no child or family will be denied an opportunity to fully participate in the NRCA Head Start Program. If you have a concern regarding breach of fairness or equal opportunity, please contact the NRCA EEO/AA Officer. This officer should be contacted if you have a complaint regarding discrimination. No one will be denied an opportunity to enroll in the program because of race, color, creed, belief, religion, gender, national origin, age, mental/physical disability, political affiliation, or past participation in the complaint process.

NRCA Administrative Offices are located in Radford and may be contacted by the following phone number: (540) 633-5133.

Client Appeal Process

IF YOU ARE DENIED SERVICE OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN TERMINATED FROM ANY NEW RIVER COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL THE DECISION. IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THIS APPEAL PROCESS, PLEASE ASK A NEW RIVER COMMUNITY ACTION STAFF MEMBER TO ASSIST YOU.

New River Community Action is an equal opportunity agency, providing services to eligible persons regardless of age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, creed or national origin. The agency follows Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended in 1991, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1992, the Virginia Human Rights Act as amended in 2020, and federal/state program requirements when determining eligibility for service.

Upon denial or termination of service, a New River Community Action (NRCA) staff member will provide you a written explanation of the specific reason(s) for the denial or termination, along with a copy of the Client Appeals Process. You have the right to appeal the decision by following these steps.

1. Within five (5) business days* of receiving the denial or termination decision, you may submit additional information or documents to the NRCA staff member who made the decision to deny or terminate services and request a second review. The staff member will review the additional information or documents and reach a decision within three (3) business days and share with you by phone, letter, and email, if available. If you do not agree with the decision, you may proceed to step 2.
2. Within five (5) business days* of receiving the denial or termination decision, you may contact the Supervisor to appeal the decision. Please contact the Executive Assistant / Communications Specialist (contact information below) for the Supervisor's name and contact information. The Supervisor will then schedule the meeting with you to occur within five (5) business days of receiving your request. You may bring a representative to help you with the appeal and the staff member who denied service will be present to respond. The Supervisor will reach a decision within three (3) business days and share with you by phone, letter, and email, if available. If you do not agree with the decision, you may proceed to step 3.
3. Within five (5) business days* of receiving the denial or termination decision, you may contact the Director of Community Services Programs or the Director of Early Childhood and Family Services to appeal the decision. Please contact the Executive Assistant / Communications Specialist (contact information below) for the Director's name and contact information. The Director will then schedule the meeting with you to occur within five (5) business days of receiving your request. You may bring a representative to help you with the appeal and the staff members who denied service and the appeal will be present to respond. The Director will reach a decision within three (3) business days and share with you by phone, letter, and email, if available. If you do not agree with the decision, you may proceed to step 4.
4. Within five (5) business days* of receiving the denial or termination decision, you may contact the CEO to appeal the decision. Please contact the Executive Assistant / Communications Specialist (contact information below) for the CEO's name and contact information. The CEO will then schedule a meeting with the Staff Appeal Committee and you to occur within five (5) business days of receiving your request. The CEO will serve as Chairperson on the Staff Appeal Committee, which will consist of the CEO, Affirmative Action Officer, and a staff member from another program selected by the CEO. You may bring a representative to help you with the appeal and the staff members who denied service and the appeal will be present to respond. The Committee will reach a decision within three (3) business days and share with you by phone, letter, and email, if available. If you do not agree with the decision, you may proceed to step 5.
5. Within five (5) business days* of receiving the denial or termination decision, you may contact the Chairperson of NRCA's Board of Directors to appeal the decision. Please contact the Executive Assistant / Communications Specialist (contact information below) for the Chairperson's name and contact information. The Chairperson will then schedule a meeting with the Board's Client Appeal Committee and you to occur within five (5) business days of receiving your request. The Chairperson will appoint a Client Appeal Committee to consist of three (3) Board members, preferably with two (2) members being target representatives. You may bring a representative to help you with the appeal and staff members who denied service and the appeal will be present to respond. The Committee will reach a decision within three (3) business days and share with you by phone, letter and email, if available. This is the final appeal

step within New River Community Action. If you do not agree with the decision, you may wish to seek legal advice.

This appeal process will be posted in each New River Community Action office and a copy given to each person denied or terminated from program services.

Approved by the Board of Directors April 15, 2021

Administrative Coordinator (540) 633-5133 ext. 415; nrca@nrcaa.org