



AFL-CIO Appalachian Council
Head Start



Parent Handbook

2026-2027

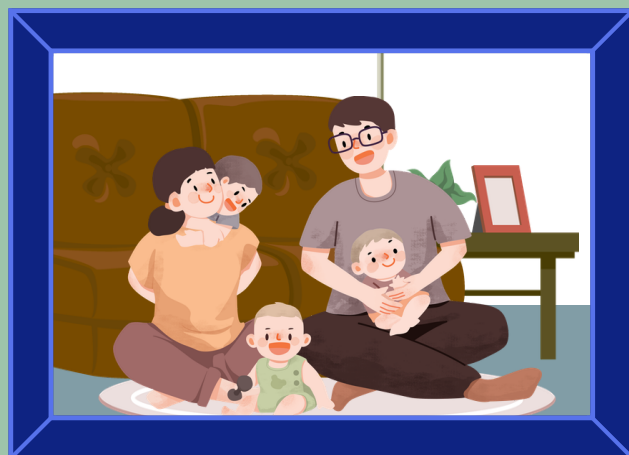


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Welcome to Appalachian Council Head Start



Head Start programs prepare young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children and families in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being while engaging parents as partners in the education of their children every step of the way. Appalachian Council Head Start began in 2003 with only three counties. Today we are one of the largest Head Start providers in West Virginia. We operate in eight counties (Boone, Calhoun, Clay, Jackson, Putnam, Roane, Wirt and Wood) and serve 610 children and their families annually.

This handbook is intended to provide you with specific information about the operation procedures for our program. These procedures are based upon regulations that are required by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Head Start, WV State Policy 2525, and the Appalachian Council Head Start Program.

**The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) are the regulations that govern Head Start programs. There are links to the corresponding HSPPS and/or additional relevant information throughout this Handbook to provide you with additional relevant information when applicable.*



If you have specific questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact the appropriate Management Team Person:

Nikki Cavalier, Director	ncavalier@appcouncil.org	(304) 561-1422
Jennifer Evans, Mental Health and Disabilities Lead	jsmith@appcouncil.org	(304) 561-3017
Selena Stover, Education Lead	sankrom@appcouncil.org	(304) 561-1406
Ashley Williamson, Supervisors Lead	awilliamson@appcouncil.org	(304) 561-1433
Rhonda Smith, Family Services and ERSEA Specialist	rsmith@appcouncil.org	(304) 561-1421

➤ MISSION

Our mission is to provide life-changing educational training, and career development opportunities for the people of the Appalachian region.

➤ PHILOSOPHY

Appalachian Council Head Start dedicates itself to providing a comprehensive child development program for eligible three- and four-year-old children. The program is designed to meet the child's emotional, social, health, and nutritional needs by enabling him/her to enter kindergarten healthy and with self-confidence in his/her ability to learn and succeed.

➤ FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Performances Standards 1302.52

[1302.52 Family Partnership Services](#)

[Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework](#)

[Parent, Family, and Community Engagement PDF](#)

Family Services Workers focus on partnering with parents to support the whole family, going beyond childcare to foster school readiness and family well-being through goal setting, connecting families to resources, promoting parent-child relationships and ensuring smooth transitions to kindergarten, all within a strength-based, culturally responsive framework. After your child is enrolled, your Family Service Worker and Teacher will arrange to visit your home. At this time, you can talk about any questions or concerns about your child's education and any other needs you may have. The Family Service Worker will assess your needs and strengths and will provide any necessary resources and referrals, if needed.

Head Start staff are always ready, willing, and able to assist families. Do not hesitate to ask questions. Your Family Service Worker will provide support, assistance, and guidance throughout your family's Head Start experience.

A "Family Partnership Agreement Plan" will be established between the Head Start Program and each enrolled family. It will be designed to assist your family in achieving self-identified and realistic goals. The information you share in developing your Family Outcomes Instrument is confidential.

Your Family Service Worker has a responsibility to work together with you and your family to develop a supportive relationship.

➤ ATTENDANCE

Performance Standards 1302.16

[1302.16 Attendance](#)

[Attendance Works](#)

Head Start attendance is crucial to ensure your child receives all the benefits of the Head Start Program. Programs are required to track attendance and address chronic absenteeism (missing 10% or more days) because it negatively impacts future success. Consistent attendance builds essential literacy, social-emotional skills, and routines for success.

➤ CHILD ABUSE - MALTREATMENT - MANDATED REPORTING

Performance Standard 1302.102

[1302.102 Program Goals, Continuous Improvement, and Reporting](#)

[Reporting Child Health and Safety Incidents](#)

Under West Virginia law ([49-6A-2](#)) Appalachian Council Head Start staff are legally required or mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If staff know or have reason to believe a child is being or has been neglected or physically or sexually abused, they must immediately (within 24 hours) make a report to CPS (Child Protection Services). A copy of the mandated reporting form will be sent to the Family Services/ERSEA Specialist and the Head Start Director.

➤ CHILD RELEASE POLICY

Head Start children will not be released to anyone who is not designated by the parent/guardian and is not listed on the Student Information Sheet. Everyone picking up a child will be asked to show appropriate identification, Student Info Sheet and Notification Change Form, where applicable. Any person designated by the parent/guardian must be an adult or 18 years of age. A child will not be released to a parent/guardian or any designated person who is obviously under the influence of drugs or alcohol, Child Protection Services and local authorities will be notified immediately. If a caregiver becomes hostile, abusive, or produces a weapon, the local police department will be notified immediately. If a child is returned to the site, all efforts will be made to contact guardians or those listed on your emergency contacts. If we cannot be a parent/guardian, your child may be placed in the custody of the local police department and/or CPS.

➤ CONFIDENTIALITY

Performance Standard 1303.21

[1303.21 Program Procedures – Applicable Confidentiality Provisions](#)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) ([20 U.S.C. 5 1232g](#); [34 CFR Part 99](#)) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

➤ COURT ORDERS & CHILD CUSTODY

CHAPTER 48. Domestic Relations

State law maintains that both parents have access to their child unless there are legal documents which define the restrictions. In situations involving child custody disputes or restraining orders, a copy of the court order **MUST** be in the child's file. We cannot prohibit contact with either parent without current court orders.

It is the Appalachian Council Head Start intent to meet the needs of children, especially when the parents may be experiencing situations such as divorce, separation, or remarriage. Parents are jointly and individually responsible for the support, care, nurturing, welfare, and education of their child. "Child custody determination" means a judgment, decree or other order of a court providing for the legal custody, physical custody or visitation with respect to a child. The term includes a permanent, temporary, initial, and modification order. The term does not include an order in relation to child support or other monetary obligations of an individual.

➤ REFERRALS

Referrals requesting services for children and their families may come from Head Start staff and/or agencies to other community agencies. Head Start must receive an Authorization to Disclose and Receive Information Form from parents/guardians before sharing any information with any outside community agency. Any information will be kept confidential. Family Service Workers will follow up with families about their satisfaction with their referrals.

➤ PARENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Performance Standard 1302.50

1302.50 Family Engagement

Communication is an integral part of building relationships between parents and staff. By working together, we can prepare children to be successful and ready for school. The Appalachian Council Head Start offers parents many options to communicate with admin staff, teachers and family service workers. Written correspondence between Head Start Employees and parents will take place through the ***Learning Genie Platform***.

➤ FACEBOOK

Appalachian Council has a Facebook Page that highlights our program. It is the only approved Facebook Page for our program.

You can find our Facebook Page at: <https://www.facebook.com/appalachiancouncil>

➤ HOME VISITS & PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Performance Standard 1302.24(b)(7)

[1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services.](#)

Parents of children enrolled in the program will receive two face-to-face home visits by teaching staff and the Family Service Workers during the year. Teacher-home visits are an in-depth opportunity for parents and teachers to:

- Develop/share individualized learning goals for your child
- Share observations about your child's strengths, needs, and interests
- Hear about the classroom schedule and activities
- Provide teachers with suggestions for possible goals and activities
- Update about any health requirements

Teachers will have paperwork, such as screenings and the child's accomplishment summary to be reviewed and signed. These visits and conferences are highly encouraged so teachers and parents as a team can enhance learning both at school and extend it into the home.

Parent/Teacher Conferences are also offered a minimum of two times annually by teaching staff. Conferences are generally held at your home unless parent/guardians specify otherwise. These conferences must be face-to-face. Parents are asked to share information about their child's progress, ask questions, give input into individualized goals for their child, and learn more about their child's progress from the teacher's observations. This is typically when teachers share assessment results. At each visit or conference, teachers will develop a form to share the child's specific progress made since the last Parent Teacher Conference.

➤ COMMUNITY SERVICES

Performance Standard 1302.53

[1302.53 Community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood and education programs](#)

The Appalachian Council Head Start offers extensive community support by connecting families to vital resources, fostering parent engagement, and providing child development services (health, nutrition, education) through partnerships with local agencies.

➤ PARENT RIGHTS

Performance Standard 1302.24(b)(7)

[1303.23 Parental rights](#)

- To be welcomed in the center or classroom during all program hours and be treated with respect and dignity.
- To participate as a member of the Parent Committee and attend meetings.
- To serve on Policy Council to represent your county and help make decisions for the program.

- To be informed regularly about your child's progress in Head Start.
- To choose whether to take part in the Head Start program activities.
- To help plan parent activities to enhance parents' daily living.
- To be informed about the operation of the program through Policy Council representative and communication.
- To receive information regarding community resources, agency activities, and program planning.
- To inspect their child's records

➤ PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/guardians have primary responsibility for their child and as the child's legal guardians, they are required to care for and supervise them. This includes adhering to the rules and requirements of this program. The Head Start staff assume a secondary role in the life and education of the child. We accept responsibility delegated to us by the child's parents/legal guardians to care for the child, feed the child, and teach the child for a portion of the day and are accountable to parents for carrying out those responsibilities.

The following are general program rules that are the responsibility of the parent:

- Send your child to school daily.
- Notify the school as soon as possible if your child will be absent and state the reason for absence.
- We will contact you if we do not hear from you within the first hour of the school day.
- Read and follow all bus policies, if Head Start provides your child(ren) transportation.
- Notify Head Start in person of any changes in information, such as a change in address, phone, emergency information, health issues, or family situations.
- Obtain all health exams and needed records.
- Work in partnership with Head Start staff to strengthen your family and prepare your child for school.
- Read and respond to all written notices, bulletins, and newsletters sent home.
- Tell us about your likes, dislikes, concerns and ideas about our program.
- Take an active interest and talk daily with your child about their Head Start experiences.

➤ PARENT OPPORTUNITIES

Performance Standard 1302.34

[1302.34 Parent and family engagement in education and child development services.](#)

As a Head Start parent/guardian you can engage in many opportunities. The following are just some of the many opportunities:

- Setting and achieving individual and family goals.
- Learning about community resources.
- Furthering your own education.

- Meeting other parents and members of the community by attending parent meetings and other events.
- Being elected a parent officer or Policy Council Member.
- Working with other parents to make programmatic decisions.

You can also volunteer in your child's classroom, engage in home visits with Head Start staff, learn about health, nutrition, mental health, child development and other topics of interest through parent meetings and workshops.

➤ PARTIES & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Head Start plans special activities for families to attend in the classroom. Parties are generally scheduled for the last hour of the day. Engagement days are scheduled during the school day. The days are planned by the teacher and included in lesson plans to coincide with our curriculum.

****Siblings are welcome; however, parents are responsible for any children in attendance who are not enrolled in our Head Start program. Head Start staff are primarily responsible for enrolled children.**

****No outside food is permitted in our Head Start Classrooms.**

➤ MALE ENGAGEMENT

Head Start encourages male engagement and a welcoming environment for families. Positive Male Engagement has a unique impact on a child's development, including cognitive, math, literacy and behavior. Research has proven that Positive Male Engagement is critical to a child's success both in school and later in life.

Go to the website below for more information on the importance of family engagement:
<https://headstart.gov/family-engagement/article/understanding-family-engagement-outcomes-research-practice-series>

➤ PARENT COMMITTEE

Performance Standard 1301.4

[1301.4 Parent Committees](#)

Parents/Guardians are valued and needed. You have an important voice, and your involvement makes a difference in our program. The Parent Committee meets monthly and parents/guardians discuss their children's development, Head Start education and activities, community issues and/or other concerns. Parents work together to support each other in a relaxed atmosphere. The parent committee will elect officers annually to keep the group moving toward their established goals.

➤ POLICY COUNCIL

Performance Standard 1301.3

1301.3 Policy council and policy committee

The Policy Council is a group made up of at least 51% Head Start parents who help lead and make decisions about the Head Start Program. These decisions impact the children, families, and communities we serve. Policy Council Members are elected annually by the Parent Committee members and serve one year terms. The Policy Council meets monthly in Charleston and can serve up to three terms. Members can join meetings by phone, virtually or in person. Attendance is important for the success of the Policy Council. Participation on policy council is vital to assure the program is meeting the unique needs of children and families in your community.



➤ VOLUNTEERING IN OUR PROGRAM

Performance Standard 1302.94

1302.94 Volunteers

The Head Start/Pre-K Program believes that successful programs require meaningful volunteer participation. The use of volunteers is an effective way of mobilizing resources in the community. By being a volunteer, you show your care, and you give of the most important thing you possess - yourself!

We encourage parents and families to visit the classroom and volunteer. from a doctor, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to volunteer as often as possible; your time and energy are always appreciated! You are always welcome in the classroom and are invited to attend field trips and special classroom events. If you want to help but can't volunteer in your child's classroom, ask the staff if there is anything you can do from home to contribute to the classroom as an In-Kind donation!

Volunteering guides the instructional program, all working together to enhance the social, emotional, and intellectual development of each child, enabling them to make the transition into public school better and giving that child a "head start".

Volunteer activities include:

- Assisting with classroom activities, such as meals.
- Reading, telling stories or sharing musical/artistic talents.
- Assisting with rest time.
- Assisting with field trips or special events.

- Helping in the kitchen. (Parents must obtain a Food Handlers Card and have a current TB test).
- Talking with the children about everything they do in a way which will help them learn, understand, and use more words with ease.
- Assisting with errands for the teacher

To become a volunteer please contact your child's teacher or County Supervisor to obtain a volunteer application form. All forms must be approved by the Head Start Director prior to volunteering in the classroom.

****Parents/Guardians who volunteer more than 20 hours per week must have a criminal background check/DHHR Background Check and a TB Risk Assessment.**

➤ IN-KIND DONATIONS

Performance Standard 1303.4

[1303.4 Federal financial assistance, non-federal match, and waiver requirements](#)

Head Start operates on a federally funded grant. As part of our funding requirements, we must secure a 20% non-federal match through In-Kind donations of time, space or goods. We welcome whatever assistance you would like to provide that will help us deliver further resources and services for our children and families.

Appalachian Council utilizes the Learning Genie App as our all-in-one communication, engagement, and In-Kind platform. Families and community members can log In-Kind hours for a variety of activities including, but not limited to:

- Classroom presentations
- Classroom assistance
- Reading to the class
- Policy Council Participation
- At-home activities with your child

Paper forms will be made available upon request. If your family needs a paper In-Kind form, please contact your child's Teacher or Family Service Worker.

Donated goods are to be turned into a Head Start staff person, where you will be provided with a Donation Form to sign and date. Any receipts provided help aid in price equivalency for our purposes, but are not required.

We appreciate your contribution and engagement with your child's education.

➤ GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Performance Standard 1301.6

[1301.6 Impasse Procedures](#)

It is recommended that communication be open throughout the Head Start system so that any problem related to the Appalachian Council Head Start programs or project will be brought to the attention of those directly involved.

An effort will be made to bring about satisfactory resolution or clarification of any issue. If a resolution is not reached for those involved, the Policy Council will hear any complaint of a Head Start Parent/Guardian or Community Representative.

Grievance Procedure

1. Discuss the problem directly and as quickly as possible with the person who is supervising that area of concern, for example: classroom-teacher, bus-driver, or kitchen-cook.
2. If there is no resolution or harmony within the area of the problem, go directly to the person in charge: (County Supervisor /Content Area Specialist) and discuss the problem, within five (5) days after the first meeting.
3. If there is still no resolution or harmony after talking to the person in charge, go directly to the Head Start Director, within two (2) days.
4. If there is no resolution or harmony reached within the local program, you may contact the Head Start Policy Council Chairperson and request to have the issue placed on the agenda for the next Policy Council Meeting.
5. If there is no resolution, the complaint will be heard by the Appalachian Council Head Start Oversight Committee Chairperson, within fourteen (14) days after the Policy Council Meeting.
6. If at any point there is a need to have the policy clarified, it is suggested that the Head Start Director be contacted. You may request that a call be placed to the Program Specialist from the Southeastern Region.

You may contact the Program Specialist directly if you feel that you have not received a fair hearing or if information is needed which has not been made available within the Appalachian Council Head Start Program.

➤ SCHOOL READINESS

Performance Standards 1302.40 and 1302.102 (a)(3)

[1302.40 Purpose](#)

[1302.102 Program goals, continuous improvement, and reporting](#)

The Office of Head Start (OHS) defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start is a leader in the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development, including physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development, all of which are essential to children getting ready for school.

School readiness means that a child is ready to enter a social environment that is primarily focused on education. The following list of behaviors and/or characteristics are often associated with early school success. Keep in mind these are not requirements to enter kindergarten.

- Follow a structured daily routine.
- Work independently with supervision.
- Listen and pay attention to what someone else is saying.
- Cooperate with others.
- Use gross and fine motor skills.
- Write their name.
- Count.
- Recognize colors and shapes.
- Recite the alphabet and identify sounds in words and recognize rhyme.

School readiness begins at home. Parents are a child's first teacher, so it is necessary that they play a key role in preparing their child for school. The family environment is very important in shaping children's early development. Parents can help their children develop the skills they will need to be ready for school. The following is a list of activities that parents can do with their children to increase their general readiness for school:

- Read books to and with your child.
- Spend quality time with your child.
- Create and enforce a structured routine within the home that your child needs to follow (i.e., mealtimes, bedtime, bath time, teeth brushing, etc.)
- Talk to your child, ask open-ended questions and encourage conversations.
- Promote their cognitive development by encouraging them to think about the world around them.
- Encourage behaviors that demonstrate respect/courtesy of others.
- Encourage children to accept responsibility and build competence through simple chores such as putting away toys and picking up clothes.

Children are the future. You as parents must prepare them for the future. A child that is ready for school and formal learning will excel and be successful if you as parents do your part to contribute to that.

➤ CURRICULUM

Performance Standard 1303.32

[1302.32 Curricula](#)

Curriculum in Head Start is a written document that serves as a road map for implementing quality child development and education program. In Head Start, curriculum is implemented within the context of sound child development principles and what we know about how children develop and learn. One of our highest priorities is, and always has been, to improve the educational experience of every child in Head Start. Appalachian Council uses the Frog Street Curriculum in our Stand-Alone Sites. We follow the Curriculum in each county for our Collaborative Board of Education classrooms. Children gain social emotional competence, promotion of physical wellbeing, increased language and cognition, and a physical environment that promotes the quality of learning.

Head Start programs do not utilize the use of "ditto sheets," which equate to worksheets. This is to adhere to both federal and state, guidelines that prohibit the use of worksheets in early education settings. WV State Policy 2525 (15.4.a.)

<https://apps.sos.wv.gov/adlaw/csr/readfile.aspx?DocId=55504andFormat=PDF>

We track educational progress to report to parents/guardians with the following practices.

- Work Samples
- Observational Records
- Parent Newsletters - Teachers can send home parent newsletters which explain the activities children are doing at school.

➤ LITERACY

Below are some benefits that highlight the importance of reading to your child between the ages of two and five.

- A stronger relationship with you.
- Academic excellence.
- Basic speech skills.
- More logical thinking skills.
- Acclimation to new experiences.
- Enhanced concentration and discipline
- The knowledge that reading is fun!

**As a parent, reading to your children is one of the most important things you can do to prepare them with a foundation for academic excellence!*

➤ CLASSROOM LOGISTICS

- Each classroom will have their daily schedule posted.
- Check your monthly calendar for days your child will not have school.
- Classrooms follow the Board of Education schedule for inclement weather closings.

Things to Bring (and not to bring) to Classrooms:

- Please send an extra set of clothing for your child. If your child gets wet or very dirty, he/she can change right away. Include a pair of pants, a shirt, a pair of underpants, and socks. Please label clothing.
- Please send a tote bag or backpack with your child every day. Your child's name needs to be marked on the bag. The bag is used to send artwork and notes home, so make sure you check it every day.
- It is important to dress your child for the seasons and weather. In the winter, please remember to send mittens, hats, boots, coats, and scarves. Children will be playing outside daily unless there are severe weather conditions. Please do not dress your child in flip flops, sandals, or clogs. Sneakers are a much safer and comfortable choice for your child.
- Children are not allowed to bring toys, money, food, drinks, or candy to school.
- We encourage parents/guardians to send a light blanket and pillow for rest time.

➤ HOURS OF OPERATION

Hours may vary by location. For the most part, Head Start will have staff available between 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM. A typical school day will be at least six hours and 15 minutes four days a week; most classrooms will follow the Board of Education Schedule. There will be at least 138 instructional days per year. Some classrooms will have to make up days due to inclement weather and other emergencies.

➤ ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

All parents/visitors must enter and exit the building through the MAIN entrance. Children will not be dropped off or picked up from an outside entrance. It is our policy that all parents sign their child in and out. If someone else is going to pick up your child, please contact us in advance and be sure you have completed the 'Notification of Change or Child/Family Information Form'.

If we are unfamiliar with the person picking up your child, that person will be asked to show a photo ID. People signing your child in/out and getting your child off the bus must be 18 years of age or older. We ask you to follow the scheduled arrival/departure times. A pattern of tardiness disrupts the classroom schedule.

➤ NON-TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION(NTI) DAYS

Parents will be provided with five (5) NTI packets on Monday, November 30th. Please keep these in a safe place so they can easily access them when needed. On NTI days you will be notified regarding use of the packets. Also, teachers will hold a 30 minute office hours session beginning at 10:00 AM for families to join, if they choose. A Google Meet Invitation will be sent to parents on the day an NTI is in place. On these days children will be considered present – off site due to the use of the learning packets.

Teachers, FSW's and other staff will be available via e-mail or through Learning Genie on NTI Days, however they may be working from home on these days and not in the office due to inclement weather.

➤ BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

Performance Standard 1302.40

[1302 Subpart D—Health and Mental Health Program Services](#)

At Appalachian Council we provide a positive approach to behavior management. Challenging behaviors are redirected and positive behaviors are reinforced to increase positive outcomes. If behaviors in the classroom exceed what is typical, the teacher and Mental Health and Disability Specialist may consult with families to create a plan to help the child be more successful at school.

In addition, Appalachian Council Head Start Employees will NOT:

- subject children to any form of corporal punishment.
- subject children to any form of emotional abuse.
- utilize “time out” procedures including removal or isolation.

➤ MENTAL WELLNESS

Performance Standard 1302.45

[1302.45 Supports for mental health and well-being](#)

Mental health screenings are completed each year for every child enrolled in Head Start. If a child’s scores are outside the “typical” range, the Mental Health and Disability Specialist will contact the teacher to determine if a classroom observation is appropriate. After the observation, the Mental Health and Disability Specialist will work with the teacher to determine what, if any further support is needed.

Additional Mental Wellness resources are available to children and families upon request.

➤ DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION

Performance Standard 1302

[1302 Subpart F—Additional Services for Children with Disabilities](#)

The Mental Health and Disability Specialists with Appalachian Council work collaboratively with classroom staff to monitor and support students, including those with suspected or diagnosed disabilities. If at any time a teacher or family member has a concern about an enrolled child’s development, they should contact the Mental Health and Disability Specialist serving their county to discuss options, potentially including an evaluation for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

Appalachian Council Head Start believes that all children benefit from a nurturing and supportive environment where all children are included in a typical preschool environment.

➤ HEALTH AND SAFETY

Performance Standards 1302.42 and 1302.47

[1302.47 Safety Practices](#)

[1302.42 Child health status and care](#)

We prioritize the health and safety of every child. Staff follow strict safety procedures in classrooms, conduct regular health checks, and provide guidance for families. Policies cover head lice, bed bugs, and other common health concerns to keep children safe and healthy.

➤ ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Performance Standard 1302.15

[1302.15 Enrollment](#)

Families provide important health information, such as immunizations and screenings, to meet enrollment requirements. Head Start staff support ongoing care, track health status, and ensure children are ready to learn and thrive.

➤ REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION & SCREENINGS

Performance Standard 1302.5 and 1302.42

[1302.15 Enrollment](#)

[1302.42 Child health status and care](#)

Immunization Record – Required Prior to Enrollment

Young children have developing immune systems and are more susceptible to infectious diseases. To protect all children, up-to-date immunizations are required before preschool attendance. Head Start follows immunization guidelines from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

If your child is behind on immunizations, speak with your physician about “catch-up” shots. Your Family Service Worker will help you create and follow an immunization schedule. Please report any immunizations received during the school year to your Family Service Worker.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening – Required Prior to Class Attendance

A TB risk assessment is required. If the assessment indicates high risk, a TB test or chest X-ray will be required before your child can attend.

Vision and Hearing Screening – Within 45 Days of Enrollment

Head Start requires an evidence-based vision and hearing screening for all children within the first 45 days of enrollment. If this has not already been completed by a healthcare professional, the screening will be conducted by Head Start Staff.

Medical and Dental Homes – Within 30 Days of Enrollment

Children must have both a medical home and a dental home within 30 days of their first day of attendance. A medical or dental home is an established relationship with a primary care physician or dentist—not an urgent care facility.

Your Family Service Worker can help connect you with providers and can support transportation if needed.

Proof of Health Insurance - If you need assistance obtaining health insurance, please contact your Family Service Worker.

Comprehensive Child Health Exam – Within 90 Days of Enrollment

All children must have a current physical exam (within the past 12 months) on file. If a child is re-enrolled for a second year, an updated physical will be required.

The physical exam should include:

- Blood pressure
- Hemoglobin level
- Lead Blood Test
- Growth assessment (height, weight, BMI)
- Dental
- Speech
- Developmental

**Note: We recommend combining most health requirements in a single physician visit (excluding dental), when possible.*

➤ GROWTH ASSESSMENTS

Growth assessments are conducted by Head Start staff within the first 45 days of school, and again after the first of the year. These assessments track height, weight, and Body Mass Index (BMI).

➤ MEDICATION POLICY

Staff administer medications only with written parental consent and according to program policies. Families must provide instructions from the health care provider and medications must be in the original containers with prescription label. Staff document all medication administration carefully.

➤ EXCLUSION POLICY

Performance Standard: 1302.47(7)(iii)

[1302.47 Safety Practices](#)

To protect all children, certain illnesses require staying home until no longer contagious. Staff follow clear policies guidelines for exclusion and safe readmission, keeping classrooms healthy for everyone. For specific information regarding exclusion, click the link below.

<https://www.cdc.gov/children-and-school-preparedness/php/interventions/when-students-or-staff-are-sick.html>

➤ NUTRITION

Performance Standard 1302.44

[1302.44 Child Nutrition](#)

Children receive nutritious meals and snacks through CACFP, meeting federal nutrition standards. Staff monitor growth and provide nutritional education for children and families to promote healthy development.

Staff assess children's dietary needs to ensure meals meet individual growth requirements. Families are offered guidance and referrals to support healthy eating habits.

➤ MENU & MEALTIMES

Performance Standard 1302.44

[1302.44 Child Nutrition](#)

Our program follows CACFP guidelines for balanced meals and snacks. Children enjoy meals at scheduled times in a positive, social environment, with menus that include fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins.

➤ NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Performance Standard 1303.11

[1303.11 Limitations and prohibitions](#)

[US Dept of Labor: How to File a Discrimination Complaint](#)

In accordance with federal civil rights laws, Appalachian Council Head Start and the USDA prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal for prior civil rights activity.

Alternative communication formats are available (e.g., Braille, large print, sign language). Individuals with disabilities may contact the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

➤ TRANSPORTATION: SAFETY FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Performance Standard 1303.70-75

[1303 Transportation](#)

For twenty-three million students nationwide, the school day begins and ends with a trip on a school bus. The greatest risk is not riding the bus but approaching or leaving the bus. Before children go back to school or start school for the first time, it is essential that adults and children know traffic safety rules.

Appalachian Council Head Start wants to make sure you and your children are always safe around the school bus. Children often look forward to riding the school bus, so it is important for parents and children to understand how to enter and exit the bus, cross the street, recognize danger zones around vehicles, and to know what to do in an emergency.

The following information is from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and other transportation resources, you can view a lot of this information on-line at www.nhtsa.gov and get up-to-date information.

It is important for parents to practice safety with their children, so they understand all of the "do's" and "don'ts" around transportation safety!

SAFE PASSENGER PRACTICES

Children need to behave safely during the school bus ride. Basic safety rules include the following:

- Always sit fully in the seat and face forward
- Never distract the driver
- Never stand on a moving bus
- Listen to the driver
- Speak in a low voice, no screaming or shouting
- Never stick anything out the window (arms, legs, head, book bags, etc.)

BOARDING and DEPARTING PRACTICES

The loading/unloading area is called the "Danger Zone" because getting on and off the bus is the most dangerous part of the school bus ride. The "Danger Zone" extends ten feet in front of the bus, ten feet on each side of the bus, and behind the bus. It is where the bus driver will have the hardest time seeing a child. Throughout the year, especially at the start of school, children need to learn how to get on and off the school bus safely.

Parents should help their children learn and follow these common-sense practices:

- Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. Running to catch the bus is dangerous and can lead to injuries.
- When the bus approaches, stand at least five giant steps (10 feet) away from the curb, and line up away from the street.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says that it's okay before stepping onto the bus.
- If you must cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the road to a point at least five giant steps ahead of the bus before you cross.
- Be sure that the bus driver can see you and you can see the bus driver when crossing the street. Stop at the edge of the bus and look left to right to left before crossing.
- Use the handrails to avoid falls. When getting off the bus, be careful that clothing with drawstrings and book bags and backpacks with straps don't get caught in the handrails or door.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least five giant steps away from the side of the bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver might not be able to see you.

BOARDING and DEPARTING PRACTICES

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends the following:

If you must cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the road to a point at least five giant steps ahead of the bus before you cross.

- Be sure that the bus driver can see you and you can see the bus driver when crossing the street.
- Stop at the edge of the bus and look left to right to left before crossing.

The U.S. Dept. of Transportation also recommends that parents help their children practice crossing the street, and teach children to:

- Cross at the corner.
- Look left, right, and left again before crossing.
- Watch for on coming and turning cars.
- Stay in crosswalks.
- If there is a traffic light, cross only when the facing light is green or when the walking sign is on.
- Always follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.

Information was based on "How to Keep your Child in One Piece", U.S. Department of Transportation, and Helping Your Child Be Healthy and Fit. For more information, go to <https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/LearnPtnrs/safe.html>

Parents of Appalachian Council Head Start will receive the bus safety handbook "Safe on the school bus: Back to School Child Bus Safety and Parents Responsibilities.

