

Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded program that provides developmentally appropriate early-childhood-education services to eligible preschool-aged children while involving their total family in the child development process.

Head Start provides a comprehensive program to meet children's emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs, as well as the needs of the family.

Head Start is a growing experience for parents and their children. Head Start staff members believe that while they can provide the child with a variety of learning experiences, the parents are the primary teachers of their children.

EDUCATION

Our Head Start program offers two options for delivering Head Start services: center-based and home-based. Both options provide developmental screening for all enrolled children. Parents will be notified prior to the screening and the results will be shared with them. The results of this screening are used to help plan individualized activities.

CENTER-BASED OPTION

With the center-based option, children come into the Head Start Center specific days of each week, for designated number of hours a day. Breakfast and lunch are provided for each child. An afternoon snack will also be provided for the full-day classroom. Activities are planned so that each child can find success no matter where they are developmentally.

HOME-BASED OPTION

With the home-based option, the home visitor makes weekly scheduled visits to each of their families. The visit will last for 1 ½ hours each week. These visits are parent-focused, stressing the parent's role as their child's primary teacher. Home visits include a variety of creative parent / child activities such as: art, music and stories to promote the child's growth and development. All areas of the Head Start program, including: health, education, social services and parent involvement are incorporated into the home visits. Time is spent discussing the child's progress, planning future activities, and sharing parent and family concerns.

Socialization sessions are held two times per month for home-based children, who come into the classroom for no less than 3 ½ hours per socialization session. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Group activities provide social interaction with other children. Socialization may be held in a Head Start classroom or community room, or it may be a field trip.

HEALTH SERVICES

All children enrolled in the Head Start program must have a physical exam as well as a dental screening. The Head Start nurses provide health screenings to all children, which include: vision, hearing, speech, height, weight, blood pressure and hemoglobin. Parents will be informed of the results of the screening. The center nurse will encourage extended follow-up and / or treatment for any medical or dental problems to be done as soon as possible, providing families with the appropriate resources and services as needed. Assistance with transportation may be arranged, if needed, to health screenings and physical or dental exams. All immunizations must be current or up-to-date before a child attends the classroom or socialization. The nurse will encourage all staff members to be aware of any health concerns of the children and their families, and staff members will encourage parent involvement in their child's health.

MENTAL HEALTH AND DISABILITIES

Mental health services include good mental health practices that encourage and support good self-esteem, socialization skills and self-sufficiency. Mental health professionals observe Head Start children two times a year and make recommendations for follow-up.

Specialized services are available for children who have been diagnosed as having a disability. These could include problems with hearing, vision, speech, physical health and emotional health. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will be written to ensure services are provided. Parent participation in developing and implementing this plan is encouraged.

NUTRITION

Nutritious meals are served to the children two times a day in the classroom or at socialization. Children are always encouraged to taste new foods but are not forced to eat anything they don't want. An afternoon snack is provided for the children in the full-day classroom. A nutrition assessment is completed on each child as part of the enrollment process, and nutrition counseling is always available to Head Start families.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent participation in all aspects of the Head Start program is always welcomed and encouraged. The Head Start Policy Council, which is established at the grantee level, is comprised of 51% parents and 49% community members. The policy council is a formal structure that provides the opportunity and authority to participate in shared decision-making.

Volunteers are a very important part of the Head Start program, and whether they are in the Head Start classroom, at socialization, in the kitchen, in the office, on field trips, on committees, or even in the privacy of your own home, they are always appreciated.

Parent committee meetings and / or trainings are held on a monthly basis. Head Start parents, guardians, and foster parents make up this committee at the local level. These meetings and trainings provide parents with the opportunity to assist in the development of activities that address their interests and needs, and that support the education and healthy development of their child. A variety of trainings and activities identified by parents are offered throughout the school year, and all Head Start family members are encouraged to participate in parent activities.

SOCIAL SERVICES

A family assessment is completed with each Head Start family. As families indicate their willingness to participate, a partnership agreement identifying family strengths, needs and interests is developed. Goals are set, and all necessary support and referrals are offered to families in order for them to achieve self-sufficiency. Staff members deal with crisis and emergency needs that are identified by families.

TRANSITION SERVICES

Head Start staff members will work with parents to make sure the transition into Head Start is a smooth one for the child, and will help prepare and support the child and family as they transition through elementary school.

LITERACY / EDUCATION

All Head Start parents will be encouraged to further their education, whether it is increasing their literacy skills, getting their GED or going to college. Head Start staff members will assist the families by obtaining information and identifying resources that may be able to help. Referrals will be made to appropriate programs, schools or agencies.

HOOSIER HEALTHWISE

Hoosier Healthwise is a health insurance program offered by the state of Indiana for children from birth through age 18 who are not covered by Medicaid and whose family incomes are below 150% of the poverty guidelines. Hoosier Healthwise covers checkups, well-child visits, doctor visits, hospital stays, prescription drugs, vision and dental care, and other health care benefits. In general, there are no co-payments, premiums, or deductibles in Hoosier Healthwise for Children. The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) will pay the costs. Applications can be completed by your Head Start family service worker or at your local Office of Family and Children.