

Southern Seven Head Start/Early Head Start



PARENT HANDBOOK

2015 – 2016

"A Parent and Child Education Program"

**Serving the Counties of:
Alexander 🛎 Hardin 🛎 Johnson
Massac 🛎 Pope 🛎 Pulaski 🛎 Union**

Dear Families:

We welcome you to the 2015-2016 School Year! Whether you are new to our program or returning from the previous year, I am sure you will find that we strive to make the transition as smooth as possible. Our staff has lots of experience in helping children feel comfortable in their new surroundings. We realize that children and parents may feel uncomfortable separating from each other during the first few days of school. We encourage you to come to the center and spend some time getting to know your child's teacher and experience some of the activities your child will be doing. Throughout the year, you will be provided with information on the progress your child is making and opportunities you have to be involved. Our classrooms are full of fun equipment and toys to give your child meaningful play experiences because young children learn through their play.

We encourage parents and families to be involved as much as possible. In the coming weeks you will hear about parent meetings, field trips, and community activities that will be happening with your center. Please take the time to attend these events. I feel that you will find them enjoyable. Teachers rely on you to provide them with information about your child. We recognize that parents are a child's first teacher so we strive to maintain the school/home connection.

The Parent Handbook will provide you with many answers to questions you may have, but if you cannot find what you are looking for, please call the center. Our goal is to make you and your child's experience with our program fun and exciting. We look forward to a great year with you and your family.

Sincerely,

Angie Messmer
Early Childhood Administrator



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Important Center Information.....	5
Southern Seven HS/EHS Addresses and Telephone Numbers.....	6
Southern Seven HS/EHS Program Options.....	7
Traditional Head Start.....	7
Dual Enrollment with School District Pre-K.....	7
Early Head Start.....	7
Home Based Option.....	8
Staff Qualifications.....	8
Key Rules and Policies.....	8
Certified Birth Certificate Requirement.....	8
Release Policy.....	9
Attendance.....	9
Absences.....	10
Pesticide.....	10
Illness.....	10
Bad Weather – Emergency Closings and Cancellations.....	11
No Smoking Policy.....	11
Confidentiality.....	11
Child Abuse and Neglect - Mandated Reporter Status.....	12
Complaint Process.....	12
Your Child’s Day at Head Start.....	13
Learning at Head Start/Early Head Start.....	14
Education.....	14
The Classroom.....	14
Special Events.....	15
Family/Staff Conferences and Home Visits.....	16
Going to Kindergarten.....	17
Staying Healthy at Head Start.....	17
Health Services.....	17
Hearing and Vision Screenings.....	18
Dental Screenings and Exams.....	18
Growth Assessments.....	19
Immunizations.....	19
Medical Emergencies.....	20
Eating Well at Head Start.....	20
Nutrition Services.....	20
Food Program.....	21
Infant Formula.....	21
Breast Milk.....	22
Children with Special Needs at Southern Seven.....	22
Services for Children with Special Needs.....	22
Feeling Good about Ourselves at Southern Seven.....	23

Mental Health Services.....	23
Families Getting Involved at Southern Seven	25
Getting to Know Your Parent Coordinator	25
Volunteering.....	25
Parent Meetings	25
Policy Council	26
Team Up with Us to Meet In-Kind	26
Information and Trainings for Parents	27
Newsletter.....	27
Community Resource Directory.....	27
Trainings.....	27
Positive Guidance.....	28



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IMPORTANT CENTER INFORMATION

Southern Seven Head Start/Early Head Start Website: www.southern7.org

My Child's Head Start/Early Head Start Center is located at:

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

The center is open from _____ in the morning, until _____ in the afternoon.

The Site Supervisor for the center is: _____

Our Parent Coordinator is: _____

My Child's Teacher is: _____

My Child's Teacher's Aide is: _____

Please call the center when your child will be absent. Consistent attendance is very important for your child's learning and skill building.

Center Staff

Office Associate: _____ Custodian: _____

Cook(s): _____

Center/Program Monthly Meetings

Parent Meeting: _____
When Time Place



Southern Seven Head Start/Early Head Start ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Administration

37 Rustic Campus Drive
Ullin, IL 62992
Phone: 634-9340; 1-800-698-4820
Fax: 634-9394

Alexander County

Cairo Head Start

4115 Sycamore Street, Building B
Cairo, IL 62914
Phone: 734-4220
Fax: 734-1985

Egyptian Early Learning Center (Located in Egyptian Elem. School)

20023 Diswood Road
Tammis, IL 62988
Phone: 776-5756
Fax: 776-5758

Johnson County

Goreville Early Learning Center (Located in Goreville Elem. School)

201 South Ferne Clyffe Road
Goreville, IL 62939
Phone: 525-4737

Johnson County Early Learning Center

513 East Vine Street
Vienna, IL 62995
Phone: 658-9229
Fax: 658-6064

Massac County

Brookport Early Learning Center (Located in Brookport Elem. School)

319 Ferry Street
Brookport, IL 62910
Phone: 564-3805
Fax: 564-3941

Metropolis Early Learning Center (Located in Metropolis Primary School)

416 East Ninth Street
Metropolis, IL 62960
Phone: 524-5222
Fax: 524-5322

Pope County

Pope County Head Start (Located in Pope Co. Elem. School)

125 State Highway 146 West
Golconda, IL 62938
Phone: 683-2142
Fax: 683-2148

Pulaski County

Mounds Head Start

327 North Reader, PO Box 476
Mounds, IL 62964
Phone: 745-6703
Fax: 745-9418

Rustic Head Start

37 Rustic Campus Drive
Ullin, IL 62992
Phone: 634-9327
Fax: 634-9817

Union County

Union County Early Learning Center/Anna

Barnes Hall, 1000 North Main Street
Anna, IL 62906
Phone: 833-8932
Fax: 833-5845

Union County Early Learning Center/Cobden (Located in Cobden Elem. School)

413 North Appleknocker Drive
Cobden, IL 62920
Phone: 893-2311

Union County Early Learning Center/Jonesboro (Located in Jonesboro Elem. School)

309 Cook Avenue
Jonesboro, IL 62952
Phone: 528-0106

**For more information or to enroll your child,
call any center listed above or our
Administrative Office.**

SOUTHERN SEVEN HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM OPTIONS

Southern Seven Head Start/Early Head Start Program offers a variety of program options for families. They are as follows:

Traditional Head Start

This is a federally funded program for children ages 3-5. Children attend Head Start for a half day or full day session (depending on the center) from August through April. Meals provide 2/3 of children's daily nutritional needs. Children enrolled in this program

back to
School



will be in a classroom setting and learn through play, hands-on experiences, and interaction with a primary Teacher. Classrooms are setup in "learning centers" such as reading, dramatic play (dress-up, puppets, playing house), hands-on-math, science, and others. Your child has an opportunity each day to spend time in activities of their choice. Some of the concepts your child will learn will include pre-reading skills, social skills, sharing, getting along with others, and kindergarten readiness. Children will attend five days per week. One day per month, the center will be closed for Staff In-Service

Training. We hope your child's first experience in a center based program is fun, exciting, and positive.

Dual Enrollment With School District Pre-K

Families can have full-day care for their child during the school year by enrolling in both Head Start and the School District Pre-K Program. Head Start will work with families and Pre-K to coordinate a.m./p.m. session placement, transportation, and meals for children in both programs. Head Start welcomes dual enrollment in all counties.

Early Head Start

Early Head Start is specially designed to meet the unique developmental needs of children between the ages of **birth to 36 months**. Early Head Start is offered at Cairo, Mounds, and Rustic. The Center Based Program is available at Cairo, Mounds, and Rustic the months of August through April. These children receive Home Based Early Head Start Services May through August.

At each center offering Early Head Start, there are classrooms specially designed to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. The size of the class is small with no more than 8 children in each classroom at a time. In Early Head Start, the ratio of children to staff is also small at 4 children to 1 Care Giver/Teacher. Transportation is not available for Early Head Start.

Home Based Option

Through weekly home visits, children and families receive all the services of Early Head Start, but in their homes. Home Based is offered for infants and children birth to 3 years of age. Each home visit is approximately 1½ hours in length and includes special activities for the child and parent together as well as a snack for everyone. Once each month, your child will have an opportunity to participate in a cooking activity. Socialization Days are held twice each month, so children also have an opportunity to play with others their age. Transportation is available for these activities upon request.



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Staff Qualifications

Southern Seven Head Start employs Teachers and Teacher's Aides who meet the qualification required for the position (Associates and/or Bachelor's Degree). They are committed to formal education, on-going professional development, and have a deep commitment to young children and to the profession. They are the "key" element in providing high quality learning experiences for young children. Center Based Site Supervisors oversee the day to day operations of the program, guide and support staff, and ensure implementation of high quality services for children and their families. If you are interested in becoming a part of the Head Start Team, talk with the Site Supervisor or Parent Coordinator at your child's center. Our staff would be happy to help you explore the training, support, and experience you would need to begin a career in Early Childhood Education or any of the other fields employed by Head Start.

KEY RULES AND POLICIES

Certified Birth Certificate Requirement

Due to the Missing Children's Records Act, effective April 1, 2010, DCFS requires that within 30 days of enrollment the parent or guardian must provide a certified copy of the child's birth certificate or other reliable proof of identity and age of the child. If a certified birth certificate is not available, the parent or guardian must submit a passport, visa, or other governmental documentation as proof of the child's identity and age and an affidavit or notarized letter explaining the inability to produce a certified copy of the birth certificate. We are required to notify the Illinois State Police if the parent or guardian fails to submit proof of the child's identity within the 30 day time frame.

Because of the above regulation, you must provide your child's original certified birth certificate (with the seal). A staff member will make a copy of this and give you back the original. This must occur within the first 30 days of your child attending school or we will have no choice but to notify the Illinois State Police as per the requirement. If

you do not have your child's original certified birth certificate (with the seal), we will be more than glad to assist you with obtaining it. However, this can take a little time so please do not wait until the end of the 30 days to begin working on this. If you have any questions regarding this, please do not hesitate to contact the Administrative Office.

Release Policy

1. All **children** will have on file a record of the individuals to whom **they** may be released to from the center or bus (if applicable). Please remember to include all adults (spouse or **significant other**, grandparents, friends, uncles, aunts, etc.) that you may occasionally ask to pick up or receive your child.
2. Changes to this record must be made in writing **by the parent or guardian**.
3. Parents must accompany their child into the building and sign their child in. To pick up their child, they must enter the building and sign them out.
4. **Staff shall refuse to release a child to any person, whether related or unrelated to the child, who has not been authorized by the parent or parents to receive the child. Persons not known to the staff shall be required to provide a driver's license (with photo), a photo identification card issued by the Illinois Secretary of State or other photo identification to establish their identity before the child is released to them.**
5. **Court documents must be on file if a parent is restricted from picking up a child. If there is a custody problem, we are legally bound to honor the wishes of the parent who has legal custody.**
6. If a parent or other authorized person arrives to pick up the child and is acting in a manner that may place the child at immediate risk of harm, expect the staff to question the suitability of releasing the child. The staff may hold the child until more suitable transportation can be arranged. For example, staff will not release a child to someone who **shows signs of being** under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Attendance

In order for your child to get the most out of the Head Start Program, it is important that they come to school on a regular basis. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Because of the need for Head Start Services, we cannot hold a slot for a child who does not come to school unless there are special circumstances such as illness or significant family problems. If your child is not at school and we don't hear from you, staff from your child's center will get in touch with you on that first day to make sure your child is okay and to see if there is anything you need. If your child is not ill and there are no special problems, we will expect your child to return to school the next day. We cannot hold a



slot. If you know your child will be missing school due to illness or other reasons, please contact the Parent Coordinator or Site Supervisor at your child's center to make special arrangements. The phone numbers for all our centers are listed in the front of this booklet.

Absences

If your child will be absent from school, it is important that you:

- Call your child's school as early as possible to let us know that your child will not be at school.

It is important for both your child and the Head Start Program that children in the program attend regularly. Did you know that your child's Head Start Program gets just over \$3.00 each day from the government food program for each child who attends? This money is used to off-set our food cost which then helps keep supplies, toys, and books in your child's Head Start Classroom. When children do not attend Head Start on a regular basis, everyone loses.

Pesticide

For the safety of your child, the center will notify you through your center's newsletter, before pesticide is applied. This will always take place when children are not present.

Illness

Even though children at Head Start follow good hand washing practices, it is still really easy for them to spread germs to each other. In order to keep **all** of our Head Start Children as healthy as possible, we cannot allow children who are sick to stay at school. If we are not sure what illness your child has or how contagious they are, we may ask for a note from your child's doctor before they can return to Head Start. Remember, children must be fever free for 24 hours before they can return to Head Start.



DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO HEAD START IF:

- ✓ She/he complains of not feeling well.
- ✓ She/he has diarrhea and/or an upset stomach.
- ✓ She/he has had a fever within the last 24 hours.
- ✓ She/he has a bad cold with coughing and a runny nose
- ✓ She/he shows signs of a contagious disease such as pink eye, impetigo, or chicken pox.
- ✓ She/he has signs of head lice.

YOUR CHILD WILL BE SENT HOME FROM HEAD START IF:

- ✓ She/he complains of feeling ill.
- ✓ She/he has open, bleeding, or oozing(weeping) sores.
- ✓ She/he has flu like symptoms.
- ✓ She/he shows signs of a contagious disease such as pink eye, impetigo, or chicken pox.
- ✓ She/he has a fever of 101 degrees or greater.
- ✓ She/he has head lice.

If your child becomes sick at school, our staff will make sure your child is comfortable and well cared for, and that he/she has an opportunity to rest while we contact you to come and pick him/her up at the center. If we can't get in touch with you, we will contact the people you have listed on the pick-up list. By removing sick children from the classroom, we can reduce the chance that other children or staff may become sick. To make sure we can keep an extra close eye on your child, we will have them rest on a cot in a location outside of the classroom and be cared for by a designated staff person until you arrive.

Bad Weather – Emergency Closings And Cancellations

Sometimes our weather here in Southern Illinois can be unpredictable. As we all know, snow, ice, and sleet can make our roads slippery all too quickly. In order to insure the safety of your child, it is likely that there will be times we have to cancel school or close early due to the weather. When we have to cancel school, we will notify all three network TV stations (WSIL-3, WPSD-6, and KFVS-12) by 6:00 a.m. If we have to close a center during the day, we will also notify the three TV stations. When the weather becomes bad while your child is at Head Start, we ask that you pay attention to the television, so you will know if you need to come pick up your child early. In most cases, we will close or dismiss early when the public school district does.



No Smoking Policy

Smoking is never allowed in Head Start Centers, playgrounds, buses, parking lots, or vehicles. In addition, smoking is not allowed in view of the children, this includes field trips to any location, even parks. All staff, parents, and visitors are expected to respect the health of the children by following the no smoking policy.

Confidentiality

At your child's school, we respect your privacy. The information that is in your child's file is kept in a locked file cabinet and is not shared with anyone outside of the Head Start Program without your written permission. As a parent, you always have the right to read, review, and request a revision to the information in your child's files. If you

would like to review any of our records concerning your child or family, you will need to submit a request in writing to the Early Childhood Administrator. If you need any assistance in preparing your request, the Parent Coordinator at your child's center will be happy to help you. The administrator will respond to your request within 30 days.

Facebook has become one of the main ways that people communicate through social media. In order to respect the privacy of all Head Start children you are asked not to post pictures on Facebook of Head Start School activities without the permission of the parents of children involved in the picture.

Child Abuse and Neglect - Mandated Reporter Status

In the State of Illinois, anyone who works with children such as teachers, social workers, doctors, nurses, and child care workers are required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS). Each year, Head Start Staff receive training from DCFS about signs of child abuse and neglect and the reporting laws. If you have any questions about the mandated reporter law or what would be considered as child abuse or neglect, please feel free to speak with the Site Supervisor at your child's center or our Social Services Coordinator at the Administrative Office.

Complaint Process

If you have a complaint about the personnel or policy practices of Southern Seven Head Start, we would like to hear from you. Please describe your complaint to the Site Supervisor at your child's center. If you are not able to resolve your complaint to your satisfaction, please submit your complaint in writing to the Early Childhood Administrator within 14 days at the following address:

Early Childhood Administrator
Southern Seven Head Start/Early Head Start
37 Rustic Campus Drive
Ullin, IL 62992





YOUR CHILD'S DAY AT HEAD START

Arrival

Staff greet children
Wash Hands
Prepare for Breakfast/Lunch**

Meal Time

Eat
Conversation
Clean-Up
Brush Teeth

Gathering Time

Stories
Music/Finger Plays/Songs

Learning Center Time

Reading and Writing
Science and Discovery
Math
Blocks
Dramatic Play
Table Toys

Small Group Time

Language
Health/Safety
Art
Special Concepts

Active Play (large motor)

Outdoor Play
Indoor Play (if weather is bad)

Meal/Snack Time**

Wash Hands
Eat
Conversation
Clean-Up

Children's Free Choice

Individual or Small Group Activities

Departure of Children (those attending ½ day)

Nap Time*

Learning Center Time

Individual Activities
Small Group Activities
Special Activities

Active Play

Outdoor Play
Indoor Play (if weather is bad)

*Children attending full day

**Children attending morning only will eat breakfast and lunch; children attending afternoon only will eat lunch and snack; children attending full day will eat breakfast, lunch, and snack; children attending a late afternoon session will receive dinner.



LEARNING AT HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

Education

At Head Start, your child's first experience in a school setting includes a classroom environment and Teaching Staff that make learning fun and help your child feel good about herself/himself as a student and a person. When children enjoy learning and feel good about themselves, they are more likely to do well in school and be successful later on in life. Our Education Program at Head Start is geared towards the unique way that young children learn.

Children learn and grow in many different ways, and therefore need a variety of experiences and opportunities within and outside of the classroom. The most important way young children learn is through active, hands-on play. In other words, they learn by doing. Sometimes, when we see our children in the Head Start Classroom, we think they are just playing and couldn't possibly be learning anything. The amazing thing about young children is that everything is new to them and they learn from every new experience. When it comes to learning, young children need to have opportunities that promote their thinking and problem solving skills, their ability to get along with others, and learning skills to deal with different feelings in an acceptable way. Young children also need an opportunity to exercise their muscles and build new physical skills.



The Classroom

Learning Centers – For toddlers and preschoolers, each classroom is divided up into learning centers or small areas that focus on particular skills. Children will find areas that promote math skills, pre-reading and writing skills, science, imagination, language, and a love of books, music, or art.

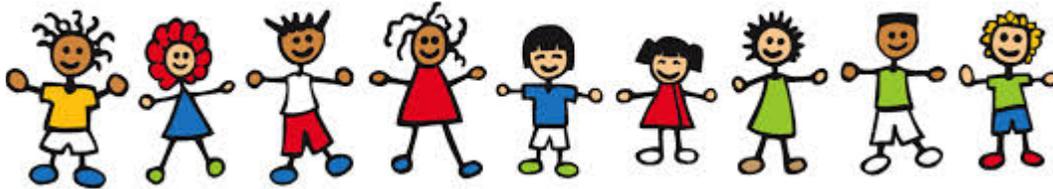
Infant classrooms are set up to promote learning and development through the interactions between caregivers and children during their daily activities. Classroom staff are trained in child development and they work with children on developmentally appropriate skills.

Teachers plan weekly lessons and the toys, games, and activities within the classrooms are changed regularly so children have a wide variety of learning experiences. Each day in preschool classrooms, time is set aside as "Center Time", where children are involved in the learning centers of their choice. During this time, Teaching Staff are able to work one-on-one or in small groups with the children on their Educational Goals. As children participate in planned activities they are learning science, math, language, pre-writing, and pre-reading skills.

Outdoor or Gross Motor Play - As a parent of a young child, you know how much energy they have. That's why it is so important that the children have an opportunity to run, jump, climb and use their large muscles (arms and legs) each day. When weather permits, the children have a chance to go outside on a daily basis. Our playgrounds include swings, slides, climbing equipment, riding toys, and balls, just to name a few. Outdoor time is a favorite time of day for many of the children. If the weather prohibits outdoor play, the children will have an opportunity for more active play indoors.

Small Group - During "Work Time" in a preschool classroom, one teacher will work with small groups of children on specific skills such as numbers, colors, shapes, or activities that use fine or small (hands and fingers) motor skills. Puzzles, sorting, counting, coloring, and working with shapes are all types of "play" that also help preschool age children build math skills.

Large Group - Learning how to listen to our friends, and take turns in a group is an important and sometimes challenging skill for young children to learn. During large group activities in a preschool classroom, children have an opportunity to read and discuss stories or make plans for the day. Other large group activities include songs, finger plays (songs or rhymes with hand motions), or exercising to music.



Videos - At Head Start, we rarely use videos or television in the classroom. Therefore, it is never necessary to send any videos or movies from home for your child. The only videos the children will watch at school will be those that are designed especially to go along with the lesson plan for your child's class.

Special Events

Field Trips – Centers are allowed to have three field trips per school year. Field trips are designed to give your child an opportunity to learn more about the community and the people within it. A field trip in the fall may include a visit to an apple orchard, pumpkin patch, or farm. This way, children have an opportunity to touch, smell, and experience the same types of things they are learning about in their classroom. The opportunities children learn from their field trips are included in classroom activities and in discussions before and after the trip itself.

Field trips are also a crucial time for parent volunteers. As you know, we pay a lot of attention to the safety of the children. The number of adults needed for safety on a field trip is certainly greater than the number needed within the classroom. We strongly encourage you to volunteer at least once during the year to go on a field trip.

You will have a great time and your child will feel very special on the day you come along. Whenever we go on a field trip, you will receive notice of the outing in advance.

Parties and Other Special Days - Everyone likes to celebrate and the children at Head Start are no exception. At Head Start, celebrations may include having a party that celebrates all the birthdays in a given month, the end of the school year, or various cultural traditions.

We are committed to having celebrations that include all families and children. Many centers plan fall or harvest celebrations, holidays around the world, winter festivals, and spring celebrations. We strongly encourage you to join us in the various celebrations and parties. By getting involved, parents can join us in sharing the rich and joyous traditions we all have in our families.

Because of the regulations we must follow, we ask that treats brought into the center for parties be store bought. We have a peanut-free environment and ask that you do not bring any peanuts or products containing peanuts into the Head Start Center. We also request that you select items that are healthy and not too high in sugar content such as fruit, vegetables, yogurt, graham crackers, oatmeal cookies, Jell-O Cups, Fruit Roll-Ups, granola bars, animal crackers, cheese crackers or muffins. A sign-up sheet will be used to plan for the appropriate amount of snacks.

End-of-Year Program - During the last week of the traditional preschool year, a program celebrating the time spent together during the school year is held. A program at the end of the school year provides transition for the upcoming summer for those children returning or going on to kindergarten. The program is informal, relatively short in length to accommodate the short attention span of young children, and allows children to demonstrate some of the skills they have learned during the year.



Family/Staff Conferences And Home Visits

Each year, your child's Teacher will contact you to arrange for two (2) Family/Staff Conferences and two (2) Home Visits. Our Teaching Staff always looks forward to having an opportunity to give you one-on-one time to discuss how everything is going with your child. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's experience, this is an excellent time to let your child's Teacher know.

Family/Staff Conferences are held at the center, and you will have an opportunity to see your child's classroom, review examples of his/her work, learn more about the daily activities, and ask questions of your child's Teacher. If your child will be going to kindergarten, Home Visits are a great time to learn more about the public school and

find out about activities you can do with your child over the summer. Do not worry that your schedule will make it impossible to meet with your child's Teacher; our staff will be happy to meet with you at a time of day that works for you.

School Readiness

Going to kindergarten is an important milestone in the lives of our children. Moving from the pre-school setting of your child's school to an elementary school setting can be quite a change (and even a little scary) for both children and parents.

One way Head Start is doing this is by developing a set of School Readiness Goals that each Teacher follows and works with the children to make the transition into Kindergarten successful. For example, one of the goals is for children to be able to recognize and print their first and last names. Teachers work with the children in various ways and activities to achieve this goal.

In preparing for kindergarten Teachers will also send home activities that you and your child can do together that support our school readiness goals. For instance, the Teacher may ask you and your child to look for a picture in a magazine that begins with a certain letter or color and cut those out and glue them on a piece of paper. After you complete the activity it is sent back to school with the child. Many of the children call it their "homework" and enjoy doing it like their older siblings do.



Near the end of each school year, we will ask for your permission to transfer your child's records from Southern Seven to your child's public school. We will also provide you with information about kindergarten registration and will invite Teachers from the public school to parent meetings in the spring of each year. Remember, you are your child's first and most important teacher.

STAYING HEALTHY AT HEAD START

Health Services

Because Head Start is a licensed child care facility, we must require that all children have a **complete school physical** before they begin attending the center. The information from the physical will need to be written on an official School Physical Form. It is important that you make sure your child's physician signs and dates the form and that his/her address is listed. The physical must have been completed within the last 6 months, and include results of a hemoglobin (finger stick), TB skin test, and blood lead. The diabetic portion of the physical must be filled out by the physician as well. The TB skin test can be from any time since your child was born. A blood lead

and the results are required at 12 and 24 months of age. The hemoglobin must be from within the last six months. Hemoglobin and TB Skin test results **MUST** be on file before your child can attend. We will also need a copy of your child's shot records. At a minimum, your child must have recently had at least one round of all of their childhood immunizations.

If your child needs to take medicine at school, our staff can give your child prescription medication only. The medicine you bring for your child **MUST BE IN THE PRESCRIPTION BOTTLE**, with the label from the pharmacy clearly visible. You will also need to fill out a form that gives our staff permission to give medicine to your child. These forms are available at your child's center. We are not able to give your child any over the counter medication such as cold medicine or Tylenol.



If your child receives a minor injury or tick bite while at Head Start, our staff will let you know what occurred and where the injury or tick bite was located on your child. It is especially important to keep a close eye on the site of any tick bites to watch for swelling or a rash.

Hearing And Vision Screenings

Like you, we want to see your child succeed, which is why every child has a hearing and vision screening during the first 45 days of each school year. Our Early Head Start and Home Based Staff have been trained to screen the birth to three year old children. The staff that completes the screenings for the three to five year olds are trained and certified by the Illinois Department of Public Health. If the screening shows any cause for concern, our staff will let you know and provide any assistance you might need in scheduling an appointment with an eye doctor or audiologist (hearing specialist). We can also provide transportation for any appointments parents have, when needed. Program Standards requires that our staff assist parents with the follow-up process. When hearing and vision problems are caught and treated early, children do not have to miss out on any of the wonderful and exciting things in the world around them.

Dental Screenings And Exams

Dental care is an easy thing to overlook because many of us feel that since children will eventually lose their baby teeth, going to the dentist just isn't that important. However, baby teeth do an important job. Baby teeth hold the place for permanent teeth to come in, usually between the ages of 4½ - 7. Baby teeth also play an important role in good nutrition, because they are needed to bite and chew foods. When baby teeth become decayed, they can look bad and ultimately have an impact on how your child feels about herself/himself. Another important factor that many of us aren't aware of is that the molars your child has in the back of their mouth will have to last a lifetime.

These teeth tend to get cavities the easiest due to the fact that they are hard to reach when brushing and do a lot of the work while chewing.

For these reasons, all children are required to have an exam or screening within their first 90 days of enrollment in the program. If you prefer to take your child to the dentist yourself but do not have a family dentist, we can provide you with a list of dentist in the area. For convenience, we will be setting up a day (within the first 90 days of school) for a dentist to come in to the Head Start centers to do dental examinations or we will transport children to a local dental provider for exams. Children that have not had their dental exams during their first 90 days of Head Start will not be able to attend until a dental exam has been completed.



In our Early Head Start Program, our Teachers and Home Based Advocates will be completing dental screenings on the infants and toddlers. They look for early signs of tooth decay. This does not take the place of a dental exam and we strongly encourage parents to begin visiting the dentist as soon as the first tooth erupts. If you need assistance finding a dentist, please contact the Parent Coordinator at your local center.

If a child's dental exam or screening shows that he/she needs further dental care, our staff will let the parents know. We are available to help you schedule an appointment with a dentist and can provide transportation if needed. Our staff will contact parents monthly until any recommended follow-up is completed.

When children get regular dental care at a young age, and continue to take good care of their teeth, visits to the dentist can be painless and pleasant. Dental care has improved to the point where most cavities can be prevented through regular teeth cleaning and sealants. When children have the opportunity to see the same dentist on a regular basis, they can grow up with good memories of the dentist's office.

Growth Assessments

Growing bigger is another important part of a child's life. At school each child is weighed and has their height measured two times during each school year. Monitoring a child's growth is an important part of making sure they stay healthy.

Immunizations

The shots your children get while they are young help protect them against some serious diseases throughout their entire lives. Many deadly diseases have been eliminated in this country due to childhood immunizations. Our Parent Coordinators can assist families with scheduling appointments and transportation to our public health clinic or a family physician.

Medical Emergencies

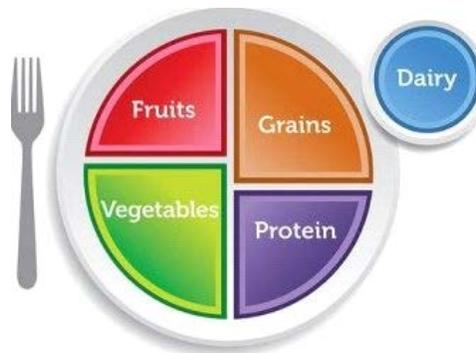
It is always possible that an accident can happen. In the application for your child's school, we asked that you sign a release that will allow us to get the medical care for your child in the case of an emergency. If a medical emergency were to occur, we will first make sure that your child gets treatment right away and we will then make sure we contact you as soon as possible. Most of our staff are trained in CPR.

EATING WELL AT HEAD START

Nutrition Services

Eating good food is not only a pleasurable experience, but probably has a greater impact on our health than anything else we do. At your child's school our goal is to provide delicious food that is good for your child in an atmosphere that is relaxed and enjoyable. We hope to promote healthy eating habits that nourish your child's body, preserve his/her teeth while at the same time develop an enjoyment of family mealtime. **We have a peanut-free environment and ask that you do not bring any peanuts or products containing peanuts into the Head Start Centers.**

In most cases, your child's day at Head Start/Early Head Start will begin with a delicious meal. Children who attend in the morning will begin their day with breakfast and end it with lunch; while those coming in the afternoon will have lunch, and then a snack. Children attending full-day will have breakfast, lunch, and a snack. Meals are prepared on site by the Food Service Staff and served Family Style by the Teaching Staff. Pre-K Children will receive a snack during the day.



Meals at Head Start include more than just eating. Children learn about taking good care of their bodies by washing their hands before each meal and brushing their teeth afterwards. Teaching Staff join the children for meals and snacks. They lead conversation, help children learn how to use silverware, serve themselves, pour drinks, and clear their plates.

Mealtime also includes learning good table manners and never missing a good opportunity to teach your child new things. Shapes, colors, textures, and even science are all concepts that can be taught at mealtime. Whenever you come in to volunteer at the center, we would love to have you as our guest for breakfast, lunch, or snacks.

Our menus offer children a variety of foods including various ethnic foods such as Mexican, Chinese, or Italian. If you have any special family recipes that you would like to share, be sure and let the Site Supervisor know. Head Start Programs are required

to provide children with at least 1/3 of the recommended daily nutrients while they are at the center. At Southern Seven, we usually provide 2/3 of your child's daily needs.

Our meals demonstrate that healthy eating which is low in fat and sugar can also include delicious food that your child will enjoy. During mealtime, we never force children to eat more than what they want or to eat foods they do not like. We do, however, encourage children to taste the different foods served each day. At the pre-school age it is not unusual for a child's tastes to change. Children who will not eat meat one day will decide they like it the very next week. To help encourage the children, our staff also eat the variety of foods served and do not discuss personal dislikes of particular foods. We never bribe children to eat, make them clean their plate, or withhold foods as a form of discipline. Our goal is for children to view food for its most important purpose - to nourish our bodies and help us grow.

Food Program

Head Start and Early Head Start participate in and follow the regulations the United States Department of Agriculture establish for childcare centers operating Child and Adult Care Food Programs. Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) reimburse participating sites which serve nutritious meals by following meal patterns established by USDA. CACFP is administered at the federal level by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture. The State Board of Education administers CACFP in Illinois. The State Board of Education approves sponsoring organizations, monitors the program, and provides guidance and assistance to assure that sponsors are meeting the requirements.

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this program is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Infant Formula

We provide iron fortified formula for all infants enrolled in the Early Head Start Program during Early Head Start hours. We will purchase the brand of formula you are providing at home to ensure the best health of your child. If you change formula brands please let your child's center know so that we can accommodate this change. If the formula requested is not USDA approved then we will require a doctor's note in order to provide the formula to the child.



Breast Milk

Breast milk may be brought in either frozen or “fresh”. Frozen breast milk should not be more than two (2) weeks old while fresh refrigerated milk cannot be more than 48 hours old. Breast milk must be brought in either bottles or other breast milk storage container. Containers should be labeled with your child’s name and the date it was brought to the center. Breastfeeding mothers will be provided a private, comfortable space in the center to nurse their baby.

Because we participate in the CACFP Program, we are required to follow the Infant Meal Pattern for infants ages birth through 11 months. The Child Care Provider must provide at least one type of iron-fortified infant formula, iron-fortified infant cereal, and the other food items for infants. If you do not want your child to receive the formula, you must sign the “Child and Adult Care Food Program Infant Formula Waiver Notification” form which you can obtain from your Head Start Site.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT SOUTHERN SEVEN

Services for Children with Special Needs

At Head Start, some of our children have “special needs”. To get an idea of where your child’s development is, we will do a developmental screening within the first 45 days of school. These screenings let us know how each child’s skills compare to other children of the same age. Sometimes the information from the screenings lets us know that a child needs extra help in certain areas.

There are also times when a screening shows more significant concerns. In such cases our staff will meet with you to explain the results of the screening and ask your permission to arrange for your child to have a more in depth screening. If your child is under three years of age Child and Family Connections will do the screening. If your child is over three, a Special Education Cooperative or school district will conduct the screening. If this screening also shows reason for concern, there would be a recommendation that a complete evaluation be done. Through the evaluation, the appropriate program can determine if a child is eligible for their services and which services the child needs. Any child who needs specialized services will need to go through the assessment process to get them.



If a child is found eligible for services a meeting will be held. If your child is under three, the meeting is called an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Meeting. If

your child is over three, the meeting is called an Individual Education Plan (IEP) Meeting. During this meeting, parents are given information about the results of their child's evaluation and the program staff recommend the services (such as speech, physical, occupational, or other therapies) the child needs to make the most of their time in Head Start. The goals for the child and the services the child will receive are written up in the Individual Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan. For many children with special needs, the services they receive before the age of 5 make a positive difference throughout their entire lives.

We are committed to inclusion. What this means is that children with special needs are in the same classrooms as their friends. Inclusion is the philosophy or belief that ALL children have the same needs for acceptance, friendships, and connectedness. Southern Seven is committed to this vision.

As a parent of a child with special needs, you are an important part of your child's education. Throughout the year, we will provide you with information about the activities and goals that are part of your child's educational program.

If your family participates in this process, our staff will be there every step of the way. Our staff will be available to attend all staffings with you to answer any questions you may have. Our staff is also there to give you more information about your child's right to a free and appropriate education. We can also help you get any other services your child may need, such as specialized equipment or medical care. All of our services for children with special needs are available for children who enter the program with a diagnosis as well as those who are identified while in the program.

FEELING GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES AT SOUTHERN SEVEN

Mental Health Services

The words Mental Health can often be scary for parents to hear. As part of our comprehensive services, Mental Health most often relates to the special programming we offer that is designed to help children feel good about themselves, learn to get along well with others, and solve conflicts with words. We also see our positive guidance approach as falling within the Mental Health service area. Simply put, Mental Health means thinking (mental) healthy (health) about ourselves and having healthy relationships with others.

At the beginning of the school year, we will complete a social emotional screening with you. This is a series of



questions that look at how your child is able to respond to their emotions and get along with others.

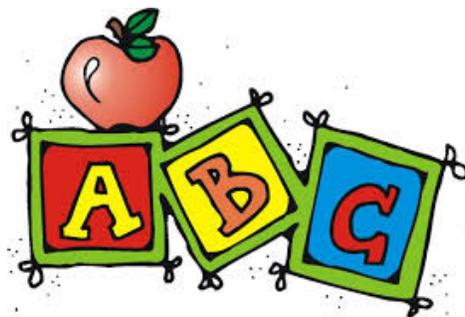
Two times each year, a Mental Health Professional from one of the local counseling agencies comes to each classroom to observe the children. There are times when the professional will recommend additional services for a child and/or his/her parents. One reason a child may need extra services is due to aggressive behavior such as always hitting or biting other children whenever he/she is angry. Dealing with angry feelings without lashing out at others can be a big challenge for some preschoolers.

At no time is a child provided additional services without written permission from a parent or legal guardian. In addition, all services and referrals are confidential. Our staff is never allowed to discuss your personal business with others unless you have given written permission.

The biggest parts of our Mental Health Services are the positive guidance practices we follow and special programs we have within the classroom. We include the Second Step Violence Prevention Program within our 3-5 year old classrooms. In Second Step, children learn about understanding and respecting the feelings of others. When we understand and respect how another person feels, it is much easier to resolve differences with words rather than fists.

We also offer a program called "Social Skills". Each month we focus on a different skill (such as making friends, feeling, family, etc.). We read books to include these themes and play games. Each month we will send home a home-time activity to let you know what we have been working on and some ideas on how you can carry this on at home.

Positive guidance of children is the most significant aspect of our Mental Health services. How children are treated when their behavior is less than desirable has a huge impact on how they feel about themselves. When we yell at and put down children who are behaving poorly, we slowly "chip away" at the good feelings they have about themselves. Children who don't feel good about themselves or confident in their abilities are afraid to try new things, often lash out at others, and can feel angry and sad. Our positive guidance approach helps children learn inner self control, behave in an appropriate manner, and feel good about themselves at the same time. A copy of our positive guidance approach is included in the back of this handbook. You may want to post the positive guidance in an easily accessible location for future reference.



FAMILIES GETTING INVOLVED AT SOUTHERN SEVEN

Getting To Know Your Parent Coordinator

At your child's school, there is a Parent Coordinator whose primary job is to help family's access services in their communities. They can help you get utility assistance, a ride to the doctor, clothing, learn about adult education programs, and many other services in the community. Parent Coordinators will also work with each family in developing a family action plan called the Family Partnership Agreement. This plan will identify your family's needs, interests, strengths, and goals. Feel free to contact your Parent Coordinator anytime. They will be in touch with you shortly after your child enrolls to explain all of the wonderful services Head Start has to offer.

Volunteering

Southern Seven offers many ways for parents to get involved in the program. One of the ways to get involved is by volunteering at your child's center. As a volunteer, here's an example of what you might do:



- ✓ Join children as they play and learn
- ✓ Read to children
- ✓ Complete Home Time Activities and return forms to your center
- ✓ Go on field trips
- ✓ Be an office helper (copying, assemble materials, restock supplies)
- ✓ Kitchen helper (assist in food preparation and serving)
- ✓ Assist with Hearing & Vision Screenings
- ✓ Help monitor on the playground
- ✓ Share a hobby, story, or talent

Another way of volunteering at Head Start is by serving on one of our planning committees. These committees include: the Health Services Advisory Committee that discusses, reviews, and approves our plans for health services each year; and the Education/Special Needs Committee that works with the Education Staff to look at the learning activities in the classrooms and to review the educational goals of the program. Parents are reimbursed mileage and child care costs for attending these meetings.

Parent Meetings

Parent Meetings are held monthly at your child's center. At your meeting you will be given information on topics of interest to you and your family. Parents will also work with the staff to plan activities for the children and families. Activities may include celebrations, field trips, special activities, and fund raising events. Each parent committee elects officers for the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Policy Council Representative and Alternate, Health Advisory Committee Representative, and Education/Special Needs Committee Representative.

Policy Council

The Head Start Policy Council is made up of one parent from each center, one parent from the Home Based Option, and a Community Representative from each county. The Policy Council has the responsibility of reviewing and approving budgets, hiring and other personnel issues, program options, program policy, and plans for funding applications. The Policy Council meets once each month. Parents are reimbursed for travel and child care expenses. If a parent on the Policy Council needs transportation to the meeting, they should call our Family Involvement Coordinator at 1-800-698-4820, Ext: 156.



TEAM UP WITH US TO MEET IN-KIND

We keep track of how many hours parents volunteer in our program. This is important! We need over \$1 million worth of volunteer hours each year to count toward required non-federal match, or “**In-Kind**” requirements. Every hour you volunteer provides \$8 to \$10 of In-Kind. **So Volunteer!** It gives a helping hand to the staff and children and provides much needed In-Kind.



INFORMATION AND TRAININGS FOR PARENTS

Newsletter

Each month, you will receive two newsletters from Southern Seven. One newsletter will come from your child's center that lets you know about the activities your child is involved with each month. The center newsletter will have a copy of the menu for the center and will also include any important dates that you need to know. The other newsletter will come from the staff at Southern Seven's Administrative Office. This newsletter includes information about each of the program's service areas.

Community Resource Directory

At the end of this Parent Handbook is the Community Resource Directory which contains a listing of programs and services available in the seven county area. The directory is an excellent resource. It is also available on our website at www.southern7.org.

Trainings

Southern Seven currently offers a variety of training that targets each of our employees such as the Teachers, Cooks, Bus Drivers, Custodians, Clerical and Social Services Staff. Some of the training opportunities include our Pre-Service Training each Fall, a semester long Head Start Experience Class, Infant Toddler "Best Practices", and "Best Practices" for three to five year old children. These classes are made possible in partnership with Shawnee Community College and Southern Seven Head Start. Participants who complete these classes receive college credit at no cost to our employees. Parents are always WELCOME to attend any training offered to our employees. If you are interested in attending training, please let the Site Supervisor or Parent Coordinator at your child's center know.

At the monthly Parent Group Meetings, trainings are provided on such topics as Nutrition, Health, Budget and Finance, Literacy, and other topics that parents may have an interest in. Parent Talk Sessions are also held throughout the year to provide an opportunity for parents to come together to talk about parenting and learn parenting skills.





POSITIVE GUIDANCE



Head Start provides an environment that is accepting and which encourages appropriate behavior in children. Our main goal is to teach children how to get along in a group situation. Here are a few ways children learn appropriate behavior at Head Start.

1. We use a conflict resolution curriculum called "Second Step" which helps children understand their feelings, learn to slow down and think about possible solutions, and helps them deal with angry feelings. This program encourages children to improve their social skills and reduces aggressive behavior.
2. Children learn that they are doing a good job and they are behaving appropriately when they hear positive comments. Some examples are: *"Thank you for putting the blocks away."* *"I like the way you scraped your plate."* We accompany words of praise with physical contact such as hugging, patting, etc. Praising children is one way of teaching good behavior. Another way is to show enthusiasm for the child's accomplishments.
3. We let the children know what is expected of them by providing a few, simple rules. We express the rules in a positive way and children are reminded of rules consistently. Children are told what to do rather than what not to do. An example is: *"Loud voices are for outside play, quiet voices are for inside."*
4. Children are redirected to other activities when appropriate. For instance, if a child is knocking blocks down while others are trying to build with blocks, the child may be asked to move to another learning area.
5. Sometimes actions have logical consequences. This means that when a child makes a mess, they are expected to clean it up. If a child runs inside the center, they will be asked to go back and practice walking. Children often remember the rules better when they get to practice them and the consequences are **directly** related to the behavior.
6. Children are given opportunities to resolve their own conflicts with teachers acting as appropriate role models. Teachers ask questions like *"How would you feel if this happened to you?"* or *"What can we do to fix this problem?"* Often children realize that they can take turns with a toy rather than fight over the toy.

7. Sometimes children need a quiet place to calm down and think about their behavior. A teacher may talk privately with a child or children to help them calm down or solve their problem, before asking them if they are ready to rejoin the group.
8. Children should not be shamed or humiliated and must be talked to with respect at all times. Physical use of discipline such as slapping or spanking will **NOT** be permitted; even if the child is your own.
9. Parents can share their expectations and insight regarding discipline, and staff may discuss their concerns with parents regarding challenging behaviors. Individual plans may be instituted as part of a behavior management plan if determined to be in the best interest of the child.

Please refer to the Guidance and Discipline Book for further details.

