



**2025-2026**

# **Early Childhood Services Family Handbook**



**Northeast  
Michigan  
Community  
Service Agency  
(NEMCSA)**

**The mission of NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is to provide high-quality, supportive learning experiences for children and families to promote their future success.**

[www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org)

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Dear Families,

Welcome to the Early Childhood programs offered by Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA)! These programs include the federally-funded Early Head Start and Head Start Preschool programs as well as the Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) funded by the State of Michigan. We are counting on you to be a full partner in every aspect of your child's experience with NEMCSA. You will have opportunities to set goals for your child and your family, learn new ways to be the very best teacher for your child, and meet other families.

Please take some time to read through this Handbook to get answers to many of the questions you may have about your child's program and our policies. Keep it handy to refer to throughout the school year.

We encourage you to be involved in your child's program through volunteering and participating in parent meetings, family events and other activities. We hope to see you often.

Once again, welcome to NEMCSA Early Childhood Services and best wishes for a successful, exciting year with your child!

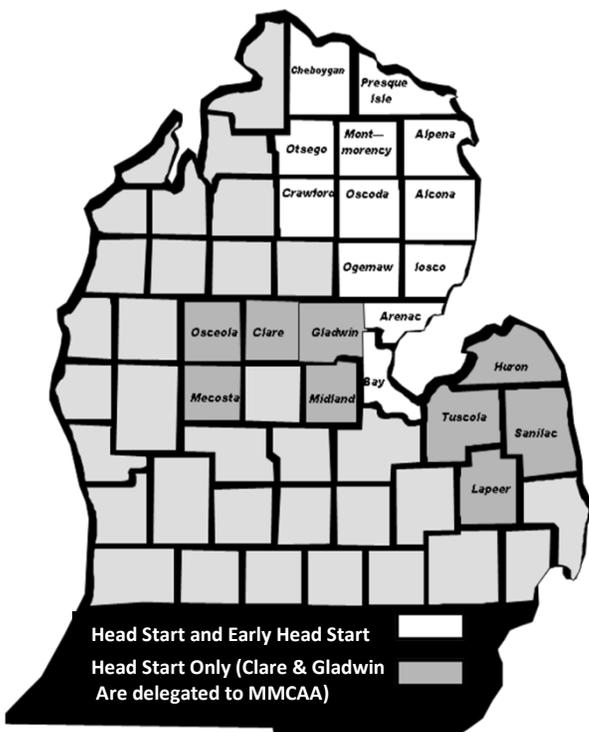
Sincerely,  
Tricia Grifka  
Early Childhood Services Director

## Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency's Early Childhood Programs

**Head Start Preschool** and **Early Head Start** promote school readiness to children under 5 years of age from low-income families through education, health, social and other services. These services are provided by implementing the Head Start Preschool Federal Program Performance Standards, which are among the most in-depth early childhood standards in the country. **Head Start Preschool** is for qualifying children turning 3 or 4 years of age by September 1<sup>st</sup>. **Early Head Start** serves pregnant women and children birth to three years old and their families. Services for both Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start are administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start.

**The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)** is Michigan's state-funded preschool program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk of educational failure. Program quality requirements and other guidelines are included in the GSRP Implementation Manual. All policies and information within this Handbook also pertain to the Great Start Readiness Programs. The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, Office of Great Start.

All NEMCSA Early Childhood programs promote active and continuous involvement of parents/guardians in the learning process of their children.



PROGRAM INFORMATION	
My Child's Program:	_____
Program Address:	_____
Day(s) and Times:	_____
The Phone Number is: (____)	_____
Teacher:	_____
Teaching Assistant and Classroom Aide:	_____
Family Services Staff:	_____
Area Manager:	_____
Regional Manager:	_____
EHS Assistant Director:	_____
ISD Contact # (for GSRP programs):	_____

### NOTES:

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## NEMCSA EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

### SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

#### **Children demonstrate improved social and emotional development.**

*Children, with the support of familiar adults, will demonstrate the ability to manage the expression of emotions, actions, and behaviors with increasing independence.*

#### **Children develop improved physical well-being and motor development.**

*Children demonstrate effective and efficient use of small and large muscles for movement, exploration, and self-help.*

#### **Children develop improved approaches to learning.**

*Children maintain focused attention on increasingly complex tasks.*

#### **Children develop improved cognition and general knowledge skills.**

*Children will experiment with materials and learn to use a variety of strategies in solving problems.*

#### **Children develop improved language and literacy skills.**

*Children will attend to, understand, and respond to increasingly complex communication and language from others.*

### OUR PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We strongly believe that children learn best by doing. Learning isn't just repeating what someone else says; it requires active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn about the world we live in. Play is the best start for academic or "school" learning.

We believe the best environment for learning is a safe, consistent "school family" atmosphere where everyone supports each child's development and celebrates successes and milestones. Program activities are designed to ensure children's active engagement and allow them to explore their own interests and progress at their own pace. We have individual, small group and large group opportunities to develop children's skills in language, literacy, math, problem-solving, physical development, self-regulation, and social skills. Our teaching staff support learning experiences by carefully observing children and responding to their needs and interests. We believe that family engagement and positive relationships with children and families are the best foundation for all learning.

Children are not excluded or expelled from classroom programming or transportation services. Each center's licensing notebook is available to parents during regular business hours.

NEMCSA provides a wide variety of services to the Northeast Michigan population. For a list of NEMCSA services including employment opportunities, access our website at [www.nemcsa.org](http://www.nemcsa.org).

If you have questions about services and resources in your area, please contact your Family Services staff or call 989-358-4619.

## OFF TO A GOOD START!

If you have ever made a move from one location to another or separated from friends, you know how hard a transition can be. Going from a familiar, comfortable environment to one that is different can be stressful.

As a parent, your attitude is important. You can show with both words and actions that school is important to your child now and in the future. School is your child's "JOB" so encourage them to relax and enjoy learning!



### Here are Some Tips:

- Make sure your child is rested. Ten to 12 hours of sleep are recommended for preschool children. A tired child does not learn as well as one who is well rested and ready for the day. It is important that you and your child get up early enough so there is time to get ready.
- Sleep recommendation for children according to age:  
14-17 hours for children 0-3 months of age, 12-16 hours for children 4-12 months of age, 11-14 hours for children 1-2 years of age and 10-13 hours for children 3-5 years of age.
- Plan your morning schedule so you do not have to rush out the door. You can get some of the things ready the night before.
- Be sure your child's body and clothing are clean before leaving for school.
- Sick children cannot function and endanger the health of other children in the classroom. If your child is sick, please read the **Early Childhood Services Health Policy** (see page 15) and keep him or her at home. Be sure to call and let us know when your child will not be in school.
- Unless ill, children need to be in school every day, so they don't fall behind or miss important activities.
- Set aside time each day for you and your child to enjoy some fun learning activities together. Talk to your child's teacher for ideas on what you can do. Turn off the television during this time.
- Read to your child each day to help lay the foundation for future success in school.
- Send your child to school with a smile, a hug, and an encouraging word each day. Check your child's backpack for newsletters and other information daily. Ask your child about their day at school.

## OUR CURRICULUM

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services center-based programs utilize the curriculum model selected in collaboration with local Great Start Readiness Program partners. Each model is research-based, child-focused, and balances child-led and teacher-guided learning. Age and developmentally appropriate learning happens so that every child is supported in social, physical, language, literacy, and cognitive growth. Children are also provided experiences that promote health, safety, and nutrition. Learning experiences are supported and enhanced through the classroom environment.

The following research-based curricula are used by NEMCSA:

- Creative Curriculum for Preschool
- HighScope
- Connect4Learning

The teacher will review the curriculum utilized in your child's classroom. You will receive a newsletter on what your child is learning and how you can extend learning at home. Additional information will be provided about your child's progress and opportunities for your involvement in your child's education through two home visits, two parent-teacher conferences, and several group meetings that occur throughout the year.

A center-based program's daily schedule includes opportunities for self-selected activities, large and small group activities, outdoor play, dental care, meals, and classroom maintenance. Sample daily schedules are included in this Handbook (see page 9).

Home-based programs offer similar learning experiences through the *Parents as Teachers (PAT) Curriculum* with a focus on parents as educators. Your Family Educator will work with you to review your child's development, discuss your concerns, and provide child development information and fun activities for you and your child to do together. In addition to weekly home visits, you are invited to group socializations to work and play with your child in a group setting with other families.

As a prenatal enrollment, your Family Educator will use *Parents as Teachers Curriculum*, as well as several other resources and support systems as a guide in following the development of your baby.

All curricula support our belief that parents are their child's first and most important teacher. We welcome your ideas and suggestions as your child's curriculum is implemented this year.

### **ELIGIBILITY, ADMISSION & WITHDRAWAL**

Children are enrolled based on priority according to selection criteria developed by the federal and state government, staff, and parents. Selection criteria include income and qualifying factors. Those who are not enrolled are placed on a wait list based on highest family needs. Vacancies are filled within 30 days of their occurrence. 10% of all Head Start Preschool/Early Head Start enrollments are held for children with certified disabilities.

### **TUITION/FEES**

Parents are encouraged to volunteer their time and talents to enhance the program. No fees are charged for Early Head Start, Head Start Preschool, or GSRP Preschool.

### **HOLIDAY PHILOSOPHY/GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Families in our programs have many different religions, cultures, and beliefs. We believe that holiday traditions are family events which are celebrated differently from home to home.

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services believes the classroom should function as a calming counterpoint to the stress on children and families promoted through commercialization and media pressure to buy gifts, foods, and costumes during the holiday seasons. Therefore, our programs will not celebrate religious, cultural, or commercial holidays. We will not design events that exclude any child or family or discriminate against any family's beliefs, values, or customs. We encourage and support families in celebrating their own holiday and other traditions at home with their children.

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCY PLAN**

Cultural diversity is reflected in all NEMCSA Early Childhood classrooms and home visit activities including language, food, celebrations, equipment, and materials. Parents and community members are encouraged to share their cultures and backgrounds. Please feel free to share your traditions with staff.

### **HOME VISITS AND PARENT- TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Center-Based home visits are an important part of the Early Head Start/Head Start Preschool/GSRP Preschool program. Education Staff engage parents in their child's learning by holding at least two conferences and completing two home visits annually, each lasting 60 minutes. One of the home visits will be conducted before starting school.

Home-Based home visits are an important part of the Early Head Start program. A 90-minute home visit will be conducted with you weekly for 46 weeks per program year.

During home visits and parent-teacher conferences you and your child's teacher will discuss:

- Making connections between the home and classroom setting so there are open lines of communication.
- Learning more about your child as well as the hopes and dreams you have for him or her.
- Provide updated information about your child's progress and areas that may need further development.
- Sharing ideas for learning in your home.
- Telling you more about your child's development and our curriculum.

Schedules for home visits and parent-teacher conferences may vary. Please work with your Educator to keep appointments and to notify staff if you need to reschedule.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Attending school and completing home visits regularly helps children feel better about themselves and gain independence. Start building this habit early so your child will learn that going to school on time every day is important. Good attendance will help them do well in elementary and high school and in their future job. We would like to encourage 100% attendance for child's best chance at success.

#### **For Center-based programming:**

- Make your child's attendance in the program a high priority, program staff will share information to support consistent child attendance.
- If your child is unable to attend on any given day, please call the program and let us know as soon as possible. The teacher needs to know the reason for the absence.
- If your child is unexpectedly absent and you have not contacted the program within one hour of the expected arrival time, program staff will contact you to ensure your child's well-being.
- Program staff will conduct a home visit or make other direct contact with you if your child has 2 or more unexplained absences in a row.
- Staff will work with you to overcome any barriers to help get your child back to regular attendance. Children who are not in consistent attendance, or families that are not communicating absence reasons on a regular basis may be started on an Attendance Plan or place back on a waitlist to allow space for other children to attend the program. Let us know how we can help.
- Please become familiar with your child's program schedule. Classrooms have a set schedule when meals begin and end.

**For Home-Based programming:**

- If you are unable to attend at any time, please call the Family Educator to let them know as soon as possible. The Family Educator needs to know the reason for the absence and will reschedule your visit.
- If your child is ill, a home visit may still be completed with parents/guardians only, when mutually agreed upon between the parents/guardians and Family Educator. Please contact your Family Educator if your child is ill for more guidance.

Your child's regular attendance is a high priority in our program. Full participation is strongly encouraged because it will maximize your child feeling like they are part of the school family. Children can greet friends and staff at circle time, choose a classroom job, interact with children and adults during free choice and small group time, as well as have a good understanding of the daily schedule and planned activities. Full participation also enables children to build academic and life skills.

**Drop off:**

Along with your child being at his/her program daily; dropping off your child each day on time is also significant.

**Pick-Up:**

Each child must be picked up on time. If your child is left to wait for you or an approved adult to pick them up, it can be very upsetting to the child. Please notify the Teacher as soon as possible once you know you will be late in picking up. Early Childhood Services staff will remain with your child until you arrive.

If you are late to pick up your child:

- 5 minutes after normal pick-up time; staff will begin to contact you

Should you not be able to be contacted:

- 10 minutes after normal pick-up time: staff will begin to contact other adults on your child's information card.
- If within 30 minutes no one has been able to be contacted, staff will reach out to the local police authorities.

Every time a child is picked up late, parents must sign and date the late pick-up form which will be placed in the child's data file.

The third time a child is picked up late, parents will participate in a meeting with the Family Services staff, child's teacher and Area Manager. The participants will decide upon strategies to facilitate on-time pick up and chart progress.

## SCHEDULE OF OPERATION

As a supplement to this Family Handbook, staff will provide parents/guardians with a schedule of operation (daily classroom schedule/routine) denoting hours, days of operation, meals served and days the program is scheduled to be closed.

Sample daily schedule and routine	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Preschool Classroom Daily</u></b> <b><u>Typical Routine</u></b></p> <p><b>7:50-8:00</b> Arrival / Table Time</p> <p><b>8:00-8:20</b> Concept Circle Time: Patterning, Unit of Study, Story</p> <p><b>8:20-8:40</b> Wash hands / Breakfast / Brush Teeth</p> <p><b>8:40-9:45</b> Planning, Free Choice: Art, Math, Science, Literacy, Muscle Development, Individualization</p> <p><b>9:45-10:05</b> Recall / Small Group</p> <p><b>10:05-11:10</b> Bathroom / Get Ready / Play Outside</p> <p><b>11:10-11:50</b> Wash Hands / Lunch</p> <p><b>11:50-1:00</b> Bathroom / Rest Time</p> <p><b>1:00-1:20</b> Wake Up / Table Activities</p> <p><b>1:20-1:45</b> Music &amp; Movement</p> <p><b>1:45-2:10</b> Wash Hands / Snack</p> <p><b>2:10-2:30</b> Outside Play</p> <p><b>2:30-2:45</b> Departure</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Infant-Toddler Classroom Daily</u></b> <b><u>Typical Routine</u></b></p> <p><b>8:00-8:30</b> Arrival/Outside</p> <p><b>8:30-9:00</b> Breakfast/Toothbrushing</p> <p><b>9:00-9:10</b> Morning Welcoming</p> <p><b>9:10-9:20</b> Enjoying Stories &amp; Books</p> <p><b>9:20-10:20</b> Choice Time/Free Play</p> <p><b>10:20-10:30</b> Small Group</p> <p><b>10:30-11:15</b> Outside/Gym</p> <p><b>11:15-12:00</b> Lunch</p> <p><b>12:00-2:00</b> Rest Time</p> <p><b>2:00-2:30</b> Afternoon Snack</p> <p><b>2:30-2:40</b> Goodbye Departure</p> <p><b>2:40-3:00</b> Parent Pick Up</p>

### REST TIME

Preschool classrooms that operate for five or more hours will provide a rest or quiet time lasting no more than one hour, while programs offering Infant-Toddler care will allow children to rest or sleep on demand. An intentional, age-appropriate approach to meet the needs of each child will be used, including: a) providing alternate quiet learning activities for children who do not need or want to sleep; c) transitioning children into rest time by dimming lights, putting on soft music, and having children assist by putting cots out, getting their own blanket and transition item(s); c) adults assist by moving among children in an unhurried fashion, having quiet conversation or providing soothing touch such as backrubs; and d) transitioning children out of rest time by increasing light in the room and gently awaken children with a touch or conversation, followed by children assisting with putting blankets, transition item(s) and cots away.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

NEMCSA Early Childhood Programs offer children and families a variety of opportunities to develop healthier bodies and minds through the “I am Moving, I am Learning (IMIL)” initiative. Physical activity is a daily part of the classroom schedule. Both staff and families are encouraged to increase the amount of intentional physical activity that a child gets daily and teach children about healthy food choices.

## SCHOOL CLOSINGS DUE TO WEATHER

Area TV and radio stations will broadcast school closings due to bad weather. If your local school district is closed due to weather conditions, your child’s program will not operate. If you are in a home-based program, your child’s Family Educator will reschedule your visit for another convenient time. You will be informed of other school closings so that you can mark them on your calendar.

## SAFE WAYS TO DRESS YOUR CHILD FOR THE WEATHER

It is great when children wear comfortable play clothing that they can get dirty. We do lots of messy, fun things in the classroom.

- Leggings, shorts, or pants should be worn under dresses and skirts for active play both indoors and outside.
- For playing outside in winter months, it is important to wear a snowsuit, hat, mittens and boots every day.
- Shoes must be worn to school for preschool age children. Shoes that tie or fasten with Velcro will help prevent accidents. Sandals and flip-flops can be dangerous.
- Clothes that are easy for your child to fasten and unfasten help them to be more successful using the bathroom independently.

## MANDATED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services employees and volunteers are mandated by state law (Act No. 238, Public Acts of 1975, as amended) to report any suspected child abuse or neglect immediately by calling 1-855-444-3911. For more information regarding the Child Protection Law (Act No. 238) please refer to the copy that is posted in your child’s classroom or call 1-855-444-3911.

## AUTHORIZED RELEASE

Your child will only be released to the persons you specifically authorize in writing on your ***Child Information Record*** or persons with proof of current legal and physical custody. Should you choose to change or add anyone, you MUST do so in person on the ***Child Information Record***.

## SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

We provide a smoke and vape-free environment for all center and home-based group socialization sites. Please do not smoke or vape on the grounds or related buildings of all NEMCSA Early Childhood Services facilities or at field trip sites.

## POLICY COUNCIL, PARENT MEETINGS AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services covers a 21-county service area in northeast Michigan and offers center-based classrooms and home-based programs. Each local program has a parent group. Regional groups consisting of membership from each local group elect members to the Policy Council.

**Policy Council** consists of Head Start Preschool, Early Head Start and GSRP Preschool parents, community representatives and one parent from the delegate agency, Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency (MMCAA). Membership may include additional member(s) appointed by the Board of Directors (Board

Liaison). The Policy Council is responsible for advising administrative staff on policies affecting local programs, providing information to local programs, and enhancing communication between administration and families enrolled in the program. Policy Council meets monthly (November through October).

### **Family Meetings and Learning Opportunity**

Early Head Start will offer Parent Café/Leadership meetings and Head Start Preschool provides Classroom-to-Home Connection Meetings. These opportunities will be offered regularly to answer questions, share practical information and help to explain your child's development better. The meetings are fun and informative. During the meetings, parents and staff also come together to speak about their programs, plan activities and relay any concerns there may be about programming. All are welcome to attend these meetings to connect our early childhood program to your home.

### **GSRP Advisory Committees**

Each Intermediate School District (ISD) is required to have GSRP parent representation on the regional Great Start Collaborative (GSC) Parent Coalition, working with other committed parents to support quality early childhood practices in the community. These GSRP parents, in turn, act as liaisons to local Family Participation Groups, sharing ideas and activities in person, virtually (e.g., Skype) or through emailed reports. Another opportunity involves participation in a School Readiness Advisory committee that includes classroom teachers, parents or guardians of program participants, community, volunteer, social service agencies and organizations. The advisory committee annually reviews and makes recommendations regarding the GSRP components. The advisory committee also makes recommendations to the GSC regarding other community services designed to improve all children's school readiness. Information will be sent home regarding dates and meeting information. Please contact your teacher or Family Services Coordinator for details.

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

You are your child's first teacher! Your involvement is essential to a successful school year and beyond. There are many opportunities to be involved and enjoy your child's early education experience. Your presence in the classroom, at home visits and parent/teacher conferences is not only helpful, but important to your child. For your child to be ready to succeed in school and in life, we need to work together. Some things you can do at home include:

- ◆ Establishing family routines.
- ◆ Promoting positive discipline.
- ◆ Creating a language and experience-rich home environment.
- ◆ Reading or engaging in other literacy-based activities every day.

The possibilities are many and the rewards are endless. Come join in the fun!!!

## **VOLUNTEERS - WE NEED YOU!!**

As a Head Start/Early Head Start/GSRP parent, you are encouraged to take a very active part in your program. NEMCSA Early Childhood programs are designed in a way that makes Parent Involvement a key ingredient for child and family success. Many things you already know how to do can be used to benefit your child's program. Here are a few ideas:

### **Parent volunteers can . . .**

- sharing a talent by visiting the classroom or providing a video
- wash blankets at home or at the center
- make classroom playdough
- prepare snacks and meals when you are in the classroom
- set up and conduct an art activity
- make and repair equipment

- donate hats or scarves
- spend time playing with children during free choice
- talk with children during lunch
- be an event assistant (for family cafes, field trips, etc.)
- contribute curriculum ideas
- teach a craft for parents/present workshops
- assist with playground maintenance
- tell stories to the children
- help recruit families
- serve as interpreters
- organize and run a lending library (Ex: books or toys)
- record story narration

We need you! Your child and your whole family will benefit from the time you spend volunteering in your child's program.

### **VOLUNTEER POLICY**

The following procedures will be implemented in every program operated by NEMCSA Early Childhood Services:

1. Volunteers are checked on the Public Sex Offenders Registry (PSOR) annually. Non-parent volunteers on the Public Sex Offenders Registry are prohibited from having contact with children in care. Sites within a school follow school policy on parents' ability to enter the school. Parents found on the Public Sex Offenders Registry have only one-on-one contact with their child(ren) during visits to non-school sites.
2. In addition, volunteers who are not biological parents or legal guardians of enrolled children must complete a Disclosure and Authorization Form/Information Questionnaire so that the NEMCSA Agency can perform a criminal background check. This documentation will be maintained locally in a secure manner. Any non-parent volunteer who has been substantiated of child abuse or neglect and/or criminal conviction will not be allowed to volunteer in the NEMCSA Early Childhood Services program.
3. Volunteers will provide assistance in the classroom but will never have responsibility for oversight of the classroom. A staff person will be present at all times to provide supervision, direction, and support to volunteers and parents.
  - At no time will any volunteer/parent be left unsupervised with children (other than their own).
  - Discipline and redirection of children will only be carried out by NEMCSA Early Childhood Services staff.
  - Staff ensure volunteers know the policy and procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.
4. Volunteers will be trained prior to volunteering in the classroom; either during Parent/Child Day(s) or individually by NEMCSA Early Childhood Services staff. Head Start/ Early Head Start volunteers will receive a copy of the NEMCSA Early Childhood Services Volunteer Handbook.
5. To Volunteer at least four (4) hours per week for more than 2 consecutive weeks, volunteers must submit verification of a negative TB test.

### **SIBLING POLICY**

We welcome parent involvement in all aspects of the program; however, the environment and/or activity may not be appropriate for siblings. Decisions on including siblings will be made by local staff on a case-by-case basis. Early Head Start younger siblings are welcome to attend socialization experiences. Please contact your Family Educator with any questions.

### **FAMILY FIELD TRIPS / COMMUNITY VISITORS**

Community awareness for children is important. Programs may have community visitors, educational walks, parent talent/hobbies, and family outings. For these to be fun learning experiences, parent

involvement is essential. Your help in planning, participating, and discussing the activity with your child will contribute to a positive learning experience. We also look forward to each activity and the opportunity to work with you and your child on these exciting adventures. Parents are notified before each field trip.

### **NON-FEDERAL SHARE (IN-KIND)**

As a federally funded agency, NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is required to match federal funds by 20%. We do this using in-kind contributions from parents and others in the communities we serve. Examples of In-kind contributions include volunteering in the classroom, program planning at parent meetings, attending socialization, school-related home activities provided by the education staff, and helping plan field trips. In-kind time can be collected from volunteers that are 16 or older. Donations of items or services such as equipment repair, playground maintenance, washing toys or paint smocks, preparation of teaching materials, etc. are also considered In-kind matches.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY/PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE CLASSROOM**

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services value and respect all families, children, caregivers, and staff. Education staff will only discuss information about your child with you, including screening, assessment, and referrals. You may want to discuss personal information with your child's Teacher or Family Educator. Education staff will not share private information unless we have your permission.

Families will also respect the rights of others when visiting the center and attending program activities. Please refrain from discussing any child-to-child conversations, behaviors, or staff and family information outside the classroom.

To ensure the safety of all children and protect the confidentiality of families, photos taken at NEMCSA Early Childhood classrooms/socialization site or during any NEMCSA activities will be limited to those taken by program staff only. All child and family information will be treated in a confidential manner.

### **HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**

To promote your child's development, we help to ensure their health through the development of a comprehensive health care program which will assist you in obtaining required medical, dental, and immunization services.

**Your child must meet the following health requirements:**

1. **A complete physical examination** must be obtained from your family physician or the local health department. The exam must include all age-appropriate health screenings and follow the federal and state mandated timeframes. **For children enrolled in a classroom, it is a state childcare licensing requirement that each child must have a medical exam on file before they can start the program or within 30 days of starting the program.**
2. **A dental exam must be obtained (Head Start only)**. An initial dental exam and all needed treatment must be completed.
3. **Immunizations must be kept up to date**. State law requires that in order for a child to participate in center or group activities, they must have at least one injection of each of the required vaccines (DTap, Hib, PCV, 1PV, MMR, Varicella and Hepatitis B). Immunizations must be kept up to date throughout the school year. Your Family Services Staff can assist you in determining your child's immunization status.

**\*\*Notify your Educator or Family Services staff of all scheduled appointments. They can assist you in making the necessary arrangements to complete the medical and dental requirements.**

## NEMCSA EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES HEALTH CARE GUIDELINES

To prevent the spread of infectious disease and maintain a healthy environment, all NEMCSA Early Childhood programs are required to follow these policies and procedures:

### **Hand washing**

Everyone in the classroom will wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with liquid soap from a dispenser and warm running water at the following times:

- Upon arrival** for the day and prior to care of children.
- Before and after** eating, handling food, or feeding a child.
- Before and after** giving medication.
- Before and after** playing in water that is used by more than one person.
- Before and after** administering first aid.
- After** diapering.
- After** using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet.
- After** handling bodily fluid (mucus, blood, vomit), from sneezing, wiping and blowing noses, from mouths, or from sores.
- After** removing latex/vinyl gloves.
- After** handling uncooked food.
- After** handling pets and other animals.
- After** playing in sandboxes.
- After** cleaning equipment, sinks, toilets, etc.
- After** handling the garbage.
- When** soiled.

### **Cleaning**

The room environment is cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. Of particular concern are areas used for diapering, toileting, eating, and food preparation. Toys and furniture are cleaned regularly. Cleaning is done with detergent and water and then sanitized with a bleach solution or an approved sanitizer/disinfectant.

### **Universal Precautions**

Blood and other body fluids (urine, feces, vomit) are treated as being potentially infectious and proper precautions will be taken. Latex/vinyl gloves are used when providing first aid to bloody injuries, changing diapers, or cleaning surfaces that may be soiled with blood or other bodily fluids. Contaminated surfaces are cleaned and disinfected with a bleach solution or approved disinfectant. Hands are washed after gloves are removed.

### **Immunizations**

All children in the program must be immunized as required by the Michigan Public Acts/Legislative Acts of 1978.

### **Health Exclusion**

A child may be temporarily excluded from classroom activities due to illness if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in center activities.
- The illness results in greater need for care than what the childcare staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children.
- The child has a specific condition that is likely to expose others to a communicable disease.

**Note:** Contact your Educator or Family Services staff for a more detailed listing of the program's health policies and procedures.

## NEMCSA EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES HEALTH POLICY

### Illness

Although it is important for children to attend school daily, it is also important to prevent the spread of illness whenever possible. If your child becomes ill at home or while at the center, it is necessary to keep them out of the center for a complete 24 hours after all symptoms or signs of illness have passed. If your child is prescribed an antibiotic from his/her physician, they should be kept at home for a full 24 hours from the first dose. Staff use common sense as well as the following guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to determine if a child should be sent home from school. If you notice your child has one or more of the following symptoms, please keep your child home to monitor their health:

- **Fever** – 100.4°F by any method
- **Diarrhea** – runny, watery, or bloody stools
- **Body rash** with fever
- **Sore throat** with fever and/or swollen glands
- **Severe coughing** - child gets red or blue in the face or makes high-pitched whooping sound after coughing or is uncontrolled. For those with a medical condition cough would be different than their baseline.
- **Eye or nose discharge** – thick colored mucus or pus
- **Yellowish skin or eyes**
- **Vomiting**
- **Earache**

If your child is ill enough to require fever reducing products, they should be kept at home. Fevers are often indications of other illnesses. For the health and safety of all children keep your child at home under these circumstances. If your child is not well enough to participate in all classroom activities including outside play, they should stay home from school. For Home-Based children, please contact your Family Educator to reschedule your visit as they may visit other families on the day of your visit and need to protect the health of others.

Children with a chronic condition that exhibit one of the above symptoms may need a recent doctor's note to remain in program with that symptom.

### If Your Child Becomes Ill While Attending The Classroom

You or your emergency contacts will be informed by the teaching staff as soon as possible whenever they observe changes in your child's health or when he/she is too ill to remain in the group. Notification will be done by phone, text message, or preferred method as indicated on the Child Information Record. Staff will describe your child's symptoms, temperature, what has been done so far, and arrange for him/her to be picked up. You are encouraged to plan as to who will care for your child if he/she is sick.

Indicators of changes in your child's health include but are not limited to:

- **Fever** – If your child has a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above.
- **Diarrhea** – if your child has two loose or watery stools, even if there are no other signs of illness.  
*Exception:* this may occasionally be caused by new foods your child has eaten, but you will be called to determine if this is the likely cause.
- **Vomiting** – Any vomiting.
- **Rash** – If your child develops any rash.
- **Crying and complaining for a long time** - if your child is not him/herself and is complaining about discomfort or is just cranky and crying more than usual for him/her.

Staff will provide comfort to your child, provide clean-up assistance as needed, and care for your child's symptoms. If your child needs immediate medical care, staff will contact 911 and notify you as indicated above. Staff will provide a separate area for your child to rest and/or play quietly; maintaining supervision of him/her to observe symptoms and care for needs.

- If your child has a fever, vomiting or diarrhea, he/she may have a need for food and fluids to replace what is being lost. Small amounts of liquids (water, juice) and light snack (crackers, etc.) may be offered.
- If your child has a fever, a cool compress will be placed on his/her forehead.

Medications: Medications are only given in accordance with the [Medication Administration Policy](#).

**Children are not excluded or expelled from classroom programming or program provided transportation because of the need for additional developmental, medical, or behavioral support, assistance with toileting or staff attitudes and/or apprehension.**

### COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

When necessary, families will be notified as soon as possible by sending home appropriate Health Letters and Communicable Disease Information Handouts.

Children should remain at home at least 24 hours after they are free of fever or signs of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.

A child may return to the center/group experience when:

- There are no longer any signs of illness such as sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability or confusion, or a physician approves, in writing, their attendance.
- Can participate comfortably.

A child with any of the following diagnoses from a health provider may return when the time periods below are followed:

- Infectious conjunctivitis/pink eye (with eye discharge) – until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Scabies – until 24 hours after treatment.
- Impetigo – until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Strep Throat – scarlet fever, or other strep infection – until 24 hours after treatment started and the child is free of fever.
- Pertussis – until five days after treatment started.
- Tuberculosis – until a health care provider determines that the disease is not contagious.
- Chicken Pox – until six days after start of rash or all sores have crusted over.
- Mumps – until nine days after start of symptoms (swelling of “cheeks”).
- Hepatitis A – until seven days after start of symptoms (i.e., jaundice).
- Measles – until six days after start of rash.
- Rubella (German measles) – until six days after start of rash.
- Oral Herpes (if the child is drooling or lesions cannot be covered) – until lesions heal.
- Shingles (if lesions cannot be covered) until lesions dry.

Children with chronic illnesses or serious communicable diseases (i.e., HIV, AIDS, and Hepatitis B) will not be excluded from the program solely based on his/her health care needs or medication requirements. The program will work with health care professionals to determine best practices for continuing program participation.

## PRESCRIBED MEDICATION

Prescribed medication may be administered to your child while attending a center or group experience only when absolutely necessary. A consent form must be signed by you. The medication must be brought in by an adult in its original container with a pharmacy label indicating the doctor's name, your child's name, strength and name of medication, instructions for its use and expiration date. We encourage parents to administer all medication at home. Staff receive training in medication administration as necessary. All medications, except for rescue medications, are secured in a lock box.

## NOTIFICATION OF CHILD INCIDENT, ACCIDENT, INJURY, DEATH, FIRE

Staff will notify you by text as soon as possible regarding an emergency (fire, tornado, natural or man-made disaster, an intruder, active shooter, bomb threat or other man-made event) and how to reunite you with your child.

Parents will be contacted immediately, in-person, in the event of a child death.

Parents will be contacted immediately by phone of any of the following: Your child is lost or left unsupervised; there is alleged sexual contact between children or a child and a staff member or volunteer.

Parents will be contacted by phone the same day or when staff become aware of any allegation of inappropriate discipline of a child by a staff member or volunteer.

Parents will be contacted immediately by phone if your child experiences a serious injury involving the head and/or face, or a bite that breaks the skin.

Parents will be notified in person at pick-up, or by phone if a child rides the bus, if your child receives a minor injury such as a skinned knee, bump from a fall, a bite that does not break the skin.

Staff will take immediate action, necessary for circumstances requiring immediate medical attention to ensure and establish each child's health and mental health emergencies. Once emergency circumstances and child has stabilized, staff will contact parents immediately and on the same day by phone to notify parents of the emergency involving their child.

## EMERGENCY CARE

Prior to your child starting, you will complete a ***Child Information Record*** in case of an emergency. Staff need to be able to respond quickly and efficiently, should an emergency develop. If your child experiences an injury or accident while attending the program, our first step is to administer first aid. We will make every effort to contact you asap. It is very important to make sure you update the ***Child Information Record*** whenever necessary.

## PESTICIDE NOTICE

In accordance with state law, NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is required to provide you with advance notice if a pesticide will be used in your child's classroom. The notice must be given at least 48 hours prior to the application of the pesticide. Notice will be given in two different ways: 1. A sign will be posted at all entrances. 2. Staff will phone all families or send a note home with your child.

You are also entitled to receive the notification by first-class mail. Please contact your child's Teacher or Family Educator if you would like to receive the pesticide notice in this manner. It is your choice to keep your child at home during the time the pesticide is being used. Under state law a pesticide cannot be used in a childcare center or classroom unless the room is unoccupied for not less than 4 hours (longer if required by the pesticide label). Please contact your child's Teacher or Family Educator if you have any questions. If you have a question and/or concern regarding certain pesticides, you may contact Poison Control at (800) 222- 1222.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING**

Beginning at enrollment, programs screen children for possible developmental and instructional needs. Preschool children will be screened by his/her teacher using the Brigance Head Start III Screening Tool or the Ages & Stages Questionnaire. These screenings will assist your child's teacher in learning more about various aspects of your child's development and instructional needs. These screenings do not determine readiness for preschool or kindergarten. Your child's teacher will share the screening outcome and any concerns with you. Our program also recognizes the importance of promoting children's social and emotional health and resilience. Head Start/GSRP uses the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Preschoolers, Second Edition (DECA-P2) to help us better understand resilience as well as behavioral concerns.

NEMCSA Early Head Start programs use the Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional following the same process described above. Referrals for additional support require parental agreement. Staff follow up on all referrals by working with parents, Early On and local school districts.

It's important to remember we involve you at every step in supporting your child's development!

## **ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT**

Throughout the year, Education staff observe, record notes that describe what your child can do, collect work samples, and take photos to represent his or her learning and development. Information is entered into an online assessment system called *SmartTeach by TeachingStrategies* and used to develop Individualized lesson plans to meet the needs of each child, small groups of children and the classroom as whole.

Together, program staff will review your child's assessment information at least three times during the program year at parent-teacher conferences and home visits. You can register and receive an invitation to *SmartTeach by TeachingStrategies* to view your child's progress at any time and have access to an activities library to support your child's learning at home. Please ask your Teacher or Family Educator for more information.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

Group observations may be conducted by staff on an as-needed basis. NEMCSA Early Childhood Services promotes children's mental wellness by providing the support needed for child success in the program setting. Individual observations or program planning may be conducted with parental consent.

## **REFERRALS FOR ASSISTANCE**

Along with preparing children for the classroom, we work to build families and the community. After all, families and communities have an important role to play in childhood growth and development! NEMCSA Early Childhood Services serves as a trusted resource, often teaming up with other state and local organizations to meet the growing needs of children and their families in the communities where they live.

All NEMCSA Early Childhood Programs look at the whole child. This approach calls for a wide range of support services, including:

- Early education that includes intellectual, developmental, social, and emotional needs.
- Activities designed to get parents more involved with their children.
- Medical and dental screenings, as well as referrals and treatment.
- Nutritional services.
- Referrals for social service providers for the entire family.
- Referrals for mental health services as needed.
- Working with parents and service providers to follow up on referrals for any services.

## PROJECT FIND

If you are concerned about your child's development, please call Project Find for free screening and referral services at 1-800-EARLY ON or <https://www.1800earlyon.org/>.

## SPECIAL SERVICES

Recognizing the importance of early intervention, NEMCSA Early Childhood Services has enrolled children with special needs since 1967. In 1972, Congress required that 10% of all enrollment slots be reserved for children with special needs.

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services considers a child to have a special need when a significant level of special assistance is required to achieve maximum potential in one or more areas of development. The following categories are used to professionally diagnose children's disabling conditions:

Health Impairment	Learning Disabilities	Orthopedic Impairment
Mental Impairment	Autism	Visual Impairment
Hearing Impairment	Traumatic Brain Injury	Other Impairments
Emotional/Behavioral Impairment	Speech or Language Impairments	

We encourage the inclusion of children with special needs in an integrated setting with other children. This mainstream experience of children with and without disabilities learning and playing together helps foster a positive self-image and assists the children in enhancing their self-esteem.

Children enrolled in NEMCSA Early Childhood Services are identified and referred for special services through the medical community, social and community agencies, public school systems, Project Find, and parents.

Parents of children with special needs may request a written daily record that includes at least the following: food intake (time, type of food, amount eaten), sleeping patterns (when and how long child slept), elimination patterns (including bowel movements, consistency, frequency), developmental milestones, and changes in child's usual behaviors.

## PARENT NOTICE OF PROGRAM MEASUREMENT

All GSRP classrooms are required to work with the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and MiLEAP to measure the effect of the state-wide Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP). Information is sometimes collected about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Program staff or a representative from MiLEAP might:

- Ask parents questions about their child and family.
- Observe children in the classroom.
- Measure what children know about letters, words, and numbers, etc.
- Ask teachers how children are learning and growing.

Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child could be identified. It is protected by law.

Questions? Please contact:

[mileap@michigan.gov](mailto:mileap@michigan.gov) or 517-241-7004 or MiLEAP, 105 W. Allegan Street, Lansing, MI 48933

## NUTRITION & MEALS

Nutrition is an important part of good health and good eating habits are an important skill to have all your life. Since mealtime is a learning experience, your child will be encouraged to taste each food served. They will also be encouraged to participate in setting the table, serving themselves, and table clean-up whenever possible.

NEMCSA Early Childhood Programs are a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. CACFP program provides cash reimbursement to childcare centers for nutritious meals and helps children develop healthy eating habits. CACFP is administered by the Michigan Department of Education.

Through CACFP you can be assured that your child is getting balanced, nutritious meals and developing healthy lifelong eating habits. Proper nutrition during the early years ensures fewer physical and educational problems later in life. Meals and snacks must meet the USDA meal pattern requirements listed below and are **provided free of charge**.

<b>BREAKFAST</b>	<b>LUNCH and SUPPER</b>	<b>SNACK (serve 2 of the 5)</b>
*Milk *Fruit and/or Vegetable *Grain/Bread or Protein may be served in place of the Grain/Bread 3x weekly	*Milk *Fruit *Vegetable *Grain/Bread *Meat or Meat Alternate	*Milk *Fruit *Grain/Bread *Meat or Meat Alternate *Vegetable

MDE is required to verify the enrollment, attendance, and meals/snacks typically consumed by children while they are in care. MDE staff may contact you regarding your child's participation in our day care center. If you have any questions about the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please contact: Your local Head Start/GSRP Program Teacher OR CACFP Coordinator, NEMCSA Head Start (989) 358-4619 OR CACFP, Michigan Dept. of Education, P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909, (517)241-5353

**USDA Nondiscrimination Statement**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877- 8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

- 1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- 2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- 3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

**This institution is an equal opportunity provider.**

**SHARING FOOD FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES**

We recognize that often there are children in our program who have food sensitivities or other special dietary needs. We ensure all children have safe and healthy food to eat while in the classroom. The following guidelines for sharing food in the classroom have been developed:

Food that comes from home for sharing among children must be whole, fresh fruits/vegetables or commercially prepared and packaged in a factory-sealed container. Items from Walmart, Meijer or other supermarkets must be in a sealed package with ingredient labels. Approved foods MAY include individually packaged granola bars, fruit snacks, Rice Krispie treats, etc.

This guideline does not apply to parent meetings or other functions where parents and children are together, and the parent can make the decision on what their child may eat. It is understood that should a parent not be present during this function, the final decision will be made by the teacher and accepted by the parent.

## NEMCSA EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES DISCIPLINE POLICY

Anyone working with children in NEMCSA Early Childhood Services programs shall use indirect guidance methods along with direct positive methods of guidance and discipline that encourage self- control, direction, self-esteem, and cooperation.

### Guidance and Discipline Methods

**Expectations:** Staff implement a consistent daily routine and help children understand what is expected during each part of the routine. Staff describe the expected behavior and state when it is expected. Staff establish fair, simple rules and enforce them consistently. When giving a command, adults use a quiet, non-emotional voice, remember to give children 5-10 seconds to respond, and verbally reinforce compliance. Children are free to function within clearly defined limits.

**Individualize expectations and activities:** A program may need to be adapted to meet the individualized needs of children. If a child needs to be involved in a specific activity that will address their particular need to release tension, it is important to adapt the routine or activity to assist the child. The adaptation is explained to the other children in the classroom.

**Encouragement:** Staff use sincere words of encouragement when a child does well, obeys the rules, and responds in a positive/acceptable manner. Example: "I noticed you picked up toys without being told." Or "Look how quickly our room is picked up when everyone works together!" "I can tell you're trying to be patient and wait your turn. I know it is hard sometimes."

**Giving Special Attention:** Children sometimes "act out" to get attention, whether it be good or bad attention. It may help to find ways to give a child attention for appropriate behavior or create an opportunity for success (helping to do a special job or leading an activity). Staff can affirm appropriate choices with a smile, a nod, a wink, a pat on the back, or a thumbs-up.

**Ignoring Behavior:** Staff can create problems by making too much of an incident or the use of certain words. If a child is behaving in an unacceptable way but the behavior is not harmful or dangerous (ex: whining), it may help to deliberately ignore the provocation. Be aware, however, behavior may become worse before it gets better.

### Child Conflict

The following procedure will be used for dealing with child conflicts:

- 1) Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions. Place yourself between the children, on their level. Use a calm voice and gentle touch. Remain neutral rather than takesides.
- 2) Acknowledge children's feelings. "You look really upset." Let children know you need to hold any object in question.
- 3) Gather information. "What's the problem?"
- 4) Restate the problem. "So the problem is...."
- 5) Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together. "What can we do to solve this problem?" Encourage children to think of a solution.
- 6) Be prepared to give follow-up support. "You solved the problem!" Stay near the children.

\*\*\*\*\*

Anyone working with Head Start/Early Head Start/GSRP children shall be prohibited from using the following as a means of punishment:

- \* Hitting, shaking, biting, spanking, pinching, or inflicting any form of corporal punishment.
- \* Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her up.
- \* Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
- \* Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
- \* Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle.
- \* Placing any substance in child's mouth including, but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
- \* Excluding a child from outdoor activities or daily learning experiences.

We encourage you to apply the same principles of discipline in dealing with your child at home. By doing this, the center and the home reinforce each other.

## **CHILD EXTREME BEHAVIOR PROCEDURE**

When appropriate behavior management techniques in program activities and an action plan developed with the family has not yet been successful, staff members will utilize the following procedure. For the safety of all children, these steps will be implemented in the classroom setting when a child's behavior becomes extremely threatening and aggressive.

Step 1. Staff will attempt to de-escalate the behavior (calm the child).

Step 2. A staff member will monitor the child at all times.

Step 3. Staff will avoid using physical control (holding/restraining) unless needed to keep ALL children safe or in a very dangerous situation.

Step 4. The Area Manager and the Mental Health Specialist/Consultant for the region will be contacted immediately to be informed of the situation and steps taken thus far.

Step 5. If the above steps are not effective, staff will contact the parent/ guardian of the child immediately to inform them of the situation. Classroom staff and parent/guardian together will determine the next appropriate step for supporting the child.

Step 6. The Mental Health Staff will work with other program staff and the family to develop a plan to help the child succeed in the classroom setting as well as identify/suggest additional support services available to families in the local community.

Step 7. If the behavior continues to occur frequently, a meeting will be scheduled with the parent/guardian to review/initiate the support planning process. The goal is for the child to participate in their regular classroom schedule and activities as much as possible.

Step 8. The plan will be implemented and reviewed as needed.

## **TOY WEAPONS**

While attending NEMCSA Early Childhood programs, toy weapons are not permitted. This includes children attending in any setting such as classrooms, socialization experiences and field trips. All toys must be kept at home. If brought in, the toy will be placed in an area inaccessible to children until the parent/guardian picks up the toy. Please keep these toys at home.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

It is the policy of NEMCSA Early Childhood Services that the following grievance steps be followed by parents or other community members who have complaints about the program, services and/or staff:

1. Parents shall discuss any concerns with local program staff. Call your Teacher or Family Educator if you have concerns regarding education, food services, nutrition, or special needs. Call your Family Services staff if you have problems regarding enrollment, children's records, transportation, or health issues.
2. If further discussion is necessary, contact the appropriate Area Manager.
3. If the matter is not resolved contact the Regional Manager for your region.
4. If the problem is not resolved, the parent should explain the problem in writing and/or call the following: Preschool Services (Deputy Director), Early Head Start Services (Assistant Director).
5. If the problem is not resolved, the parent should contact the Early Childhood Services Director.
6. If the problem is still not resolved, the parent should contact a Policy Council member and ask to be placed on the agenda to discuss the problem.

7. If the problem is a matter involving parents of children enrolled in NEMCSA Early Childhood Services, there is still another avenue to pursue if the problem was not satisfactorily resolved following steps 1 – 6. The problem should be outlined in a letter and submitted to the Executive Director/CEO, NEMCSA, 2369 US 23 South, Alpena, MI 49707. If it is still unresolved, the Executive Director/CEO, at the parent’s request, shall present the matter to the NEMCSA Board of Directors, whose decision shall be final.

Families participating in programs receiving GSRP funding who have not been able to reach a satisfactory resolution using Steps 1-6 above can contact their local Intermediate School District and Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP). MiLEAP contact information: [mileap@michigan.gov](mailto:mileap@michigan.gov), 517-241-7004, or 105 W. Allegan, Lansing, MI 48933.

### **NO WEAPONS POLICY**

For the safety and security of all students, staff, and visitors, our Head Start Preschool and Early Head Start programs strictly prohibits weapons of any kind on school property. This includes firearms, knives, and any other items that could be used to cause harm. This policy applies to all individuals, including students, parents, guardians, staff, and visitors, during school activities, as well as during pick-up and drop-off times.

Any individual found possessing or using a weapon on school property will be subject to immediate removal from the program and may face legal consequences. Please be aware that possessing a weapon on school property is a serious offense.

We appreciate your cooperation in ensuring a safe and peaceful learning environment for all.

### **APPROPRIATE ADULT BEHAVIOR POLICY**

Children do best when program staff, parents/guardians, volunteers, and other adults in their life all work as a team. NEMCSA Early Childhood Services believes everyone – children and adults - should feel safe at our locations. Everyone is expected to interact in a courteous and respectful manner.

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services has a “zero tolerance” policy for threatening, aggressive, abusive or violent behaviors. Law enforcement will be called if behaviors threaten the safety of anyone at the location.

Behaviors that will not be tolerated include but not limited to:

- Shouting, either in person or on the telephone
- Swearing, degrading, or offensive language, in person, on the telephone, via text message, social media, or on a communication app
- Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or pushing or unwanted physical contact of any kind
- Threatening, physical intimidation causing reasonable concern for the physical and/or psychological well-being of any person at the NEMCSA site or activity, on the telephone, via text message or social media, or a classroom app
- Using aggressive or threatening hand gestures
- Threatening damage to Agency or personal property
- Unusual, inappropriate behavior that a reasonable person would consider threatening

Joking about any of the above noted behaviors is also prohibited because of the potential for misunderstanding.

Any adult found to have engaged in threatening or disruptive behavior in violation of this policy:

- \*must attend a meeting with the appropriate managerial staff before returning to the premises, and/or
- \*be reported to law enforcement.

When an adult is in violation of the policy, staff will ask the adult to stop the inappropriate behavior immediately.

1. If behavior does not stop immediately, staff will ask the adult to leave the premises.
2. If adult refuses to leave premises, staff will call local law enforcement.

Area Manager, involved adults and staff meet to agree upon an Adult Behavior Incident Corrective Action Plan to sign, date, and follow. Children continue to participate in the program until the meeting occurs and action steps are developed to resolve the situation.

Refusal to follow the corrective action plan may result in the adult being prohibited from future involvement in the program, either temporarily or permanently. Each case is evaluated individually based on the specifics of the reported incident. Children continue to participate in the program throughout the process.

### **CUSTODY ORDERS**

- Unless we have court-certified papers stating otherwise, a parent or legal guardian has the right to visit the child regardless of whether the parent/legal guardian is listed on the ***Child Information Record***.
- Unless we have court-certified papers stating otherwise, a parent or legal guardian has the right to educational records/information of the child.
- A parent must provide one or more of the following to be kept on file:
  - Birth Certificate
  - Custody Order
  - Order of Filiation
  - Guardian Order
  - Affidavit of Parentage
  - Order of Adoption
  - Letter from Foster Care Agency
  - Custody Section of Divorce Judgement signed by judge
- Each parent who will pick up the child or have the child taken to their home must complete a ***Child Information Record*** naming the emergency contacts.
- If it is your day to pick up the child or have the child taken to your home, it is your responsibility to be there on time.
- It is your responsibility to provide the program with the most recent written documentation that will be followed to the letter. We will not honor parent requests that violate the custody order or other legal documents regarding parental status.
- Any and all changes must be in writing.
- NEMCSA Early Childhood programming is not used for supervised visitation.
- Parents must always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner.

Thank you for your cooperation. Working together, we can provide the best learning experience for your child.

### **MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION**

Your child should look forward to the experience of a new school with a sense of excitement and anticipation. They need to know what is expected of them by staff in their new program. Early Head Start will assist you in making the transition to Head Start/GSRP or another available preschool program of your choice. Head Start will assist you in making the transition to kindergarten or the program of your choice. They should have an opportunity to visit their school and become familiar with the building. Transition activities should prepare your child for the new experience.

It is important that you help your preschool child with the transition to kindergarten. It is also important that you continue to be involved in your child's educational program and help them feel competent as he

or she moves on to kindergarten. You can promote confidence in your child by having a positive attitude about school.

Here are some suggestions for transition activities to do with your child:

- Visit the new school or classroom. Walk around the playground and building with your child. If they are open in the summer, the staff may let you visit.
- Talk to your child about the name of their new school. If you know the teacher's name, help your child learn it. Talk to your child about his/her new schedule, such as what time he/she will wake up, get dressed and other things which may be included in the school schedule.
- Include your child in the back-to-school preparations. Whether clothes are new or used, stress that "these are your school clothes." A hair cut or trim can become "your new haircut for going back to school."
- Discuss with enthusiasm starting the new school year. Tell grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends. Encourage your child to tell others that he/she is going to Preschool/ Kindergarten this year.

## WHAT DOES “READY FOR KINDERGARTEN” MEAN?

As children enter school, we often wonder whether they are ready. Here is a list of skills that help a child entering kindergarten.

### READINESS IS . . .

#### **a child who listens**

- to directions without interrupting.
- to stories and poems for five to ten minutes without restlessness.

#### **a child who hears**

- words that rhyme.
- words that begin with the same sound or different sounds.

#### **a child who sees**

- likenesses and differences in pictures and designs.

#### **a child who understands**

- words such as up and down, top and bottom, over and under, little and big, etc.
- the classification of words that represent people, places, and things.

#### **a child who can**

- express their basic needs
- who can share creative ideas.

#### **a child who cleans up after him/herself**

can toilet independently  
can dress and undress

#### **a child who adjusts**

- to changes in routine and to new situations without becoming fearful.
- to opposition or defeat without crying or sulking.
- to the necessity of asking for help when needed.

#### **a child who understands and follows**

- classroom rules as established by the teacher.
- safety rules on playground and school bus.
- fire drill rules quickly and quietly.

#### **a child who plays**

- cooperatively with other children.
- shares, takes turns, and assumes his/her share of group responsibility.

## **PROGRAM PROCEDURES TO PROTECT PERSONAL IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION**

NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is committed to ensuring the protection of the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information (PII), data, and records collected or maintained by the agency. This commitment aligns with the policies, protections, and rights found in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as appropriate for the NEMCSA Early Childhood programs. Procedures in place are as follows:

- A. The program must disclose PII from child records, without parental consent, to:
- Officials within the program or acting for the program, such as contractors, if providing services for which the program would otherwise use employees;
  - Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, in connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements of the program;
  - Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, to conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs, for, or on behalf of, the program;
  - Appropriate parties to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk such as a serious food allergy;
  - Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena (program will make a reasonable effort to tell the parent in advance) unless order specifies non-disclosure;
  - Secretary of Agriculture or an authorized representative from the Food and Nutrition Service to conduct program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements for CACFP if the results will be reported in an aggregate form that does not identify any individual;
  - Caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement, when the agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection; and
  - Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.
- B. The program will disclose PII from child records without parental consent but with parental notice and opportunity to refuse in the following circumstances:
- The program forwards PII from child's records to officials at a program, school, or school district in which the child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled so long as the disclosure is related to the child's enrollment or transfer.
  - The program notifies the parent about the disclosure, provides the parent, upon request, a copy of the PII to be disclosed in advance, and gives the parent an opportunity to challenge and refuse disclosure of the information in the records.
- C. Subject to the aforementioned exceptions in Parts A and B, the program will not disclose PII from child records without parental consent.
- The written consent must be signed and dated. It must specify what child records may be disclosed, why the records will be disclosed, and identify the party(s) to whom the records may be disclosed.
  - Consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time but not retroactively.

### **Parental Rights**

- A parent has the right to inspect child records. The program must make the child records available within a reasonable time but no more than 30 days after receipt of the request.
- If a program maintains child records that contain information on more than one child, the program will ensure the parent only inspects information that pertains to the parent's child.
- The program shall not destroy a child record with an outstanding request to inspect and review the record.

- A parent has the right to ask the program to amend information in the child record that the parent believes is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy.
- The program must consider the parent's request and, if the request is denied, render a written decision to the parent within a reasonable time that informs the parent of the right to a hearing.
- A parent has the right to a hearing to challenge information in the child's record.
- A parent has the right to a copy of child records free of charge.
- A parent has the right to review any "written agreement with third parties".
- A parent has the right to a hearing to challenge information within 45 days.

#### Maintaining Records

- Child records will be maintained in a manner that ensures only parents, and officials within the program or acting on behalf of the program, have access and such records will be destroyed within a reasonable timeframe after such records are no longer needed or required to be maintained.
- The program will maintain, with the child records, for as long as the records are maintained, information on all individuals, agencies, or organizations to whom a disclosure of PII has been made (except for program officials and parents) and why the disclosure was made.
- If a parent places a statement in the child's record, the program will maintain the statement with the contested part of the child record for as long as the program maintains the record and disclose the statement whenever it discloses the portion of the child record to which the statement relates.

#### **Definitions**

*Child Records:* records that are directly related to the child, maintained by the program or by a party acting for the program, and include information recorded in any way such as print, electronic, or digital means including media, video image, or audio format.

*Disclosure:* permit access to or the release, transfer, or other communication of PII contained in child records by any means including oral, written, or electronic means, to any party except the party identified as the party that provided or created the record.

*Parent:* a Head Start/Early Head Start/GSRP child's mother or father, other family member who is a primary caregiver, foster parent or authorized caregiver, guardian or the person with whom the child has been placed for purpose of adoption pending a final adoption decree.

*Program:* NEMCSA Early Childhood Services programs.

*Personally Identifiable Information (PII):* any information that could identify a specific individual, including but not limited to a child's name, name of a child's family member, street address of the child, social security number, or other information that is linked or linkable to the child.

*Third Party Written Agreement:* a written agreement between NEMCSA and another entity or person, such as a contractor, providing services that would otherwise be performed by an employee. An example of such an agreement would be contracting with a Registered Dietician to provide nutrition consulting services.