



2024-2025

Early Head Start Home-Based Program 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

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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 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,

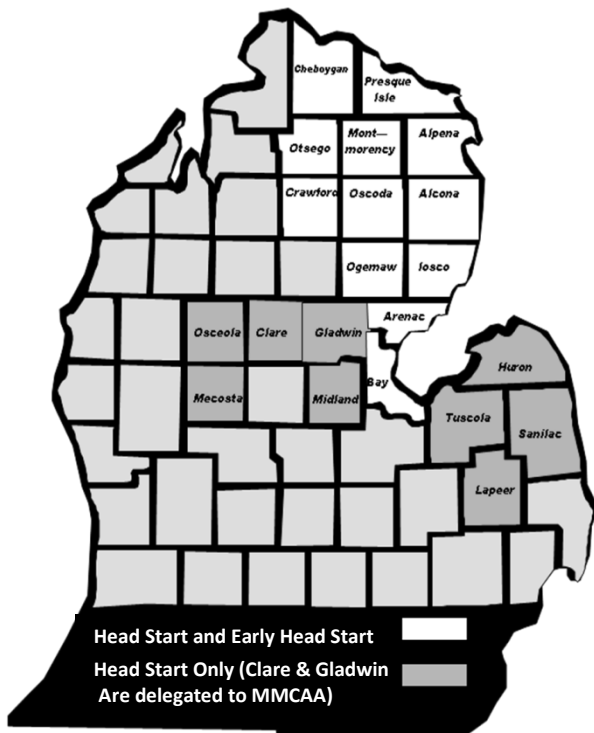
Tricia Grifka

Early Childhood Services Director

Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency's Early Childhood Program

Early Head Start promotes school readiness through services to pregnant women and children under 3 years of age from low-income families through education, health, social and other services. These services are provided by implementing the Head Start Federal Program Performance Standards, which are among the most in-depth early childhood standards in the country. Services for both Head Start 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.

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: () _____

Home Visitor: _____

Family Services Assistant: _____

Team Leader: _____

EHS Director: _____

NOTES:

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 and group opportunities to develop children's skills in language, literacy, math, problem-solving, physical development, self-regulation, and social skills. Our home visitors 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.

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.

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

OFF TO A GOOD START!

You can show with both words and actions that learning is important to your child now and in the future. We offer a two-hour socialization twice per month giving children the opportunities interact with peers while being guided by you, the parent/guardian.

Here are Some Tips:

- Make sure your child is rested. Ten to 12 hours of sleep are recommended. 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.
- 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.
- Sick children and adults cannot function and endanger the health of other people attending socialization. If you or your child is sick, please read the **Early Childhood Services Health Policy** (starting on page 10) and stay home.

OUR CURRICULUM

NEMCSA Early Head Start home-based programs offer similar learning experiences through the *Parents as Teachers (PAT) Curriculum* with a focus on parents as educators. Your home visitor 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. You are invited to group socializations to work and play with your child in a group setting with other families. Both curriculums support our belief that parents are the child's first and most important teacher. We welcome your ideas and suggestions as the curriculum is implemented throughout the year.

As a prenatal enrollment your Home Visitor 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.

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 not enrolled are placed on a waitlist based on highest family needs. Vacancies are filled within 30 days of their occurrence. 10% of all Head Start/Early Head Start enrollments are held for children with certified disabilities. Once a prenatal enrollment delivers her baby he/she will automatically qualify for the program and the family will continue with programming focusing on the development of the child.

TUITION/FEES

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

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 program 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 in a group setting. 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 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

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.

Schedules for home visits may vary. Please work with your Home Visitor to keep appointments and to notify them if you need to reschedule. Consistency in programming offers the best outcome for you and your child and we encourage you to reschedule in the same week when possible.

ATTENDANCE

Completing home visits regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves! Start building this habit in the early years, so your child will learn that going to school on time every day is important. Strong attendance will prepare them for a bright future.

- Make completing a home visit a high priority.
- If you are unable to attend on any given day, please call the home visitor and let them know as soon as possible. The home visitor needs to know the reason for the absence and will reschedule your visit.
- Staff will work with you to overcome any barriers to help get your family back to regular attendance. Let us know how we can help.
- It is very important to contact staff when a home visit must be missed. In the case that your child is ill, home visits can be done with parents/guardians only. Please contact your home visitor when your child or someone is sick in the home.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS DUE TO WEATHER

Local weather Apps, area TV, and radio stations will broadcast school closings due to bad weather. If your local school district is closed due to weather conditions and there is a scheduled socialization it will be rescheduled. If you are in a home-based program, your child's home visitor will reschedule your visit for another convenient time unless he/she can make it to your homesafely.

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-base 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 cover a 21-county service area in northeast Michigan and offer 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, Early Head Start and GSRP 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).

Parent Leadership Meetings occur regularly in every NEMCSA Early Childhood Program. This is an opportunity for parents and staff to come together as a group, share program concerns, ideas, and plan activities for your child. The parent group helps determine the usage of the “Parent Program Fund” with the assistance of the Family Services/Support Coordinator.

Family Cafes are offered regularly to answer questions, share practical information, and help you understand your child’s development a little better. These workshops are fun as well as informative.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

You are your child’s first teacher! Your involvement is essential to a successful program year and beyond. There are many opportunities to be involved and enjoy your child’s early education experience. Your presence at home visits 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 an Early Head Start 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 . . .

- contribute curriculum ideas
- assist with playground maintenance
- set up and conduct an art activity
- make and repair equipment
- tell stories to the children at socialization
- help recruit families
- serve as interpreters
- record story narration
- teach a craft for parents/present workshops

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. 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.
 - a. At no time will any volunteer/parent be left unsupervised with children (other than their own).
 - b. Discipline and redirection of children will only be carried out by NEMCSA Early Childhood Services staff.
 - c. Staff ensures volunteers know the policy and procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect.
3. Volunteers will be trained prior to volunteering in the classroom; either during parent/child days or individually by NEMCSA Early Childhood Services staff. Early Head Start and Head Start Volunteers will receive a copy of the NEMCSA Early Childhood Services Volunteer Handbook.
4. 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 socialization environment and/or activities may not be appropriate for siblings. Decisions on including siblings will be made by local staff on a case-by-case basis. Please contact your Teacher or Home Visitor 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 in these exciting adventures.

NON-FEDERAL SHARE (IN-KIND)

As a federally-funded agency, NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is required to match federal funds by 25%. 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 repairing equipment, 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 Home Visitor. Home Visitors 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 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.

The exam must include all age-appropriate health screenings and follow the federal and state mandated timeframes.

2. **Immunizations must be kept up to date.** Your Family Services Assistant or Home Visitor can assist you in determining your child's immunization status.

**** Notify your Family Services Assistant or Home Visitor of all scheduled appointments. They can assist you in making the necessary arrangements to complete the medical and 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 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** 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 socialization experience due to illness if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- ☐ The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in socialization site.
- ☐ 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 Home Visitor 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 socialization on a regular basis, it is also important to prevent the spread of illness whenever possible. If your child becomes ill at home or while at socialization, it is necessary to keep them home and limit exposure 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 home visits and socialization attendance should be rescheduled a minimum of 24 hours from the first dose. Staff follow guidelines established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to determine if the child/parent can attend group socialization. If you notice your child has one or more of the following symptoms, please keep your child home to monitor their health:

- **Fever** – defined as having a temperature of 100 degrees F or higher taken under the arm, 101 degrees F if taken orally, or 102 degrees if taken rectally
- **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
- **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, please reschedule your home visit and/or do not attend parent-child socialization session. Fevers are often indications of other illnesses. Your Home Visitor may visit other families on the day of your visit. Please keep in mind for the health and safety of all children if someone in your home is ill, please talk with your Home Visitor about rescheduling your visit.

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

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 socialization or home visit 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.
- Are able to 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 socialization experience only when necessary. The medication must be brought in and administered by the parent 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. All medications, except for rescue medications, are secured in a lockbox.

EMERGENCY CARE

Prior to your child’s entry, 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. 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 if you would like to receive the pesticide notice in this manner. It is your option to keep your child 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 will be unoccupied for not less than 4 hours (longer if required by the pesticide label). Please contact your child’s teacher 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. Early Head Start utilizes Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). These screenings will assist your child’s Home Visitor in learning more about various aspects of your child’s development and instructional needs.

Your child's Home Visitor will complete the questionnaire with you and share the outcome of these screenings if there are any concerns.

Our program also recognizes the importance of promoting children's social and emotional health and resilience. NEMCSA Early Head Start programs use the Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ – SE) following the same process described above.

Referrals for additional support require parental agreement. Home Visitors follow up on all referrals by working with parents and 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, Home Visitors 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 *MyTeachingStrategies* and used to develop Individualized Home Visit Plans to meet the needs of individual children.

Together, program staff will review your child's assessment information at least three times during the program year at your home visit. You can register and receive an invitation to *MyTeachingStrategies* 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 Home Visitor 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 school, 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.

SPECIAL SERVICES NEEDS

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 amount 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.

A child with special needs is enrolled in NEMCSA Early Childhood Services through referrals from 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.

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 feeding themselves whenever possible.

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 at socialization. The following guideline for sharing food in the classroom has 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 a Walmart, Meijer or other supermarket 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 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 take sides.
- 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 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 always monitor the child.

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. 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

Toy weapons are not permitted in NEMCSA Early Childhood programs. 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 Home Visitor if you have problems regarding education, food services, nutrition, or concerns regarding special needs. Call your Family Services Assistant 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 EHS Director.

4. If the problem is not resolved, the parent should explain the problem in writing and/or call the Head Start Assistant Director or Early Head Start 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, 2569 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, 517-241-7004, or 105 W. Allegan, Lansing, MI 48933.

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.
- 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 or another available preschool 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.

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 kindergarten this year. and school bus.

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 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 previously mentioned 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.