

# NEMCSA Early Childhood Services



## Volunteer Handbook

In our attempt to keep everyone safe we ask that you speak with the classroom staff about their health and safety procedures.

This Handbook shares the many ways that are available to volunteer outside of the classroom and be engaged in your child's education.

**Educate the child, Strengthen the family, Build the community!**

# Welcome to the Early Head Start, Head Start Preschool and Great Start Readiness Programs!

**Thank you for being involved in your NEMCSA Early Childhood Programs.**

The staff of the \_\_\_\_\_ Early Head Start/Head Start Preschool/GSRP Program want to welcome you to a year of fun and excitement. Through your involvement in your child’s education, together we can build an experience for children that will last them a lifetime.

The information on the following pages will aid you in being involved in your child’s education. Please feel free to talk to any staff member about questions or suggestions you may have. We want to hear from you!

<b>Staff Names and Numbers</b>			
Education Staff	Telephone	Education Staff	Telephone
Family Services Staff	Telephone	Mental Health Staff	Telephone
Area Manager	Telephone	Regional Manager	Telephone
Early Childhood Services Deputy Director	Telephone	Early Head Start Assistant Director	Telephone

**Parents work together with all staff to determine the kinds of learning experiences they want their children to have.**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

**The Mission of NEMCSA Early Childhood Services is to provide high quality learning experiences and support for children and families to promote their future success.**

## **NEMCSA Early Childhood Services Beliefs**

- ◆ The relationship between parent and child is the foundation for growth and learning
- ◆ Experiences and opportunities support growth and independence
- ◆ Time and energy invested in children impacts our future
- ◆ Life-long learning is essential for the growth of children and families
- ◆ Children, families, and staff have individual strengths and deserve respect
- ◆ Families are essential partners and integral to the success of Head Start/GSRP
- ◆ Communication between families and staff builds relationships
- ◆ Diversity is an asset and an opportunity
- ◆ Community partnerships support families in their development
- ◆ Strong families strengthen communities

**NEMCSA Early Head Start** provides services within 12 counties in Michigan: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Bay, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle.

**NEMCSA Head Start** provides services within 21 counties in Michigan: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Bay, Cheboygan, Clare, Crawford, Gladwin, Huron, Iosco, Lapeer, Mecosta, Midland, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Osceola, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Sanilac, and Tuscola.

**Great Start Readiness Programs** are offered in the following counties: Alcona, Alpena, Arenac, Bay, Cheboygan, Huron, Iosco, Lapeer, Mecosta, Midland, Montmorency, Oscoda, Osceola, Otsego, Sanilac, and Tuscola.

NEMCSA Early Childhood Programs are committed to implementing a child-centered curriculum covering development across all domains. The curriculum is based on recognized National and State of Michigan Standards of Developmentally Appropriate Practice for the education of young children. These basic standards include the Head Start Program Performance Standards, NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practices, and the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality.

NEMCSA has selected one of the following written curricula for each service location, depending on the program and age group served: *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool*, *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos*, *HighScope*, *Connect4Learning*, or *Parents as Teachers*.

## **WAYS TO VOLUNTEER AND BE INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION**

There are many ways to volunteer, talk with your teaching staff to review all the options available.

- Contribute to child assessment by providing comments, photos, or videos to your teacher of your child's participation in activities or as requested by staff
- Participate as much as you able in your program
- Do activities with your child at home
- Help plan the curriculum/share ideas for classroom activities with your teachers to aid in making the activities individualized for your child
- Attend all Home Visits and Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Attend and contribute to Classroom-to-Home Connections Meetings by helping provide information and ideas to support program decision-making.
- Attend program meetings and assist by making program decisions in addition to providing information and ideas. Meeting opportunities include but are not limited to: Policy Council, Classroom-to-Home Connection meetings (Head Start Preschool/GSRP), Parent Café/ Leadership meetings (Early Head Start).
- Make telephone calls for the program from your home
- Repair outdoor playground equipment
- Complete required physicals, dental exams, and immunizations
- Share your heritage, family customs, talents, and interests to become a part of the curriculum
- Recruit new families for the program
- Record story narration
- Put posters up in the community



## POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION

Children may need assistance in following adult direction. Many teachers and professionals in child development have discovered the importance of directing children by saying “**How to**” rather than “How not to.” Adults may be surprised at how effective some of the following examples are:

<b>Please Say:</b>		<b>Please Do Not Say:</b>
Sit down when you slide.	vs.	Don't stand up when you slide.
Dig in the sand.	vs.	Don't throw sand.
Sit on the swing.	vs.	You'll fall if you don't watch out.
Use both hands when you climb.	vs.	You'll fall if you don't watch out.
Climb down the ladder.	vs.	Don't jump off.
It is time to brush your teeth now.	vs.	Do you want to brush your teeth?
Keep the puzzle on the table.	vs.	Don't dump puzzle pieces on the floor.
Turn the pages carefully.	vs.	Don't tear the book.
Talk in a quiet voice.	vs.	Don't shout.
Wipe your hands on the paper towel.	vs.	Don't put your hands on anything.
Be sure the ladder is safe.	vs.	Be careful. Don't fall off the ladder.
Walk around the swing.	vs.	Be careful. The swing might hit you.
Drink your milk.	vs.	Don't you want to drink your milk?

Practice these at home with your child and let your teaching staff know what you think and how they worked.

## **FEDERAL SHARE “IN-KIND” FOR HEAD START**

Head Start is a federally funded program, free to families who qualify. However, we are required to match the \$11,208.62 per child that we receive from the federal government with 20% In-kind. So, for every \$1.00 given to the program, we need .20 worth of In-kind. In other words: we need to generate \$2,241.24 worth of volunteer time and donations for each Early Head Start/Head Start Preschool/GSRP child.

**Your time is very valuable to your child and to your Head Start Program. When you participate in your child’s education with Head Start, such as program meetings, your time is worth \$13.20 per hour. Program meetings may include any of the following: Policy Council, Classroom-to-Home Connection meetings (Head Start Preschool/GSRP), Parent Café/ Leadership meetings (Early Head Start).**

**Another way of collecting In-kind would be to participate in the Individualized School Readiness Activities**

The staff in your program will be sending home activities that you (or another adult) and your child can do at home. Activities will be individualized to your child, related to the activities happening in the classroom or at home visits. Use these learning opportunities as a way to extend the activities you observed your child doing in the classroom or during home visits. Included with activities, will be a form for you to record the time you spent with your child. You may also record this time by accessing our Parent/Volunteer Portal at [ecs.nemcsa.org](http://ecs.nemcsa.org) for Head Start Preschool/GSRP families.



## **FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

**NEMCSA Early Childhood Services** offers parents opportunities and support for growth, so they can identify their own strengths, needs and interests. The objective of Head Start Performance Standard 1302.52 is to support family well-being, support child learning and development, provide services and supports for children with disabilities and to foster parental confidence and skills that promote early learning and development of their children.



### **Family Partnerships**

The Family Partnership process begins when applying for the program. Families and staff work together to identify interests, needs and efforts toward any goal families want to achieve. Staff work with each family to learn about resources in their communities.

### **School Success Practices**

School Success practices help children prepare and succeed in hopes to close the achievement gap and promote school readiness. These include promoting positive discipline, establishing family routines, providing language-rich environments, and reading or engaging in other literacy-based activities with your child.



### **Community Partnering**

The active involvement of parents within their community is encouraged. By partnering with other community members in advocacy and activities, parents can make a difference and help community service agencies to be more aware of community concerns and needs.



## CAR SAFETY

### Air bags, car seats and your child's safety



Seatbelts and air bags help prevent injuries to drivers and passengers in cars involved in accidents. When children are riding in a car, they must be secured in a car seat and car safety equipment must be used properly. Infants and young children need to use a car seat, properly secured, instead of seatbelts and older children should use booster seats

Children under the age of 12 should not sit where an air bag can be activated. When triggered, an air bag can result in serious injury to a young child or death. The safest place for all infants and children under the age of 12 is in the back seat. It is up to you, as a parent, to make sure your child is using all appropriate car safety equipment and is using it properly. Please see updated car seat law mandates.

<b>MICHIGAN'S CAR SEAT LAW CHANGES 2025</b> <small>EFFECTIVE APRIL 2, 2025</small>		
CURRENT MICHIGAN LAW	2025 MICHIGAN LAW CHANGES	SAFEST PRACTICE
 <b>REAR-FACING</b> Infants under age 1 and under 20 pounds must be restrained in a rear-facing car seat	Children must ride rear-facing until they are <b>at least 2 years old</b> or outgrow the height or weight limits of their rear-facing car seat.	Children should stay rear-facing until they outgrow the car seat's height or weight limits.
 <b>FORWARD FACING</b> Children under age 4 must be properly secured in a child restraint system in the rear seat, if possible.	Children must use a harnessed car seat (rear- or forward-facing) until they are <b>at least 5 years old</b> or outgrow the car seat's height or weight limits.	Children should use a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they outgrow the car seat's height or weight limits.
 <b>BOOSTER SEAT</b> Children under age 8 and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall shall be properly secured in a booster seat or child restraint system.	No changes.  Questions: <a href="mailto:always@trinity-health.org">always@trinity-health.org</a> Schedule a Car Seat Appointment: <a href="https://safe-kids-west-michigan.square.site/">https://safe-kids-west-michigan.square.site/</a>	Children should use a booster seat until they can sit without slouching and the seatbelt fits snugly across their thighs and shoulder. 

The following pages were taken from a publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office Of Child Development made possible with help from the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

For more Parenting Guides and other information, visit:

<http://www.safekids.org/coalition/safe-kids-midmichigan> You & Your Child may be reproduced for non-profit use only.

### AIR BAG SAFETY

An air bag can save your life, can be life threatening for children. Following a few simple rules will help you keep your child safe in a car with air bags. Keep infants out of the range of air bags. Never put an infant under 1 year of age in the front seat of a car with an air bag. In an accident, air fills the bag in a split- second, and it explodes outward with great force to form a protective cushion for the passenger. This force created by an air bag can seriously injure or kill a young child, particularly an infant. Several infant deaths have been reportedly caused by air bags.

For older children, if they must ride in the front seat, the seat should be adjusted as far back as possible to reduce airbag impact.

## **CAR SEAT SAFETY**

Take a minute to check your child before driving. Follow a few simple safety rules:

### **Secure all children**

All children must be properly secured in car safety seats, booster seats, or shoulder/lap belts that are correctly matched to their size.

### **Check the instructions for the car seat**

Follow all instructions. Be sure your child matches the recommended age and weight for the car seat.

### **Is your child facing the right way?**

Infants ride in rear-facing car seats in the back seat until they are at least 20 pounds and 1 year old. A child who weighs more than 20 pounds and is older than 1 year faces forward in the car seat, which is still secured in the back seat of the car.

### **Now, before you start your car...**

Check to make sure the car seat harness is snug against your child.

Make sure the seat belt holding the child safety seat is fastened around the child car seat correctly and is pulled tight.

## **NEVER LEAVE A CHILD ALONE IN A CAR – EVEN FOR A MINUTE!**

Children should never be left alone in a vehicle, not even to run a quick errand. Plan ahead to use drive-thru services where available, such as pharmacies and banks. Plan extra time into your drop-off/pick-up routine to bring all children inside with you. Believe it or not, routines and distractions have caused people to mistakenly leave children behind in vehicles. Place your cell phone, purse, left shoe, etc. on the floor of the back seat. This will help remind you to open the back door and see that your child is in the car.

## **If you see an unattended child inside a vehicle, dial 911 immediately!**

## **CROSSING THE STREET – PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

### **HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD TO CROSS SAFELY**

The street and parking lots are dangerous places for young children. Children do not understand the harm that can come to them if they run into the street or through a parking lot.

It takes time to teach young children how to safely cross the street – many years in fact, before they really understand the danger and become responsible enough to cross on their own. For this reason, we must teach them for their own safety and the wellbeing of others.

The best way to teach your child to cross safely is to do it slowly, step by step while holding your child’s hand. Don’t hurry your child and don’t expect too much of him or her too soon.

Street and parking lots are a HIGH danger zone so you may need to be firm about not allowing your child to go into the street. Young children should never go into the street or parking lot alone and should always be accompanied by an adult.



### **AS SOON AS CHILDREN ARE READY, START TEACHING THEM HOW TO CROSS THE STREET**

Teach in a way that is clear to children. For example:

- ◆ Stand on the edge of the street, hold your child’s hand, and say, “First we look and listen this way. Any cars coming? Then we look and listen this way. Any cars coming?”
- ◆ If a car is coming, say, “Car coming. We have to wait.” Then start the look-and-listen process all over again.

### **INSIST ON CROSSING THE STREET WITH YOUR CHILD WHILE HOLDING HIS OR HER HAND**

Don’t let your child cross the street alone, even if you are watching. It is hard for children to understand when it is okay to cross alone and when it is not okay. Set a simple rule – “You never go into the street alone”.

## **TEACH YOUR CHILD NOT TO CHASE A BALL INTO THE STREET**

Even a child who seems to be learning how to cross the street is likely to forget and chase a ball or follow a friend into the street.

If a ball rolls into the street, let it go. Tell your child to stay on the side of the road while you walk – not run – to get it. Look and listen both ways before going into the street to get the ball



## **WHEN YOUR CHILD IS READY TO CROSS ALONE, PRACTICE TOGETHER**

Between the ages of 6 and 8, your child may be ready to cross the street alone if you have trained him or her. Practice together.

- ♦ Stand at the side of the street. This time don't hold your child's hand.
- ♦ Let your child go through the crossing routine, looking and listening up and down the street.
- ♦ Watch your child walk across the street. Be sure he or she doesn't run.
- ♦ For a long time, the rule should be that your child can only cross when you are watching.
- ♦ Practice many times before allowing your child to cross without you being around to watch.

## **BREAKING THE RULES**

If your child breaks a rule, stop him or her; explain the danger of what has just happened and practice the right way.

## **ALWAYS FOLLOW THE RULES YOURSELF WHEN YOUR CHILD IS WATCHING**

When you cross the street and your child is with you, look both ways and even say out loud, "No cars coming this way, no cars coming that way." If you don't, your child will not understand why it's okay for you not to look and listen before crossing. Being a positive model for your child is one of the best ways to teach them.

# ***Thank you for being involved in the education of your child***

## **NEMCSA EARLY HEAD START**

*A Tuition Free Program for Pregnant and Birth  
through 3-year-olds*

## **NEMCSA HEAD START**

*A Tuition Free Preschool Program for 3–5-year-olds*

## **Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)**

*A State Funded Preschool Program for 4-year-olds*



*These materials were developed in part through grants awarded by the Office of Head Start and Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential.*