

Family Handbook

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CHD 270



Head Start Mission Statement

At Head Start center, our mission is to provide high-quality learning for children ages 0–5, and an inclusive early learning experience that supports the growth of the whole child. We empower children from low-income and diverse families through a nurturing, culturally responsive environment. We partner with families to promote school readiness, healthy development, and lifelong success through comprehensive services and strong relationships.

My Philosophy of Education

I believe all children deserve a safe, caring, and inclusive classroom where they can grow socially, emotionally, and academically. Children learn best through hands-on play and strong relationships. Inspired by Piaget and Vygotsky, I use active learning, exploration, and gentle teacher support to help each child learn at their own pace.

In my classroom, I focus on kindness, respect, and positive guidance. I help children name their feelings, solve problems, and feel confident in who they are. I set clear routines but stay flexible to meet children's needs.

Family partnerships are also very important to me. I communicate often with parents and work together to support every child.

My goal is to create a warm, joyful place where children feel safe to explore, make mistakes, and grow into curious, capable learners.





Welcome to Stafford County Early Childhood Program



Welcome to Stafford County Early Childhood!
We are happy you chose our program for your child.

Our programs include:

- Head Start (HS)
- Early Head Start (EHS)
- Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Our goal is to help children get ready for kindergarten and lifelong learning.

We support growth in:

- Social-emotional skills (feelings, friendships)
- Physical skills (gross & fine motor)
- Thinking and problem-solving
- Language and literacy
- Math, science, and social studies



We believe families and teachers work best together to support each child.



Head Start & Early Head Start

Head Start (HS)

- Helps 3- and 4-year-olds prepare for school
- Funded for 251 children (68 three-year-olds, 183 four-year-olds)
- Some families may be placed on a waiting list
- With VPI funding, we offer 83 full-day spots for 4-year-olds



Early Head Start (EHS)

- Serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers
- Funded for 28 families
- Runs year-round
- Offers:
 - Full-year center-based classrooms
 - Home-based services for 12 families

Both programs provide education, nutrition, health support, and family partnership.

ECSE & Inclusive Programs



Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

- Serves children age 2–5 with identified disabilities
- Classrooms are language-rich (songs, books, visuals, communication support)
- Services follow each child's IEP
- Peer models (children without disabilities) may join classrooms for inclusive learning

Whole-Child Support

All programs offer:

- Education
- Health & nutrition
- Mental health services
- Family engagement
- Social services and community resources



Eligibility & What We Provide

Who Can Enroll?

Eligibility for HS, EHS, and VPI is based on:

- Income
- Family needs and priority criteria



What We Provide

- Free breakfast, lunch, and snack
 - Bus transportation (HS, VPI, ECSE only)
 - Support with:
 - Health and dental
 - Nutrition
 - Mental health
 - Disabilities
 - Family literacy and parent involvement
- We make sure children are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

School Location & Contact

North Star Early Childhood

Phone: (540) 658-4090

Key staff include: Principal, Assistant Principal, Education Coordinator, ECSE Chair, Nurse, Office Manager, Mental Health Coordinator, Family & Community Partnerships Coordinator, Parent Involvement Specialist

If unsure who to contact, call the front office first, they will guide you.





Language Support

If you prefer a language other than English, please tell the office.

We provide interpreters for:

- Parent meetings
- Home visits
- Family trainings and conferences

Updating Information

We must have:

- A working phone number
- Two emergency contacts

Please update us right away if your:

- Phone number changes
- Address changes
- Custody arrangements change

This helps keep your child safe.



Language Support & Contact Information



Attendance & Daily Schedule




- Children should come every day unless sick or there is a family emergency.



- Call the school if your child will be absent.
- Send a note when they return.



- Arrival: 7:30–7:45 AM
 - After 7:45 = tardy
 - Dismissal: 2:00–2:07 PM
 - Regular attendance helps children build routines and friendships.
- 

Attendance Follow-Up Steps (HS, EHS, VPI)



1–4 absences → Staff will contact you

5 absences → Letter sent home

7 absences → Required meeting & attendance plan

10 absences → Meeting with administration & support plan update

More than 15% missed → Child may be disenrolled

15 consecutive absences → Required by law: child is withdrawn

If your child has a serious health issue, call the nurse or staff right away so we can support you.

Drop-Off & Pick-Up: Safety



- Photo ID required every time, no phone photos

- All visitors must sign in at the front desk

- Only adults 18+ may pick up a child



- Never leave a child alone in a car. Staff must report unsupervised children.

- Staff must report unsupervised children.

Early Pick-Up

- until 1:30 PM
- After these times → use car rider line.



Authorized Pick-Up & Custody

Authorized Pick-Up List

- Parents provide an approved list
- Additions must be made 48 hours in advance
- Anyone picking up must be 18+ and show photo ID

Custody

- If you have sole custody, bring legal documents.
- Without paperwork, the school must treat both parents as having rights.
- Bring updated court documents immediately if anything changes.



Bus Expectations (Parents)



Parents must:

- Be at the stop 10 minutes early
- Stay with the child until they board
- Show ID at pick-up
- Never board the bus
- Never carry children onto the bus

If no adult is present → child returns to school.
Repeated cases may lead to losing bus service.

Bus Behavior (Children) & Loss of Service

Bus Behavior

Children must:

- Stay buckled
- Stay seated
- Use quiet voices
- Follow directions
- Keep hands and feet to themselves
- No food, gum, or drink (except water)

Loss of Bus Service

1st time → Warning

2nd → 1-day loss

3rd → Several days

4th → Rest of the school year

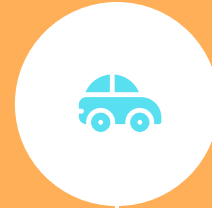


Car Rider Procedures



- Families receive a car tag linked to the child

- Staff confirm car tag + ID every day



- ID is required even if staff know you

- Return car tags at end of year





Clothing, Backpacks & Events



01

Clothing

- Comfortable, washable clothes
- Closed-toe shoes only
- Coat, hat, gloves in cold weather
- Free clothing closet available

02

Backpacks

- Clear backpacks are provided
- Check daily for notes, forms, and student work
- Weekly book bag comes home (read, draw, write together)

03

In-School Events

- Special programs come into the school
- Parents may volunteer (must attend training)



Discipline & Social-Emotional Learning

We use positive guidance, not punishment.

Programs include:

- Conscious Discipline
- Al's Pals
- Second Step
- Zones of Regulation
- Focus Five

We teach children to:

- Use feeling words
- Solve conflicts
- Make positive choices
- Calm their bodies
- Show kindness

If a child shows unsafe behavior, we develop a behavior support plan with the family.

Mandated Reporting

All staff must report suspected:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Unsafe supervision
- Physical or emotional harm
- Sexual exploitation



Support is available for any family needing help with:

- Parenting
- Behavior
- Safety
- Supervision
- Child development



Health, Dental & Medical Information



Our nurse helps families complete:

- Physical exams
- Dental checkups
- Hearing & vision tests
- Height, weight, and BMI
- Immunization updates
- Referrals if needed

Medications must:

- Be brought by a parent
- Have a doctor's form
- Be in original prescription container



Food & Nutrition

All students receive free meals and snacks.

Meals are:

- Nutritious
- Balanced
- Planned by the nutrition team

Head Start/EHS follow federal nutrition rules and serve food family-style.

Important

- No outside food for birthdays.
- Parents may celebrate by reading a story or doing a special activity.



Curriculum & Learning

We use Creative Curriculum, which builds skills through:



01

Play

02

Small & Large
groups

03

Hands-on
activities

04

Learning
centers

- DRDP assessments are shared with families 3 times a year (Nov, Feb, May).
- Families are encouraged to read daily and support learning at home.

Home Visits, Disabilities & Mental Health



Home Visits

Teachers meet with families 4 times a year, including 2 home visits.



Disabilities

Children are screened and evaluated with parent involvement. ECSE provides needed services and supports.



Mental Health

The Mental Health Coordinator helps with:

- Behavior
- Feelings
- Self-regulation
- Family needs



Family Involvement & Leadership




Parents can join:

- Policy Council
- Parent Committee
- Parent Center Committee

Family events include:

- Family Literacy Nights
- Workshops
- Thanksgiving Family Dinner
- Volunteer celebrations

Each family works with a Family Service Worker and receives a Community Resource Guide.

A photograph of children sitting on a wooden floor, playing with colorful LEGO bricks. One child in the foreground is wearing a striped shirt and pink and white striped socks. Another child in the background is wearing a red tank top. The scene is bright and cheerful. A large orange circle is overlaid in the center, containing white text. There are also several white geometric shapes (triangles, circles, and zig-zags) scattered around the circle.

We are honored that you trust us with your child, and we look forward to partnering with you to support their learning and growth. We can't wait to meet you and your family!