

*Avoyelles Head Start
and
Early Head Start*



PARENT HANDBOOK

AVOYELLES CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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WELCOME TO AVOYELLES CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Welcome to Head Start and Early Head Start programs operated by Avoyelles Child Development Services, Inc. (ACDS). Our purpose is to give your child a quality, early learning experience, in a loving, caring, and safe environment. ACDS is a private, non-profit corporation, funded through grants from the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, that provides Early Head Start and Head Start services, to eligible children in Avoyelles Parish.

What is Head Start? Head Start is a comprehensive child development program that improves the educational outcomes, for children ages three to five, from families with limited income, foster children, homeless children, and children with disabilities. The program includes Education and Child Development Services; Health Services Including Health and Safety; Family and Community Engagement Services; Services for Children with Disabilities.

What is Early Head Start? The Early Head Start program was established to serve children, from birth to three years of age, in recognition of the mounting evidence that the earliest years are the most important time in children's growth and brain development. The purpose of the Early Head Start program is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the brain development of very young infants and toddlers, and promote healthy family functioning in young parents.

The goal of both programs is to prepare a child for his or her next educational setting. Head Start helps to develop a child's social skills and assist the family in setting and meeting goals that will enhance the family's future. With your help, Head Start will provide your child with school readiness skills. More importantly, Head Start will teach children to effectively interact with others, to care for themselves, and to feel confident and happy about learning. Your help is critical to make all of this happen.

AGE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

A Head Start child must be at least three years of age or turn three years old by September 30, which is the date used to determine eligibility by the Avoyelles Parish Schools; and be no older than the compulsory school age for Avoyelles Parish Schools.

An Early Head Start child must be an infant (6 weeks of age) or toddler younger than three years of age.

INCOME ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

A child is eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start if:

- i. The family's income is equal to or below the poverty line; or
- ii. The family is eligible for or, in the absence of childcare, would be potentially eligible for public assistance: (TANF, FITAP, SNAP, or SSI)
- iii. The child is Homeless.
- iv. A child is in Foster Care.

If a family does not meet a criterion, a program may enroll a child who would benefit from services, provided these participants only make up to 10% of the program's enrollment. An additional 35% of participants whose family's income is below 130% of the poverty line may be enrolled.

A point system is established to rank a child's eligibility based on the above criteria.

Head Start Selection Criteria/Factors:

Family Receiving Public Assistance-FITAP, SSI or SNAP Benefits	--30 points
Family is Homeless	--30 points
Child is in Foster Care	--30 points
Family is below the OMB Poverty Line	--30 points
Child with Identified Disabilities (IEP)	--45 points
Child Transitioning from Early Head Start to Head Start	--45 points
Family 100% - 130% above OMB Poverty Line	--15 points
Child Aged 4 by September 30	--15 points
Native American Child (must be registered tribal member)	--15 points
Dual Language Learner (English as the second language)	--10 points

Early Head Start Selection Criteria/Factors

Family Receiving Public Assistance-FITAP, SSI or SNAP Benefits	--30 points
Family is Homeless	--30 points
Child is in Foster Care	--30 points
Family is below the OMB Poverty Line	--30 points
Child with Identified Disabilities (IFSP)	--45 points
Teen parent, 18 or younger attending school	--45 points
Family 100% - 130% above OMB Poverty Line	--15 points
Child, less than age 1 by September 30	--15 points
Native American Child (must be registered tribal member)	--15 points
Dual Language Learner (English as the second language)	--10 points

These established selection criteria/factors shall assure that eligible children enter the program as vacancies occur. Factors and points shall match those assigned in the prioritized waiting list in the database from which selection will be made.



EDUCATION SERVICES

As a parent, you are your child's most important teacher. Young children learn academic and social skills by playing with objects and interacting with people. Classrooms have materials to help your child learn early reading, writing, math, and science skills based on his/her developmental level. Your child's teachers will assess his or her learning needs at the beginning of school and accomplishments throughout the year. This will be documented on a secure, online database known as Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG). The teachers will then plan learning activities based on these assessments. Parents are encouraged to look at their child's TSG Portfolio online, to see for themselves the progress their child is making. Your child's teacher will provide you with instructions to access your child's information. Parents are to participate, be informed, and have input into their child's educational curriculum.

The class daily schedule for children is posted in the classroom. It provides large group, small group, and individual activities for your child, as well as a balance of active and quiet learning experiences throughout the day. The daily schedule for infants and toddlers in Early Head Start provides a less structured daily schedule of age-appropriate activities and learning experiences. Physical Activity for children under age two shall be provided time and space for age-appropriate physical activities, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day. Children aged two and older shall be provided with physical activity that includes a combination of both teacher-led and free play, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day. Sleep/Rest time is also an important component of this program. Infants shall be allowed to sleep according to their individual schedules. Children under age 4 shall have daily rest time of at least 75 minutes in programs operating more than 5 hours per day. Children ages 4 and older shall be offered the opportunity for quiet time.

Our teachers work with preschool aged children to develop five essential domains: Social & Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, Language & Literacy, Physical Development, and Cognition & General Knowledge. Children learn these skills by participating in learning centers, outdoor learning, group time, individual activities, meals, and rest time. Teachers assess children during the program year to check their progress in these skill areas.

Your child will be more successful when you are involved with his/her learning. You can do this by reading to your child frequently, working with your child's teacher to develop lesson plans, meeting with your child's teacher to set goals for your child, asking the teacher for activities to work on at home with your child, limiting TV or video game time, or talking and listening to your child about his/her day.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

All Head Start staff will work with families to promote and encourage regular attendance for each child enrolled in the program. Staff will emphasize to parents during the in-person interview at enrollment, on home visits, and all during the year the importance of children showing up on time and attending every day possible, in order to achieve school readiness and success in the next educational setting.

Head Start regulations require that we *“implement a process to ensure children are safe when they do not arrive at school. If a child is unexpectedly absent and a parent has not contacted the program within one hour of program start time, staff **MUST** attempt to contact the parent to ensure the child’s well-being”*. If you do not notify staff of the absence by 9:00AM, you will be contacted by text, e-mail or phone calls. A home visit may also be conducted if there is no response from parents.

Parents, please notify your child’s Teacher or Family Advocate if your child has an upcoming appointment, is ill, or there is a family crisis which will cause her/him to be absent from school.

If your child is absent without good cause, your Family Advocate will make appropriate efforts to re-engage with your family to resume the child’s attendance. If all efforts fail, according to the approved ACDS Eligibility, Recruitment, Selections, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) Policies and Procedures, your child will be unenrolled and his/her slot will be considered a vacancy to be given to another eligible child.

Please have your child arrive at school on time to allow them to receive the full benefit of what Head Start and Early Head Start has to offer.

SIGN IN/OUT POLICY FOR CHILDREN

Child Care Licensing Standards require that parents or designated persons dropping off or picking up their children from centers must complete the sign-in and sign-out process. This may be done electronically or on paper, depending on current practice. If your child is riding the bus the bus monitor will sign in and out for your child.

CHILD RELEASE POLICY

In keeping with Louisiana Child Day Care Center Class “A” Minimum Standards, ACDS will ensure a daily attendance record for children to include the time of arrival and departure of each child and the name of the person to whom the child was released. Avoyelles Child Development Services is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all enrolled children as they leave the care and responsibility of our staff at the end of the day. A child shall never be released to anyone unless authorized in writing by the parent/guardian. A picture identification will be required if the receiving person is not known to staff. A child may be released to a legal parent (as indicated on the birth certificate) or guardian (as indicated on custody agreements) with the following exceptions:

1. A child shall not be released to a non-custodial parent as indicated by a legal document.
2. A child may not be released to a parent for whom there is a restraining order on file.

These procedures shall be followed for all children whether released from ACDS centers, from buses operated by ACDS, or from staff vehicles in the rare instances when children are transported by staff.

Children Left at the Center or Returning on the Bus

In the event that children are left at the center or returned on the bus because no authorized person was available to receive the child, the staff member in-charge shall contact everyone listed on the child release form. After all efforts are exhausted to contact someone listed on the child release form, the Center Director or the designated staff member in-charge shall call the local police department and explain the situation and ask for assistance with locating the child’s parent/guardian and/or getting the child home safely. If the incident is suspected to have occurred because of neglect by the parents, a report shall be made to the Department of Children and Family Services Service (child protective services) regarding the incident.

DRESS CODE for Children

Please dress your children each day in the following: play clothes that can get dirty; clothes that your child can take on or off by themselves to use the bathroom; and closed-in-shoes that your child can run, jump, or climb in safely. If your child needs clothing, including outer wear (coats, sweaters), our Family Advocates can assist you with meeting those needs. For safety reasons children are not allowed to wear flip flops, sandals, crocs, or boots. Infants and toddlers are not allowed to wear hair beads, barrettes, jewelry, or pacifier holders.

Adults must dress appropriately while at the center, (even when dropping off or picking up their child), or at center sponsored activities. We ask that adults refrain from clothing that is sleep wear; contains profanity; promotes negative behavior (smoking, consuming alcohol etc.) or revealing. Parents should also wear appropriate footwear when entering the building.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Head Start/Early Head Start regulations also require teachers to conduct two scheduled Parent/Teacher conferences each year. Teachers will share information about your child’s educational screenings and progress in meeting individual goals which you will develop together. Home activities to assist in your child’s school readiness will be discussed. It is important that you attend these conferences to keep informed about your child’s progress. Parents can request additional meetings with teachers if needed.

HOME VISITS

Head Start and Early Head Start regulations require teachers to conduct a minimum of two home visits each year, including one before your child attends classes. The purpose is to meet you and your child in your home setting and to share information that will help your child’s teacher best serve you and your child. Additional home visits may be conducted by your Family Advocate if a need arises. Parental involvement is very important during home visits. You are teaching your child that you support their teacher and value their education when you actively participate.



TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

If we provide transportation for your child on an ACDS owned bus, he or she will be required to wear an appropriate restraint system (required by Head Start) and stay seated at all times. Each Head Start bus will be staffed with a Bus Monitor who will assist your child getting on and off the bus. Your children will be taught bus safety practices which need to be reinforced at home. **You shall escort your child to the bus stop and stay with him or her until he or she gets safely on the bus.** Your child will only be released to you, or an adult listed on the release form, and this person must be at the bus door.

If you are providing your own transportation, your child shall arrive at school on time, in an appropriate child restraint. Remember you will be required to “sign your child in” when entering the building, so you will be required to escort your child to the classroom for signage. Never drop your child off unattended. Please do not leave any children unattended in a car when you enter the school.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Our program ensures that enrolled children with identified disabilities and their families receive all applicable program services delivered in the least restrictive possible environment. We also assure that the children fully participate in all program activities. We provide screenings and ongoing assessments of all children to identify any need for special services. If you believe that your child has a special need, please tell your teacher or Family Advocate about your concerns. If follow-up is needed, we may refer your child for further evaluation. Parents are always involved in the referral, evaluation, and goal setting process for their children. Staff members work closely with families and community agencies to provide services to meet the special needs of children. Children may have special needs in the areas of speech, language, learning, hearing, vision, behavior, motor development (involving large or small muscles), or social/emotional health.



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mental wellness for children is important for success in school and life. ACDS programs help children feel good about themselves, develop healthy relationships, manage daily stress and solve problems. Mental health classroom activities provide children with the social and emotional skills they will need to be successful in their next education setting. Our Head Start and Early Head Start staff provide materials and opportunities for each child to explore, experiment, create, question and make sense of the world around them. The classroom structure provides children opportunities to play and work together, make friends and practice social interaction skills. This is an important part of creating mental wellness for your child. Managing unacceptable behaviors in the classroom is another part of our mental health services. We provide support for effective classroom management and positive learning environments; supportive teacher practices; and strategies for supporting children with behaviors and other social, emotional, and mental health concerns.

It is of utmost importance to address the mental health and wellbeing of families. Many children and their family members have seen or experienced traumatic events. These experiences can significantly and negatively affect the mental health and wellbeing of the family unit. Our programs can assist both children and families with referrals to professionals who can provide services. Please let the Teacher or Mental Health Advocate know of events such as parents being away from home; new persons living in the home; illness or hospitalization of a family member; a death in the family; a move by the family; divorce or separation of parents; death of a pet etc. These events may affect your child's behavior at school and the staff will need to know, to provide proper support and nurturing for your child during these difficult times. ACDS has partnerships with mental health and counseling agencies within our community, and we can provide referrals for both children and their family members for these beneficial services.



BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Conscious Discipline is a classroom management program written and developed by Dr. Becky Bailey. It is based on brain research and child development information. Conscious Discipline is a way of organizing schools and classrooms around the idea of a *School Family*. All members of the *School Family* learn how to form relationships with others, communicate well with others, and how to effectively interact with others. Children also learn to manage their own behavior in productive ways. ACDS staff are trained to use Conscious Discipline to build strong relationships between the children, families, and staff. "Time Out" is not practiced by staff at any ACDS center.

Standard Toddler Rules:

1. Keep your hands and feet to yourself; use soft touches.
2. Use a quiet voice while inside.
3. Listen quietly.
4. Sit on your bottom on floor or in a chair.

Standard Pre-K Rules:

1. Walk while inside (classroom or bus)
2. Use a quiet voice while inside.
3. Listen quietly during group activities.
4. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
5. Sit on your bottom in a chair, on the floor, and on the bus seat.

Disciplinary Action PROHIBITED in an ACDS Head Start or Early Head Start Program

The following violations of the Discipline Policy will be grounds for immediate termination of an employee.

- Physical or Corporal punishment which includes but is not limited to yelling, slapping, spanking, yanking, shaking, pinching, exposure to extreme temperatures or other measures producing physical pain, putting anything in the mouth of a child, requiring a child to exercise, or placing a child in an uncomfortable position.
- Verbal abuse, which includes but is not limited to using offensive or profane language, telling a child to "shut up", or making derogatory remarks about children or family members of children in the presence of children.
- The threat of a prohibited action even if there is no intent to follow through with the threat:
- Being disciplined by another child.
- Being bullied by another child.
- Being deprived of food or beverages.
- Being restrained by devices such as highchairs or feeding tables for disciplinary purposes.
- Having active play time withheld for disciplinary purposes, except timeout may be used during active play time for an infraction incurred during the playtime.

Parents and Volunteers who violate this policy may be excluded from the center and Head Start activities entirely.

Protocol for a child who bites a student:

Biting is a form of communication, common with young children. Teaching children how to express their feelings is a form of redirecting this behavior.

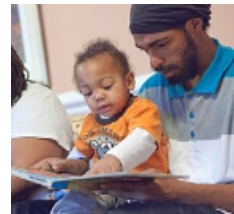
Should a bite occur, the focus will be on the child who was bitten. The child will be comforted and receive care for the bite as follows:

- If the skin is not broken, we use a cold pack.
- If the skin is broken, we will follow medical advice by cleaning the injury and contact the school nurse for further evaluation.

Teachers must complete an incident report, have it signed by administrators, keep a copy, and give a copy to the parent when the child is picked up. Teachers and administration will analyze the cause of any ongoing biting that occurs in the classroom. There is a plan to address the cause of biting, focusing on keeping children safe and helping the children who bite express their needs appropriately. Due to confidentiality, we are unable to provide the name of the child who bit.

Children with IEP's or IFSP's

Behavior of a Head Start child with an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan), or and Early Head Start infant or toddler with an IFSP (Individualized Family Services Plan) will be addressed according to recommendations stipulated in the IEP or IFSP Written Plan. If necessary, a parent and staff conference with the agency responsible for disability services will be conducted.



PARENT RIGHTS

My rights as a parent or guardian in the program include the rights:

1. To be recognized as my child's primary educator.
2. To be treated with respect by all ACDS employees.
3. To be welcomed in my child's classroom. I may visit the center at any time during its hours of operation if I am accompanied by a staff member, per state licensing regulations.
4. To receive information and guidance from the Teacher about my child's progress and development, including regular progress reports from my child's Teacher.
5. To participate in discussions about my child's progress and set goals for my child's learning.
6. To be an advocate for my child. In the event my child has a diagnosed disability or is referred for a concern, I will be involved with the local school district in creating an Individualized Education Plan and will be kept informed on my child's progress in meeting his/her goals.
7. To participate in decisions regarding my child's center and the program. My ideas and suggestions will be valued, and I will have opportunities to share them with staff and other parents. Opportunities include Parent Committee Meetings and Policy Council meetings.
8. To be informed about resources within the community related to education, health, social services, employment, etc. which may help meet my needs.
9. To review and ask for clarification on policies and procedures.
10. To submit any concerns regarding the center's alleged violation of the licensing requirements to the state Licensing office if I am unable at first to resolve the concern at the local center level.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

My responsibilities as a parent/guardian of a child enrolled in the ACDS Head Start or Early Head Start program include the following:

1. Ensure my child attends school every day, consistently and on time when she or he is not ill to support my child's learning and development and ensure later success in school.
2. Participate actively in the program and take advantage of the opportunities that the program offers me for volunteering and training.
3. Adhere to all Avoyelles Child Development Services Policies.
4. Work with teachers, staff, and other families in a cooperative manner.
5. Embrace new ideas and experiences that can benefit me and my children.
6. Help make the program better by offering my positive opinions and helpful suggestions.
7. Take my concerns or complaints about the program to the Head Start Director instead of to the streets or to social media.
8. Ask questions of my child's Teacher, Family Advocate, or other members of the staff.
9. Reinforce what my child learns at school by working with my child at home.
10. Ensure my child is up to date on all required medical and dental needs and immunizations.
11. Work with my Family Advocate to set goals and reach outcomes to meet my needs for growth.



PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteers

1. Classroom Volunteers - We want you to interact with your child and share your individual talents with the other children enrolled in our classrooms. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to become regular volunteers, substitutes, and apply for paid positions within our centers. Some of our current staff were former Head Start parents. Parents can also volunteer to assist Teachers at home by crafting materials needed in the classroom, working on Teacher assigned tasks at home to help your child's learning and development, and reading to your child every day.
2. Food Service Volunteers – Parents may volunteer to assist in the food service program by helping to serve, sitting with children at mealtime to encourage children to eat a variety of foods, teach children manners, and to communicate appropriately during meals.
3. Office Volunteers – Parents may volunteer to assist in the office by helping to run copies, stuff envelopes, and office tasks as directed.
4. Outdoor Learning Volunteers – Parents may volunteer in the outdoor learning center (playground) to add an additional pair of eyes to assure children are properly supervised for safety while playing and learning out of doors.
5. Maintenance Volunteers – Parents may volunteer with routine cleaning and maintenance tasks for which they are qualified. This will assist staff in maintaining safe and healthy environments for your children.
6. Committee Volunteers – Parents may serve on our Health Service Advisory Committee which meets with health professionals to discuss common health problems or issues facing our children and families. You may also serve on our Nutrition Advisory Committee which meets to discuss our food service program and review menus and make recommendations for updates or possible changes. Parent input is always welcomed in these two very important areas of our program.
7. Parents shall be offered a minimum of two opportunities for involvement each year, which may include but are not limited to, an open house, parent education session, parent and staff conference, family potluck dinner, holiday party or parent or grandparent's day.

All regular, consistent volunteers in the center will need to have a criminal background record check as required by Federal Head Start guidelines. Our program will pay for costs related to these requirements. All volunteers are expected to follow the ACDS Confidentiality Policy and avoid/stop any conversation that reveals confidential information about a child or family in the program.

Parent Committees

Each of our centers has a Parent Committee that meets regularly. All Parents of children currently enrolled in the program are automatically members of the Parent Committee at each center. The responsibilities of the Parent Committee are to:

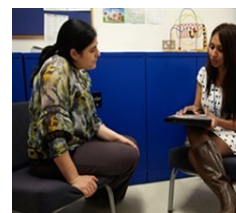
- advise staff in developing and implementing local center activities and services.
- encourage all parents to participate in the program.
- elect parent representatives and alternates to the Policy Council.
- Communicate with elected representatives, issues for discussion at Policy Council meetings.

Policy Council

Parents may serve on the Policy Council if elected by the parents at their centers. The Policy Council must be made up of at least 51% parents of children presently enrolled, plus representatives from the community who are elected by the parents. The Policy Council:

- participates with staff in program planning.
- approves the program's philosophy and long and short-range goals and objectives.
- participates in the recruitment and hiring of employees for the program and approving terminations of employment.
- approves any changes in the service areas.
- approves the criteria for recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities for children.
- approves funding applications and amendments to applications prior to submission.
- helps to resolve community complaints or complaints from other parents.
- works cooperatively with the Director to stay informed and make good decisions about the program and "what is best for children".

Parents may be reimbursed for travel to these meetings, for babysitting while attending meetings, or other reasonable expenses incurred by members.



Parent Engagement

At the time of enrollment, each family will complete the ACDS Head Start Family Needs Assessment Form indicating your needs or interests. Staff members may also observe that you or your child have needs based on their observations during the year. Examples would be, the parent needs Emergency/Crisis Intervention Services because the family home recently flooded; or the parents need Parenting Education because their child's classroom activities are preventing him/her from adapting positively to the new environment. It is our mandate from the Head Start regulations to focus on positive child and family outcomes to help families close the achievement gap and build a better future for the children and families that we serve.

After identifying your needs, your Family Advocate will work with you on setting up an Individual Family Partnership Agreement (IFPA), which will outline activities for both you and the staff to support meeting those needs by setting goals. Staff will also work with you to outline steps that you and staff can take together to successfully meet your goals. The IFPA should be developed **jointly** by you and your assigned Family Advocate who will track your progress in meeting your goals and documenting your outcomes.

Our Family Advocates are mandated by Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards to implement a family partnership process that includes a family partnership agreement, services, and activities to support the following seven listed outcomes:

1. Families as Advocates and Leaders:

Goal: Parents will participate in leadership development, decision- making, program policy development, or in community organizing activities to improve children’s development and learning experiences.

2. Families/Parents as Learners Themselves:

Goal: Parents will advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.

3. Families as Lifelong Educators of their Children:

Goal: Parents will observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.

4. Family Connections to Peers and the Local Community in which they Live:

Goal: Parents will form connections with peers in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.

5. Family Engagement in Transitions from one Education Setting to Another:

Goal: Parents and families will learn to support and advocate for their child’s learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including Head Start to Pre-K early learning environments, and Head Start to kindergarten through elementary school.

6. Family Well-Being - Living in Safe and Healthy Environments and Financially Secure:

Goal: Parents and families will be safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.

7. Parent-Child Relationships – Nurturing and Caring for Children:

Goal: Parents will develop warm relationships that nurture their child’s learning.

This partnership process must be initiated as early in the child’s enrollment as possible and continue for as long as your family participates in the program, based on parent interests’, and needs. ACDS has Community Partnerships with numerous agencies in Avoyelles Parish which include health services, adult education services, social services, nutrition services, disability services, and homeless services. Parents can be referred to these services by our staff who can help you negotiate and advocate for these services to meet the needs of your children and family.



NUTRITION SERVICES

Avoyelles Child Development Services will provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon supplement (snack) for your child each day. This will meet at least 2/3 of her or his daily nutrition requirements. Healthy menus are prepared by our Nutrition Coordinator assuring that foods are not high in fats, sugar, or salt. Serving sizes are based on the requirements of the USDA Child Food and Nutrition Program guidance. Meals are part of our Education program. Children are encouraged, but never forced, to eat all the foods on the daily menu. We do not give candy to the children. Monthly menus are posted in all classrooms, and the monthly newsletter sent home includes the menu for all meals to be served during the month.

Nutrition counseling is available to parents or guardians to assist with any concerns we might find or that you have about your child’s eating habits, weight problems, or other nutrition issues. Some children have food allergies. Special diets will be addressed and menu changes made **ONLY** when we receive written documentation of the allergy or diet issue from your child’s physician. In addition, if your child has dietary restrictions due to religious preferences, a menu revision may be requested. Our Nutrition Goal is to provide nutritious meals to the children at school and provide nutrition education to the families we serve.

Proper nutrition is vital to the growth and development of children. The Nutrition Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and we must comply with all regulations and rules to receive this funding.



HEALTH SERVICES

Promoting adequate health services is important for a child's ability to learn. To participate in the program, your child shall receive wellness medical and dental examinations as a means of maintaining good health. Follow-up services will also be required when a child becomes ill, or it was recommended to correct any condition found during the wellness examination. The School Nurse and Family Advocate will assist the family with finding a doctor or dentist and scheduling appointments and transportation.



PARENT HEALTH GUIDE

It is vital that you notify us when your child has developed a suspected contagious illness, so we may notify other parents, and watch the rest of the children for symptoms. When contagious illnesses are identified among children who attend ACDS centers, a notice will be posted indicating the type of illness, symptoms to look for and other information of interest to parents, such as incubation periods for various diseases. We do this as much in advance as possible so you can plan for alternative care for your child should he/she become ill. Names of children are confidential. Only the type of disease and related information are shared. ACDS will notify the local health department when specific communicable diseases have been diagnosed, as required by law.



Medication Administration Policy

We would like for your child to receive all medications at home. However, if your child's doctor states that he or she must have medication during school hours, then trained staff can give your child the medication. A physician's order must be filed in the child's record for verification. Please do not send any **Non-Prescription Medication** such as nose spray, vitamins, cough syrup, diaper rash ointment, etc. to school with your child. The Health Specialist can explain fully our medication administration policy and give you the forms and help you complete them if needed.

Immunizations

Head Start is required to follow the Public-School regulations for immunizations. Children are required to have their vaccinations up to date. A 10-day grace period is allowed to obtain the needed vaccinations. If the vaccination is not obtained timely, the child will not be able to attend school. If a parent chooses to deny vaccinations, they will be required to sign a statement to that fact. If a breakout of a contagious disease occurs, the unvaccinated child will have to remain home until the disease is contained.

The child shall remain home the day after receiving a vaccination for monitoring of possible side effects, like fever or soreness at the injection site.

Illness and Attendance

To provide a healthy environment for your child and other children at the center, there may be times when your child needs to remain home or be sent home from school. Please learn the following signs of illness and guidelines.

MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT REQUIRE A CHILD REMAIN HOME OR BE SENT HOME FROM SCHOOL. This list is comprised of the common conditions observed in Head Start. The School Nurse will be contacted, when available, regarding these illnesses or any other illness that arise in the classroom. A medical referral to a physician regarding any illness that may be contagious may be completed when deemed necessary.

Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye- A written statement from the child's physician is required to return to school.

Diarrhea- If a child has diarrhea, they must stay home. They may return after they are free of diarrhea for 24 hours.

Impetigo (Indian Fire) - A written statement from the child's physician is required to return to school.

Lice – If a child has live lice or nits they must be isolated immediately. The child shall return to school one day after treatment. Upon return to school the child shall be re-examined by a trained staff member to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.

Mouth Sores/Blisters- A written statement from the child's physician is required to return to school.

Rash (Any of Unknown Origin)- A written statement from the child's physician is required to return to school.

Ringworm- A written statement from the child's physician is required to return to school.

Temperature (Fever)-If a child presents with a temperature of 100.4 or greater, they are to remain home until they are fever free for a minimum of 24 hours or obtain a written statement from the child's physician stating otherwise.

Vomiting- If a child presents with vomiting, they are to remain home until they have completed a minimum of 24 hours free of any episode or obtain a written statement from the child's physician stating otherwise.



Communication

If we are going to meet your child and family needs, it is very important that we communicate with each other. We will communicate with you by text, emails, phone calls, monthly newsletters, or home visits as needed. Since good communication is important, PLEASE inform your child's teacher or Family Advocate of any changes in your living or mailing address, telephone numbers, emergency contact phone numbers, or the names of any contact persons.

Phone contact with the teacher is recommended after 12:00 p.m. (unless in an emergency), as they are working diligently teaching the children from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.. You may also contact your Family Advocate if you are unable to contact your child's school.

For the safety of the children and employees, surveillance cameras have been placed inside and outside all ACDS premises. Video surveillance signs are posted on all buildings.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICIES:

Head Start is required by State Licensing to implement the following mandates:

1509.A. 9: Electronic Devices Policy,
1509.A.10: Computer Practices Policy and
1509.A.11: Programs, Movies and Video Games Policy.

These mandates may be viewed on the LDOE website. *Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 28 – Part CLXL. Bulletin 137, effective July 1, 2015.*

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Personal information is obtained to assist with providing the best services to your child and family. We are committed to protecting this information. If you are the parent or legal guardian of your child, you may have access to any of the information in your child's file. Contact your child's Family Advocate or Center Director to review any information at any time. Only certain staff members can see your child's file as spelled out in the ACDS Confidentiality Policy. Protected passwords are used to access personal data on computers. If we are asked to share your child's information with another agency, you will be asked to sign a consent form to release the information before it is shared.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

All ACDS operated programs provide services to eligible families without regard to race, sex, creed, color, national origin, handicapping condition, sexual orientation, or ancestry including children who are being breastfed.

Avoyelles Child Development Services, Inc. participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program under the United States Department of Agriculture in order to feed your child free of charge. The following is a statement from our agency that we will do so on a basis of equality:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at <http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint> or at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866)632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by mail to: U.S. Department of Agriculture; Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; Fax: (202) 690-7442; Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING POLICY

Federal Regulations state: "Head Start agencies must report suspected child abuse and neglect in accordance with the provisions of applicable state or local law." In addition, Public Law 93-247, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, mandates that all early childhood centers follow the child abuse and neglect laws in their respective states. **All employees of ACDS are mandated** to adhere to the standards and regulations as set forth in the Louisiana Children's Code, Article 610 under mandated reporters. Head Start will assist the families and children and collaborate services with Child Protective Services when deemed appropriate. Reports of any suspected abuse or neglect shall be made to the Louisiana Child Protection Statewide Hotline (855) 4LA-KIDS (855-452-5437).

ADULT CONDUCT POLICY

One of the primary goals of ACDS is to teach children to recognize, understand, and accept standard rules of social conduct and behavior. A large part of this teaching occurs through the "modeling" of appropriate behaviors by adults who come in contact with the children. For adults, as well as children, some behaviors are unacceptable.

- The adults in our program shall have a clear understanding of what behaviors are unacceptable.
- Adults will comply with all ACDS Policies.
- Adults will not use vulgar language while at a center or while participating in an ACDS sponsored activity away from the center.
- Head Start programs are federally mandated to provide a smoke-free, drug-free, and weapons-free campus for young children and families served.
 - A Smoke/Vape-Free campus means that you should extinguish all tobacco products before you turn into the school driveway. Smoking/Vaping is not allowed by staff, parents, volunteers, or visitors in any area of the school property, including restrooms, outdoor learning areas, classrooms, offices, kitchens, hallways, closets, training facilities, buses, and privately owned vehicles while being used to transport children, parents, or staff to a program activity or service.
 - A Drug-Free campus means that children or adults, including staff, parents, volunteers, or visitors to the center shall not appear at any Head Start facility or Head Start sponsored activity with unauthorized controlled substances or alcohol in their possession or appearing to be under the influence of unauthorized controlled substances or alcoholic beverages. The sale or use of such substances is prohibited on ACDS property and at school sponsored activities.
 - A Weapons-Free campus means that children or adults, including staff, parents, volunteers, or visitors to the center, may not bring weapons of any kind onto any ACDS property or to any ACDS sponsored activity, including but not limited to firearms, bombs, or knives.
- Alcoholic beverages are not allowed at any ACDS program or while participating in an ACDS sponsored activity away from the center. Adults shall not appear at any ACDS facility, or ACDS sponsored activity, under the influence of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances. The sale or use of such substances is prohibited on Head Start property and at ACDS sponsored activities, including bus stops.

Adults shall refrain from any acts of physical violence while at an ACDS center or while participating in any ACDS sponsored activity, including at bus stops.
- Adults shall treat ACDS children, families, employees with respect at the centers, in public and while participating in an ACDS sponsored activity, including bus stops. Adults shall not make false statements about, defame, or injure the character of another ACDS parent, child or employee.
- Adults shall treat others with respect, even in times of conflict and disagreement.

- Adults are prohibited from using any form of corporal or physical punishment of any form on an enrolled child, or any other child, while at an ACDS center or while participating in an ACDS sponsored activity, including at bus stops.

CHILD CARE LICENSING STANDARDS

All Avoyelles Child Development Services centers are licensed by the State of Louisiana, Department of Education as Title III Early Learning Centers. As licensed Early Learning Centers, our programs must follow the Minimum Standards outlined in the *Louisiana Administrative Code, Title 28 – Part CLXL. Bulletin 137*

Open Door Policy: Please feel free to visit your child's center at any time. You are welcome to observe your child in any activity throughout the day and to volunteer in the program. Licensing Standards require that **all parents, guardians, and visitors must sign in at the office and be accompanied by a staff member while at the center.** If you have any questions about the program or services, please feel free to speak to any staff member. If we can do anything to make your child's first school experience better, please let us know. We look forward to working with you and thank you for enrolling your child in our program.

LOUISIANA LICENSING CONTACT INFORMATION/COMPLAINT POLICY

Any questions or concerns about Child Care Licensing Standards may be addressed to the following:

Department of Education; Division of Licensing

www.louisianabelieves.com

P.O. Box 4249

Baton Rouge, LA 70821

Phone: (225) 342-9905; FAX: (225) 342-2498

FEES

Early Head Start and Head Start services are provided free of charge. At no time will children or families be assessed a fee for services in the programs.