

# UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start PARENT HANDBOOK



2011-2012

*"If there is anything that we wish to change in the child,  
we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could  
better be changed in ourselves."*

*Carl Jung*

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **English**

If you do not speak English, or if you are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf/blind, you can have interpretation services provided for you at no charge. Tell the person helping you that you need an interpreter.

### **Spanish**

Si Ud. no habla ingles, o si es sordo, tiene dificultad para oir, o es sordo/ciego, se le podran proporcionar servicios de interpretacion sin costo. Digale a la persona que le este ayudando que necesita un interprete.

UCHRA Van Buren Head Start Program is a nonprofit program for children 3 to 5 years of age. Van Buren County Head Start is licensed by the State of Tennessee.

**Mission Statement:** Foster individual development for children, families, and staff to sustain positive transitions into the future.

### **Eligibility**

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program actively recruits income eligible children regardless of race, sex, age, color, national origin, or disabling conditions.

### **Head Start**

Project Head Start is a family and child development program serving 3 and 4 year old children from low-income families. Children must be 3 or 4 years old by October 1 of that school year to be eligible for the Head Start program. Ninety percent of the Head Start children our center enrolls must fall below the federal poverty income guidelines (which are updated by the federal government/yearly). Ten percent of the children may be from families whose income exceeds these guidelines, but who have special needs either in the family or the child. Children with disabilities must be made available to ten percent of the total Head Start slots.

Head Start is a comprehensive program that involves parents and the community in four areas: Education, Health Services, Social Services, and Parent/Community Partnership to ensure that children and families receive needed services. Children may attend (8:00-2:00) sessions, Monday through Thursday during the Van Buren County academic school year.

In the event that there are more applications than available slots, the program considers many factors besides income and age. Factors may include disabilities, single parent families, foster children, high medical bills, and other conditions that may reflect a higher need for Head Start services. In order to determine the special needs of the family, every Head Start applicant will maintain a Family Inventory.

## **FUNDING**

### **Head Start**

Project Head Start is a federally funded program operating under annual grants from the Department of Health and Human Services/Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Head Start. The number of children UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start serves is determined by this grant and may change from year to year depending on federal money available.

### **USDA Food Program**

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start receives supplemental funds for meals served to eligible children through USDA reimbursement.

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964.

### **Non-Federal Share**

The federal government requires that the Head Start program match 25 percent of the federal grant money awarded each year with cash, donations of time, space, and materials from the community and individual volunteers which is called In-kind. The program uses In-kind as the 25 percent non-federal share required

### **Licensing**

Van Buren County Head Start is licensed by the State of Tennessee through the Department of Human Services Division of Licensing and Regulations. The license must be renewed annually. It is a legal requirement that helps ensure the safety of the children enrolled. Van Buren County Head Start is licensed to accommodate 40 children. Head Start voluntarily participates in the STAR Licensing Program. Through this program the center receives a report card and is evaluated on quality of services. Applicants can receive 1, 2, or 3 stars. Van Buren County Head Start has maintained 3 stars since the conception of the Star Program.

## **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH**

### **Philosophy**

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program is based on the premise that all children share certain needs. The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program approach is based on the philosophy that:

A child can benefit most from a comprehensive interdisciplinary program to foster development and remedy problems through a broad range of services; in decision making. There are other factors that enable a developmental approach, which helps children achieve social competencies. The performance standards program, the child's entire family, and the community, must be involved. The program should maximize the strengths and unique experience of each child. The family, which is perceived as the principal influence in the child's development, is invited and encouraged to be a direct participant in the program.

### **Goals**

The overall goal of the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program is to bring about a greater degree of social competence in children. Social competence means the child's everyday effectiveness in dealing with both present environment and future responsibilities in school and life. Social competence objectives are:

- to enhance children's growth and development;
- to strengthen families as the primary nurturers of their children;
- to provide children with educational, health, and nutritional services;
- to link children and their families to needed community services;

- to ensure well-managed programs that involves parents for the accomplishment of goals and objectives.
1. The improvement of the child's health and physical abilities, including appropriate steps to correct present physical and mental issues, to enhance every child's access to an adequate diet and the improvement of the family's attitude toward the future health care and physical abilities of the child;
  2. The encouragement of self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline, this will assist in the development of the child's social and emotional health;
  3. The enhancement of the child's mental processes and skills with particular attention paid to conceptual and communication skills;
  4. The establishment of patterns and expectations of success for the child, which will create a climate of confidence for present and future learning efforts and overall development;
  5. An increased ability by the child and the family to relate to one another and to others;
  6. An enhanced sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and the family.

### **Head Start Outcomes Framework**

This Framework is intended to guide Head Start programs in their ongoing assessment of the progress and accomplishments of children and it enhances efforts to analyze and use data on child outcomes in program self-assessment and continuous improvement. The Framework is composed of 8 general domains, 27 domain elements, and 100 examples of more specific indicators of children's skills, abilities, knowledge, and behaviors. The Framework is based on Head Start Program Performance Standards, Head Start Performance Measures, provisions of the Head Start Act, as amended in 1998, advice from the Head Start Bureau Technical Work Group on Child Outcomes, plus a review of documents on assessment of young children and early childhood program accountability from a variety of state agencies and professional organizations. The Domains, Elements and Indicators are presented as a Framework of building blocks that are important for school success. The Framework is not an exhaustive list of everything a child should know or be able to do by the end of preschool. The Framework is intended to guide assessment of 3 to 5 year old children. It is not for infants, toddlers and pregnant women enrolled in Early Head Start or Migrant Head Start programs.

### **Approach**

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program offers an educational program that utilizes an individualized, child centered, and problem solving approach to learning. Children are encouraged to learn through exploration, experimentation and active involvement. The Creative Curriculum is an important resource used in planning the UCHRA Van Buren Head Start Program.

### **Project CIRCLE STEP**

Project CIRCLE STEP has been incorporated in the curriculum to promote research-based practices and strategies for implementation of early literacy programs. Project CIRCLE STEP provides literacy training for all Head Start programs nationwide; builds on existing quality improvement and professional development efforts; and creates a consistent foundation of

staff knowledge and skills in early literacy to enhance locally designated curriculum and staff development.

### **Be Smart Kids Learning System (BSK)**

*Be Smart Kids* has been incorporated into the curriculum to enhance language, vocabulary, math and logic, music, motor skills and a second language (Spanish). This system involves child-adult interactions through patterns of learning. Research has shown that children learn best between birth and age 5; i.e.: results have shown children 15 months old knowing their colors and letters, 2 year old children knowing their ABC's and counting to 30 after participation in BSK. The program is designed to consistently involve children in 30-minute sessions each week. During these individualized one-on-one sessions, which are tracked and documented, children progress through levels of curriculum. Parents receive progress reports periodically.

### **Benefits**

A longitudinal study reflected that (compared to similar children who did not attend preschool) children with a preschool education were more likely to show:

1. Better achievement
2. Higher high school graduation and college attendance rates
3. Lower juvenile delinquency and adult crime rates
4. Less welfare dependency
5. Fewer teenage pregnancies and lower child bearing rates and
6. Increased rates of employment and job training

### **Confidentiality**

Any information received by UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start Program will be kept in strictest confidence. Under no circumstances will this information be released and/or used for any other purpose than to help the child and the child's development.

All records maintained in our office are locked and access is prohibited to anyone other than staff or service personnel. Children's records are always available to his/her parent or legal guardian. Parents wishing to release information must sign an Information Release Form.

## **YOUR RIGHTS**

All children-receiving child care services in a certified or licensed day care center shall have the following rights:

- The right to be free from physical or mental abuse;
- The right not to be subjected to abusive language or abusive punishment; and,
- The right to be in the care of adults who shall meet their health, safety, and developmental needs.
- All parents, custodians, or guardians of children in a certified or licensed day care center shall have the following rights:
- The right to have access to their children at all times the child is in care and access to the provider caring for their children during normal hours of provider operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider;

- The right to be provided with information about child care regulatory standards, if applicable, where to direct questions about regulatory standards, and how to file a complaint;
- The right to file a complaint against a child care provider without any retribution against the parent, custodian/guardian of child;
- The right to review and discuss with the provider any state reports and deficiencies revealed by such reports.

**Grievance Policy**

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start actively seeks input from families of children enrolled in our program during the year in an effort to improve program quality. In order to address the needs and concerns of our families and the community, or complaints from individuals, the program will deal with groups or organizations in the following manner:

- ❖ Complaints should be submitted in writing (if possible). Any staff member receiving a complaint will immediately gather and write down all available facts and information pertaining to the complaint.
- ❖ Our Director, who will determine how the issue should be addressed, will review all complaints. All complaints will be reviewed within five (5) working days from receipt of written complaint.
- ❖ The Director will take appropriate action to resolve the complaint. If no policy exists to address the situation, the Director will meet with the Policy Council Chairperson to determine how the issue should be approached.
- ❖ All formal complaints will be responded to in writing by our Director within ten (10) working days from receipt of written complaint.
- ❖ If a satisfactory agreement for resolution cannot be reached you may file a grievance in writing to the Executive Director of UCHRA who will review it and respond within ten (10) workdays.
- ❖ If no policy exists to address the situation then the Executive Director will meet with the Chairperson for the Board of Directors taking into consideration documentation and recommendations of the Head Start Director and Policy Council to determine how the issue should be approached.
- ❖ If satisfactory resolution is at an impasse, a mediation process will occur.

If you have any questions concerning our grievance process, you may ask any staff member or contact our center's Director personally.

**ENROLLMENT**

**Application Requirements**

To apply for UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start, parents/guardians must provide the following to the Family Partnership Specialist

Birth Certificate or Birth Verification

Immunization Certificate (age appropriate immunized according to the schedule authorized by the Tennessee Dept. of Health before being accepted for care. (Licensing requirement 1240-4-3-10)

School Medical/Physical Exam

Proof of Income (verified and signed by staff and parent/guardian)

Proof of Insurance

## Partnership Agreement

Social Security Card (copy card of child being enrolled and verify social security #'s for all family members)

### **Enrollment Requirements**

When you are accepted for enrollment in our program, you are required to complete the following forms prior to entering the classroom:

- **Emergency Information Form (Name and Telephone number of a responsible person to contact in an emergency, if parents/guardians cannot be contacted)**  
Licensing regulation (4) (a) (1)(I)
- Permission to Reveal and Obtain Information Form (when applicable)
- Health History (differs with age; must be on file. (Licensing regulation 1240-4-3-10)
- Dental History
- Diagnostic information if your child is disabled or has medical problems
- Diagnostic Screenings (when applicable)
- Proof of On Site Visit
- Signature Proof of receiving licensing requirements and policies (parent handbook)
- Parent Permission and Agreement Form
- Signed Application Form
- Verified Income Status (signed)

Other information will be requested as indicated by family need. A Family Inventory will be maintained during enrollment. If your child has a pre-diagnosed or suspected disability, you will be invited to a meeting to discuss your child's status. Details as to the purpose of the meeting will be made known to you [in writing] prior to each meeting.

Orientation meetings are held in August before the academic term begins. During this meeting, all required paperwork will be completed. The Parent/Guardian will also have a chance to meet the staff, see the classroom and ask questions about the program. Children will not be able to attend UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start until all enrollment criteria are met.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **Hours of Service**

All children should arrive at the center between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m.

Children should leave the center by 2:00 p.m. no later than 2:30 p.m.

Parents who will be late picking up their child, or need to make any changes to their bus route should call the center no later than 1:00 p.m.

Children will not be allowed into the classroom before their scheduled time.

### **General Policy**

In order to receive the benefits of the program, Head Start children are expected to attend all Monday through Thursday sessions. Regular attendance helps our program schedule an individualized education curriculum, field trips, appointments, and meal plan.

The Family Partnership Specialist will determine the child's starting date at the time of enrollment. The child will be expected to attend on the assigned starting date. **If a child does not attend the center on their starting date, another family will fill that slot.** You must notify Head Start as early as possible if your child is ill or will be absent for a day or more. If a child misses four (4) days of school without prior notice from the parent or guardian, or five (5) days in a two-week period, the Family Partnership Specialist will contact the parent or guardian by telephone, letter, or home visit is made or attempted by the Family Partnership Specialist and is met without response, the child can be dropped from the program.

Parents/parents will receive an excused absence form to fill out and return to the center (see Appendix) failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence.

### **Drop Off and Pick Up Of the Children at the Center**

All Children must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or authorized person when being dropped off or picked up from the classroom. Violation of this rule will result in a verbal warning for the first offense, a written warning for the second offense, and finally, if these two means have failed, dismissing the child from the program. **We must insist that parking take place in designated area due to accommodating bus pick-up and drop-off.**

### **Dropping Off Children At Home**

On the afternoon Head Start bus route all children being dropped off at home should have a parent/guardian or authorized person available to receive the child. The bus monitor will have a sign off sheet for the parent to initial indicating that they have received their child. If a parent/guardian or authorized person is not available the bus route will continue as scheduled. When the route is finished the child will be brought back to their home. If the parent/guardian or authorized person is not present to receive the child staff will return to Head Start with the child, and the Department of Children's Services will be notified. **Daily changes of the bus route are confusing and upsetting for children. Please try to limit excessive changes in your drop off locations.**

### **Signing In and Out**

Upon entering the center to pick up or drop off your child, the parent/guardian or authorized person must sign-in and sign-out their child in the child's assigned room and verbally notify staff in the room that the child is being dropped off or picked up. Parents must initial on the Attendance (Sign In/Sign Out) Sheet. This is located as you enter the child's assigned classroom. Any individual entering the building for any reason is required to sign the Center Sign-In Sheet located in the hallway. If a child is not signed in and out, the Family Partnership specialist will assume the child is absent (see appendix under Attendance). Failure to follow this policy will result in a written warning and, as a last resort, dismissal from the program.

### **Authorization to Pick Up**

The Parent/Guardian must fill out an Emergency form before your child can enter the classroom. The Family Partnership Specialist will keep a copy. For your child's protection, only those people listed on the form will be allowed to pick up the child.

It is the responsibility of the Parent/Guardian to inform the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start Family Partnership Specialist of any changes as soon as possible, and to subsequently fill out a Change of Status Form. Any Parent/Guardian Authorized Person coming to pick up a child that are presumed to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will not be permitted to pick up the child. Staff will contact other adults authorized to pick up the child. If no one can be contacted to pick up the child then the Department of Children's Services will be notified.

### **Late Pick-Up**

If a child has not been picked up by 2:30 p.m., the Parent/Guardian will be contacted. If the Parent/Guardian cannot be reached the persons on the emergency list will be contacted. As a last resort, and only if the Parent/Guardian or any other individuals listed on the emergency form cannot be contacted, the Dept. of Children Services and the Van Buren County Sheriff will be notified that the child has been abandoned.

### **Cancellation Due to Weather**

In case of bad weather, please listen to the radio or television for announcement concerning the closing of Van Buren County Schools. If the County schools are closed Head Start will be

closed. If evacuation from the center is required, the center will remain open until all children have been picked up.

***Recommended Radio Stations:***

*94.7 (Cookeville)*

*107.3 & 107.7 (McMinnville & Spencer)*

*103.9 (McMinnville) 105.5(Sparta)*

***Recommended Television Channels:***

***CBS (5), NBC (4), ABC (2) Nashville channel***

**Calendar Closing**

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start closings will follow the same schedule as the Van Buren County School System. During orientation, you should receive a schedule of tentative closings. If there are changes or additions, those dates will be posted on the Parent Bulletin Board and the calendar included in monthly newsletter.

**Smoking**

UCHRA Head Start is a Non-Smoking facility. **Under no circumstances will there be smoking in front of the children!** However, there is a designated area for smoking purposes. This is located by going out the gym door (a canopy is covering the area for your comfort on rainy days.) If children are occupying the gym, please be kind and go out the front door and walk around to the smoking area. There is a container located in the area to dispose of your cigarette-butts. Please always dispose of your cigarettes in these containers to help keep our grounds beautiful. **SMOKING ALLOWED IN DESIGNATED AREA ONLY!** **TENNESSEE LAW PROHIBITS SMOKING TWENTY (20) FEET FROM ANY ENTRANCE!**

**Soft Drinks**

We provide a nutritional environment for the children here at Head Start; therefore we must ask that you do not drink soft drinks in front of the children.

**Please limit your drinking of soft drinks to the “Parent Lounge”.** We do not permit drink cans to be scattered all over the building, please put drink cans in the recycle bin adjacent to the kitchen.

**PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR PRESCHOOL**

Beginning school is a big event in your child’s life. You will be the one who has the most influence over his/her attitude toward the new experience. This is the first step toward many years of formal education, and it is very important that you do everything that you can to help your child adjust and feel positive about this experience.

**General Suggestions**

Be willing to listen to his/her fears about going to school.

Answer all of his/her questions honestly.

Try to show your child a positive feeling towards school and learning.

Talk with the child’s teacher about any specific concerns.

Unless they are sick, send your child to school every day.

If possible, let your child visit the center before their actual starting date. Show them where everything is (like the bathroom or the kitchen).

### **Specific Suggestion**

Here are a few ideas for helping your child get ready for school. We hope the following suggestions will help you to prepare your child for those first special days.

- Show your child where their classroom is. With advance permission, you and your child may spend time there prior to the starting date.
- Show your child the outside area and explain that they will play there when school begins.
- Tell your child the name of their teachers (Mrs. Kim, Mrs. Amy, Mr. Joe, etc....).
- Tell your child how they will get to and from school each day.
- Tell your child who will pick them up and who will drop them off for school.
- Tell your child the time they will be dropped off and picked up. Draw a picture of a clock showing the times.
- Show your child the starting date on your calendar. Count the days until school starts.
- Give your child something special to bring to school to remind him/her of you. A note saying you love them is one idea.
- Dress your child in comfortable play clothes so they will not need to worry about staining clothes during normal school activities, such as painting and playing with sand, water, and clay.
- Encourage your child to tell the teachers when they want or need something (to go to the bathroom, to get a drink of water, etc....).
- Look at any work the child brings home. Tell them what you like about it.

### **Extra Items to Send to School**

Each child should bring to school an extra set of clothing identified with laundry markers or other semi-permanent method. (pants, shirt, socks and underclothes) Always consider appropriate clothing for weather, when it becomes cold remember to change clothing available at school.

Children wearing diapers or training pants should bring the amount of diapers, training pants, baby wipes, and other necessities the parent/guardian estimates will be needed. Only disposable diapers can be worn by children while attending UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. Any other special item needed by the child can be brought to the center when agreed upon with the supervising teacher or Education Specialist.

### **Dressing for School**

Dress your child for comfort and play. Your child will learn through exploration and by being involved in many types of activities. Your child will be encouraged to paint, play in sand, work in our class garden, and other potentially messy activities. Although we provide paint

smocks and try to use washable materials, your child should be dressed so that clothing does not inhibit their activities and development.

Dress your child for safety. While children are active, clothes that are too loose and jewelry (including earrings) may interfere with movement. National statistics show that many playground accidents occur because of jewelry. **Therefore, it is strongly recommended that no jewelry be worn.**

Dress your child for independence. In our program, we will help your child learn to solve problems, think creatively, and act independently. Clothes that children cannot buckle, snap, tie, zip, etc.... interfere with their development.

### **DAILY SCHEDULE**

The daily schedule will vary for each classroom and is posted in the classroom for both the parents and the child to see. Although changes may be made periodically, the daily schedule will be similar to the following:

#### **Preschool**

7:30 – 8:00 Free Choice of Centers  
8:00 - 8:30 Breakfast  
8:30 - 8:45 Clean Up, Brush Teeth and Transition  
8:45 - 9:45 Outdoor Play/Gross Motor  
9:45 - 10:45 Center Time  
10:45- 11:00 Clean Up, Potty, Wash Hands & Transition  
11:00- 11:30 Lunch  
11:30- 11:45 Group Time  
11:45- 1:00 Rest Time  
1:00 - 1:10 Wake Up, Potty, Wash Hands & Transition  
1:10 - 1:25 Group Time  
1:25 - 1:40 Transition, Snack Time & Brush Teeth  
1:40 - 2:30 Free Choice of Centers/Departure

#### **Field Trips**

We extend the learning environment into the community by scheduling regular field trips. The field trips are planned by the teaching staff to include a wide range of activities and experiences for the children. When a field trip is planned, your child's teacher will send you a notification or field trip form. If you do not wish your child to attend the field trip, please let your child's teacher know and appropriate arrangements will be made. With prior arrangements, parents are welcome to come and participate in the activities.

If your child is going to be leaving or arriving at a time other than their schedule (for example, if your child is supposed to be at the center until 2:30 p.m. and you plan to pick them up at 12:00 p.m.), please let your child's teacher know. This will help them plan for their day.

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

### **Child Abuse**

According to Public Law 101-647, Statute

All staff working in a childcare setting, school, Head Start, etc. must report all suspected cases of child abuse. Examples of suspect that would be reported include, but not limited to the following:

Physical Injury: includes, but not limited to: severe lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries and serious bodily harm.

Mental Injury: includes, but not limited to: harm to a child's intellectual or psychological functioning.

Sexual Abuse: includes, but not limited to: persuasion or coercion of a child to participate in or assist another to engage in sexual explicit conduct.

Neglect: includes, but not limited to: serious endangerment to the physical well being of a child, such as failure to provide medical care, leaving children unattended in vehicles for any amount of time or reason, etc.

### **Transportation**

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start bus transports all students we can accommodate. Four-year-olds can be transported by the Van Buren County school buses with prior arrangements if at all feasible. When no other arrangements can be made Parents/Guardians will be responsible for transportation of their child. All children riding Head Start and County Buses must observe all safety rules; failure to do so can result in transportation being denied. UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start provides transportation for education field trips and Head Start related services provided by the program. **DO NOT drop children off on the outside of the building!** All children must be accompanied into the building. (See "Drop Off and Pick Up").

### **Behavior Management**

The Behavior Management Policy used by the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program requires that corporal punishment (spanking) or extended isolation will not be used as disciplinary measures. All staff members, parents, guardians, and parent volunteers will sign a statement verifying their understanding of this policy, during the times they are in the classroom or on Head Start premises. Failure to follow this policy can result in termination of employment or volunteer status. You may not spank your child at the center.

In place of corporal punishment and extended isolation, the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program utilizes the following approaches:

- Preventive measures such as teaching alternatives
- Redirection and substitution
- Natural and logical consequences
- Supervised time-away with verbal contacts.

### **Personal Items Brought to School**

Children are permitted and encouraged to bring personal items to school. If possible, place your child's name on the item. **In selecting items, which you allow your child to bring to school, please select those which provide comfort.** Please do not send toy weapons, war toys, and/or toys that encourage aggression (guns, knives, swords, water pistols, etc....).

Prior to bringing items to school, discuss with your child the proper care, possibility of loss, and their responsibility for the item. Explain that a teacher has to approve the item. Check the item for safety. Toys may be brought from home for Show & Tell Day (see parent calendar). They should be age-appropriate. If the toy is safe, teachers should help the child decide where the toy would best be stored. If the child does not wish to share their toy, the teacher will encourage the child to store the toy when they are not using it for Show & Tell.

The teachers will try to protect the children's personal items. However the safety of the item cannot be guaranteed and neither the teacher nor the center will be responsible if it's lost or damaged.

Television is not part of our daily curriculum. There are occasions when viewing a movie is acceptable. Before allowing children to bring movies to Head Start check with your classroom teacher. We will not view any movies other than those rated G (general audiences).

### **Lost and Found**

When something is found in the classroom, bus or on the playground and no child claims the article, it is placed in a Lost and Found box located in the office. Please check it regularly. Items brought to school that become disruptive to classroom activities or become a major problem will also be placed in lost and found. You will be notified to pick up these items.

### **Covers**

Tennessee Licensing Regulations require that covers and pillow cases are washed weekly and all children who take naps (rest) have individual covers for naptime. Our center provides a cot, cover and small pillow for each child. You can provide a nap "buddy" that can be left at the center every day. If possible, these items should be marked with your child's name. Storage is limited; please select items accordingly. No other child will use your child's cot to sleep on.

### **Transfer of Records**

Head Start programs are required to keep on file records documenting professional diagnoses of disabilities and the results of all screenings, exams, treatment, immunization, family contacts, referrals to outside agencies, developmental assessment, and samples of classroom work. These records can be shared with the public school system if written parental release of information is obtained.

Records in your child's file are the property of UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. With written permission from the parents/guardian, records can be released to another school or facility responsible for services to the child. All requests for transfers must have the parents/guardians signature. Any request will require 24-hours to process. If your child will be leaving our center to attend Kindergarten, you may want to sign this form and leave it in your child's file. Then, if you need forms later during the next year, we will be able to mail them to you or the person/facility you choose. If a form is not in your child's folder, you must come to the office to sign the form before any documents will be released.

### **Reviewing Records**

Parents/Guardians are free to view their child's records at any time. Reviewing your child's records must be done in the office area only. **Under no circumstances may any records**

**leave our office.** Parents who wish copies of items in their child's file may request them in writing at no cost. Copies require at least 24-hours to process.

### **Outdoors**

Outdoor play is a regular part of the daily schedule when the temperature is 35-95 degrees. Adjustments will be made for heat index and wind chill factor. We use the playground as an extension of the classroom. All children who attend school will go outside. Sun block is provided and administered when necessary with written consent from parent/guardian. In most cases, any child who is too ill to participate in our curriculum, which includes outdoor learning, should stay out of school until they have recovered completely. Please send appropriate clothes your child can wear outside. Teachers will make sure hoods and gloves are worn. These items are provided by Head Start and these items will not be shared between the children. They are as needed and if a child happens to take these items home, the parent/guardian should return them to the center. If you are unable to provide your child with appropriate clothing due to family circumstances, please contact the Family Partnership Specialist. We might be able to help you find the needed item.

### **Entry Refusal**

To protect your child from illness, children will not be allowed to stay at school when sick. Your child's teacher has the option of not allowing your child into the classroom if there is suspicion of communicable illness or disease (see "Health").

## **EDUCATION**

The learning environment and the daily schedule is designed to foster independence, self-control, exploration, feelings of positive self-worth, problem solving, creativity, and physical and intellectual growth.

### **Curriculum**

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start implements the Creative Curriculum philosophy. The curriculum is based very much on the transfer of control from the teacher to the child. The main mission is providing developmentally appropriate materials and activities within a wide variety of learning centers. During active learning, children are not just recipients of information but have hands-on experiences. The teachers concentrate on developing a real ability to converse with the child; asking questions that will extend the learning experience that is taking place. Children are provided experiences in language, representation, classification, sequencing, numbers and logical reasoning, special and temporal relations, movement and social/emotional development.

Children are encouraged to make choices and plan what they will do. They are provided with time to work on the activity and to recall or represent the experience that took place. This is called Plan/Work/Recall (Center Time). Plan/Work/Recall helps children make choices, express themselves verbally and non-verbally, plan their activities and recall their experiences. Teachers implement a planning time at the beginning and a recall time at the end of a session as it occurs.

To help the children improve their listening skills and to allow for a variety of learning styles, the teachers plan large group activities at least once a day. Some large groups include story time, films, songs, finger plays, and guest speakers (to include parents).

To help the children plan their activities, work on individual projects, and carry out tasks, the teachers plan small group activities. These activities usually involve a small group of children (usually 10 or less) and include things like art projects, nutritional snacks and science discoveries.

### **Learning Centers**

Rooms are arranged in easily identifiable Learning Centers that the children may choose to work in during center time. Each center has a variety of materials and activities that children can find, use, and put away with a minimum of adult supervision.

When visiting our classroom, you will see a room full of children playing. Our center does not use duplicated learning materials, work sheets, or coloring pages. All activities are designed for hands-on involvement. Activities sent home are designed for parent-child interaction, not for “Busy Time.” As parents/guardians you may ask what your children are learning by playing. The learning centers most often used in our classroom are listed below with examples of which learning experiences the centers can provide for your child:

#### **I. The Block Center**

- A. Increases attention span
- B. Increases child’s ability to concentrate
- C. Develops gross and fine motor skills
- D. Helps develop social skills (cooperative play, oral communication)
- E. Increases math and science concepts, such as space, weight, shape, size, and number concepts

#### **II. The Art Center**

- A. Stimulates the child to express feelings about themselves, their community, and their world
- B. Gives opportunities to learn what people think and how they feel different about the same things
- C. Helps to develop gross and fine motor skills that are a prerequisite to writing
- D. Strengthens the child’s ability to imagine and observe
- E. Helps to build positive self-concepts through successful experiences
- F. Gives opportunities to concentrate, plan and organize
- G. Encourages children to appreciate beauty
- H. Helps to demonstrate the concept of how materials change
- I. Helps develop pre-reading skills through the use of symbols

#### **III. The Home Living Center**

- A. Offers opportunities for role-play and creative dramatics
- B. Offers opportunities for development and use of reading, writing, and number skills.
- C. Helps the child develop acceptable social skills (sharing, taking turns, etc....)
- D. Encourages development of oral language skills

#### **IV. The Discovery Center (Science & Math)**

- A. Increased vocabulary of mathematical and scientific concepts
- B. Encourages the use of counting, sorting, and classifying skills
- C. Strengthens the understanding of size, shape, and textures of objects

- D. Provides opportunities to explore, manipulate, and experiment with measurement, temperature, time, and weight
- E. Stimulates interest in matter and energy, living things and their activities, our earth, man, and his environment

#### **V. The Book Center**

- A. Gives opportunities for children to acquire reading and pre-reading skills
- B. Encourages appreciation and develops a desire for books
- C. Gives opportunities for children to remember details and express ideas
- D. Increases verbal skills through storytelling and use of flannel board figures and puppets
- E. Provides ample opportunity for children to seek quiet time and personal space

#### **VI. The Music Center**

- A. Enhances children's awareness that listening is important for information and enjoyment
- B. Teaches children how to listen effectively
- C. Stimulates creativity in rhythms and movement
- D. Increases oral skills
- E. Increases auditory skills

#### **VII. The Circle/Games Center (Group Rug and Manipulative)**

- A. Encourages talking and sharing as a total group
- B. Offers a place for small group lessons during work time
- C. Offers a space for making plans together
- D. Offers manipulative games for promoting eye-hand coordination and recognition of shape, size, color, etc.
- E. Introduces unit concepts to the entire group
- F. Helps the group learn to complete a task
- G. Offers opportunities to match, sort, and classify

#### **VIII. Outdoor/Indoor Gross Motor**

- A. Offers opportunities for gross-motor development through running, climbing, crawling, skipping, jumping, playing with balls, etc.
- B. Develops writing skills through sand play, painting, drawing, etc.
- C. Develops weighing and measuring skills through water and sand play woodworking, etc.
- D. Offers opportunities for children to watch plants and animals grow.
- E. Promotes development of social skills.
- F. Offers opportunities for children to use their bodies in challenging tasks (promoting self-esteem).

#### **IX. The Sand/Water Center**

- A. Allows children to recognize cause and effect.
- B. Helps to develop concept of sequencing, textures, and form.
- C. Promotes development of social interaction and language skills.

## X. Computer/Writing Center

- A. Develops fine motor hand/eye coordination.
- B. Aids letter, number, colors and shapes recognition.
- C. Promotes social interaction and language skills.

### Daily Schedule

The daily schedule supports our goals for children. We want your child to feel secure and independent, moving from one activity to another as easily and confidently as possible. We strive to provide a variety of learning experiences for a well-rounded education. UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start plans a daily schedule that takes all of these goals into account. The staff follows a schedule day after day so that children may know what will happen next (see “Daily Schedule”).

### Notes to Parents

There are two types of notes to parents: Notes concerning activities and accomplishments the child has demonstrated in the classroom, and notes concerning behaviors exhibited by your child and involving your child.

Notes about activities and accomplishments help teachers and parents keep in close contact. Teachers will look for **Key Experiences** the child has demonstrated in class (see Appendix). During home visits, your child’s teacher will discuss all of these Key Experiences with you, and make note of what you would like to have him/her work on during the year.

Notes about behaviors, including accidents, will be sent home on the same day the incident happens. Should your child demonstrates a violent behavior (such as biting), or if your child is the recipient of a violent behavior (such as being bitten), or has a minor accident (such as falling down on the playground), you will receive a note from the teacher about what happened and what action was taken.

It is the policy of UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start not to include the name of other children involved in an incident. For example, if another child scratches your child you will receive a note saying that your child was scratched and what the teacher did. If your child scratched someone, you will receive a note saying what your child did and what measures the teacher took after the incident. Teachers maintain strict confidentiality concerning any incidents that occur at our center. Please do not ask the teacher to reveal the name(s) of children or families involved in incidents. If you feel more extensive measures should be taken, you may contact the Education Specialist to express your concerns.

### Health

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start staff members are provided training in the areas of medical, dental, nutritional and mental health. The training will help to ensure that a safe, healthy environment is provided to all children and that staff can serve as a resource to the families. Staff members are also provided with CPR and first-aid training.

In the health area, staff assists families in obtaining TennCare and CoverKids when applicable, serving as an advocate when necessary and ensuring all children and families have a primary caregiver/medical home (See Appendix).

### **Immunizations**

Tennessee Day Care regulations require that an Immunization Certificate be on file before a child is permitted to enter the classroom. Immunization status is checked regularly by the Health Services Specialist and the parents/guardians will be consulted. Immunizations are available from the local Health Department or your primary caregiver. **It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to keep them up to date (See Appendix).**

### **Meals**

An on-site cook provides food for the UCHRA Van Buren Head Start. Our program offers breakfast, lunch and snack. Children eat in a family style setting socializing in a relaxed atmosphere. Activities related to nutrition will be planned on a regular basis for children. Please note when your child's class eats breakfast and lunch. If your child misses the time the meal is served, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide for their child. Meals are provided for volunteers who have donated at least three (3) hours of service. All volunteers who substitute in the classroom will be provided meals free of charge (this pertains to meals served during your scheduled volunteer time). No snacks are provided to adults.

### **Nutrition**

Our program strictly follows state and Head Start regulations regarding meals. The meals must be balanced according to State, Federal, and Head Start nutritional guidelines. The Nutritionist for the Van Buren County Board of Education develops menus. A variety of foods must be offered to broaden the children's food experience. UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start makes every attempt to make considerations for cultural preference, ethnic restrictions, identified needs, and nutritional requirements in menu preparation. Menus are posted in the hallway and classroom as soon as they are received. All Parents/Guardians will be provided a copy of the monthly menus. Food cannot be used as punishment or reward in the Head Start Program. Children are offered additional portions as desired and as available during meal times.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start works closely with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in Nashville, Tennessee, in menu and fiscal planning in the nutritional area. As a part of this coordination, all parents are required to complete and sign an Income Eligibility Application (the CACFP or Free Lunch Form) each year (when applicable).

### **Food Brought to School**

Nutritious meals are provided by UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start. **Food is not allowed to be brought from home into the classroom or on buses for an individual child.** If children have food allergies, special arrangements will be made with our food services for substitutions, with a statement from recognized medical authority on file. Arrangements may also be made for religious beliefs and ethnic restrictions.

Special food to share with all the children can be brought by families **but only with prior approval from the teacher.** This includes birthday and holiday treats. This helps us to let you know if someone in your child's group has allergies.

### **Brushing Teeth**

Self-care oral hygiene is emphasized daily as part of the classroom experience. Preschool children brush their teeth twice daily. Toothbrushes and toothpaste will be provided by UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start at the beginning and upon returning from Christmas break.

## Naps

An extended rest period is part of the preschool program. Children are not required to sleep but are required to rest quietly (see "Covers").

## Sickness

Any child unable to participate in the daily schedule (including outside play) due to illness, should not attend their session. Our center will call you to pick up your child if any of the following conditions occur:

- ✓ **Diarrhea**
- ✓ **Nausea with vomiting**
- ✓ **Fever 101 degrees and above**
- ✓ **Chills**
- ✓ **Earache**
- ✓ **Sore throat**
- ✓ **Skin rash or open sores**
- ✓ **If the child appears excessively sleepy or lethargic**
- ✓ **Eye discharge: thick mucus or pus draining or pink eye**
- ✓ **Severe coughing: child gets red or blue in the face, or makes high pitched whooping sound after coughing**

If you wish to be called in circumstances other than those listed above, please state that on the Emergency Form.

Do not bring your child to school if they show any of these symptoms. It is a good idea to have substitute childcare planned for emergencies.

If your child has had a communicable disease, such as measles or strep throat, please contact our Health Services Specialist for information about what you will need to do before your child will be permitted back into the classroom. Some illnesses require a note from the Health Department or physician before we will let your child re-enter the classroom. You will be advised with a note home if a child in our program has contracted or is suspected of a communicable disease. This note will inform you of symptoms to watch for and what necessary actions you must take.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **Emergency Information**

Upon enrollment, the parent/guardian is required to complete an Emergency Form. You are asked to list the names of at least three (3) adults who can be contacted in case your child is sick or in case of any emergency. The adults will be called in the order they are listed. Therefore, if you wish us to contact you first when your child is ill, your name should be listed first. It is extremely important that the names of the individuals listed be kept up to date. This is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. If the information needs to be changed, please fill out a Change of Status form immediately. (See Appendix)

If any of the individuals listed on your form refuse to pick up your child, we will notify the parent/guardian in writing. If that individual is called a second time and refuses to pick up the child, the name of that individual will be dropped from the Emergency Form and the parent/guardian will be notified in writing that a new name will need to be supplied to our office. If the parent/guardian, second individual and third individual are all called and no one

can be reached or refuses to pick up the child, the child will thereafter be refused entry to the center until this information is complete and up to date.

### **Allergies**

Any allergies or special conditions must be noted on the Emergency Form. It is especially important that the staff is aware of allergies to such things as poison ivy, bee stings, and different foods. A list is kept in the classroom to alert staff of any potential problems and restrictions.

### **Accident Insurance**

Accident insurance is provided free of charge for Head Start children while on the premises or during a scheduled Head Start Outing.

If you have primary insurance of any type, including a medical card, this insurance will be a secondary coverage policy only and the primary company's claim must be filed first. The primary company will be responsible for filing with UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start indicated insurance provider.

### **Medication**

**Staff members will not administer medications without a signed permission and instruction from a doctor** (for Administering Medication Form see Appendix). **Over the counter medications will not be given at all.** Parents/guardians may administer medicine to their own children in the center, as they deem necessary. **Expired medications will not be given. Medication must be in original container.**

### **Care of a Sick Child**

If a child becomes ill during the day, he/she will be placed in a supervised area until arrangements can be made for you or someone on your Emergency Form to pick them up. If it is suspected that a child has a communicable disease, they will be separated from the other children and placed in an isolated supervised area.

A letter will be sent to all families any time there is an occurrence of any contagious illness (such as measles or chicken pox) at our center. The letter will list all the symptoms you might want to look for with your own child, and will indicate the steps you will have to take to re-admit your child to the classroom.

Your child's teacher will keep a brief factual record of any symptoms your child might have during the day. A copy will be kept for the office records and one will be sent home with the child.

### **Medical Emergency**

The detailed Medical Emergency Procedure followed by all staff is posted on the bulletin board in the main office. In the case of an accident, a staff member will apply first aid and supervise the care of the injured child. Minor injuries will be treated on site. Every effort will be made to contact the parent or guardian using information on the Emergency Form. A staff member certified in CPR will always be on duty.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start is unable to provide any emergency medical care or transportation to emergency facilities without a signed Emergency Form. For this reason, no child is allowed to enter the center until one has been completed by the parent/guardian. On this form, the parent or guardian authorizes the program and medical professionals to provide emergency care until they arrive. It is critical that the parent or guardians inform the UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start Staff if there are changes in their daytime location or telephone

number. The parent/guardian should contact the Family & Community Partnership Specialist and ask for a Change of Status form. This form should be signed and returned to our office.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to keep all emergency and contact information up to date. Children whose information is found to be in error will be denied entry into the classroom until all corrections and updates have been made.

### **Evacuation**

The State Division of Licensing requires that we inform all parents of our emergency procedures in the event that the center must be evacuated. If time permits, we will try to reach all parents by telephone to inform them of the need to pick up their child. If we must leave the school grounds, we will transport the children to the Spencer Elementary School or Fall Creek Falls State Park Main Office. We ask that you come to this location as quickly as possible to reassure your child of his/her safety.

### **Fire**

Fire drills are scheduled bi-monthly to teach children safety procedures to use in the event of a real fire. If you have any questions, please ask your child's teacher to show you **the procedure posted in the classroom.**

### **Tornado**

Tornado drills are scheduled monthly, to teach the children safety procedures to use in the event of a real tornado. **This procedure is posted in the classroom.**

## **SOCIAL SERVICES**

Social Services, as provided by Head Start, is a program for the entire family. We will do our best to help you or introduce you to people who are qualified to meet your needs. Some ways we can help:

- (1) Obtaining clothes, shoes, and food (clothes bank on premises)
- (2) Budgeting money
- (3) Securing a medical home
- (4) Locating housing
- (5) Providing or identifying counseling services
  - (a) Dealing with family or personal problems
  - (b) Child, spouse, alcohol, or drug abuse
  - (c) Child management
  - (d) Any other concerns involving you, your child or your family environment
- (6) Obtaining education or employment

A community resource directory will be given to each family every year. This is an excellent source of information about agencies that can also assist you in finding answers to questions and help in solving any problems that may come up during the year.

### **Home Visits**

During the year, the Education staff is required to complete two home visits. The Education staff will meet with you and your child in a setting where you both feel comfortable -- preferably in your home. We want to know your child's interests, whether they make friends easily, what foods they like, whether they need special care, and what their habits and routines are normally.

At the same time, the family is free to question the teacher about the daily schedule, the curriculum, lunch, birthday parties, friends their child has at the center, or whatever they would like to know. The purposes of the home visits are to help the family by providing any information you request and by assisting you in any goals you may have for yourself and your family. Education, Health and Social Services staff can provide varied information on such subjects as parenting, health services available in the community, budgeting money or time, going back to school, getting a job, and many other topics.

The staff will schedule these meetings at a time convenient for the parent or guardian. **Home Visits are required for Head Start.**

## **SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start actively recruits disabled children of all ages. The philosophy of our program is to mainstream disabled children, which means that pending recommendation of the Disabilities Screening Committee children with special needs are grouped with non-disabled children in the classroom at all times except when they attend special services, such as speech or physical therapy.

Children with special needs who wish to enroll in UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start must first meet with the Disabilities Screening Committee. During this meeting, your child will be allowed to interact in a classroom situation. The committee will determine if Head Start is the best placement for your child. If not, UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start will assist the family in any way possible to find appropriate placement in the community.

Disabled children will be provided the same opportunities to learn, play and interact with their teachers, peers, and non-disabled children. Every effort will be made to alter the learning environment to accommodate special needs. School age children receive services on an as-needed basis upon request of the parent /guardian.

### **Your Rights as a Special Needs Family**

Your rights and those of any exceptional child may be summed up in the following key terms:

**NOTICE:** You have the right to be informed (receive notice) in writing any time Head Start plans or refuses to identify, evaluate (test), or change the placement of your child.

**PERMISSION:** You must give your permission before your child is tested or placed in a special education program for the first time.

**EVALUATION:** You have the right to have a full evaluation of your child's individual educational needs.

**INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM:** You are a voting member of the Committee which must plan and review an Individual Education Program (IEP) for your child should he/she be determined to be exceptional and in need of special education and related services.

**LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT:** You have a right to have your child educated with children who are typically functioning to the maximum extent appropriate.

**RECORDS:** You have the right to see any record kept on your child and the right to know what Head Start will do to make sure your child's records are kept private.

**HEARINGS:** If at any point along the way you do not agree with how Head Start is dealing with your child concerning his/her identification evaluation, placement, or program, you have a right to due process and may request an impartial hearing.

### **Screenings**

With the advent of the Head Start Handicap Effort in 1972, programs were required to initiate screening programs. These programs are designed to screen all children for possible disabling conditions so that intervention can take place early in the program year. In addition to the health screenings, which include hearing and vision, the screenings for disabilities include articulation, receptive, expressive language, visual, motor and developmental progress. All screening must be completed within forty-five (45) days from the beginning of the program year. You will be notified of all screenings upon completion. Only certain individuals have access to this information:

- Center Director: Can access everything pertaining to children, working in conjunction with service delivery staff to insure timely services and for staff planning services.
- Educational Staff (teaching): All have access to developmental and social/ emotional in order to individualize every child's educational program. Health related screenings are accessed on a need to know basis in order to assist with the educational program or the child.
- Health Services Staff: Can access to insure functioning at developmentally appropriate levels to insure future success in the learning process.
- Consultants/ Health Professionals: Can access on a need to know basis in order to assure services are delivered (i.e. Mental Health Professional, Disability, Doctor, Dentist).

### **Diagnosis**

Screenings are not diagnostic instruments. Children who do not perform satisfactorily on any one of the first screenings are re-screened. If they perform far below age-level on the second screening, they are referred to an appropriate diagnostician for evaluation.

### **IEP Development**

When the diagnostic process is complete and documentation is on file, the child's Individual Education Program (IEP) process begins. The program meetings will involve staff and providers discussing available information on the child and making tentative plans. The parents/guardians are an important part of the IEP. If necessary, transportation to and from the IEP will be provide by the Head Start program. Parental input for goals, objectives and activities is sought. The parents are given a copy of the completed IEP form.

### **IEP Services**

Head Start programs endeavor to provide the services identified on the child's IEP, or contact appropriate professionals to provide the services. For example, speech therapy may be provided by an on-staff therapist or speech aide, by the local Board of Education with whom the Head Start program has a contract, or by a private consultant. Due to limited funds, programs are constantly searching for more cost-effective ways in which to provide services. For example, in some agencies, physical therapy is provided by a member of the classroom staff who has observed and been trained by a physical therapist in the exercises that help the child. Although the physical therapist sees the child only once every two or three months, the service is still being provided by Head Start staff.

### **Transition to Public School**

In addition to services provided to the child and family during their Head Start experience, Head Start also assists in the child's enrollment in the local school district. The assistance may take the form of helping with the initial registration, sending records, or contacting school officials. This allows for prior plans to be made by both the school system and the parents. We also assist children with individual, developmental and school-readiness goals. We prepare them to transition from family-style to cafeteria style food service. We organize parent/child Kindergarten orientation. We provide the child with actual Kindergarten/School experiences in conjunction with the Van Buren County School System.

### **Staff Training**

In order to better service disabled children, training is provided for Head Start staff. Training topics include:

- \* *Child development*
- \* *Identification of disabled children*
- \* *Behavior management*
- \* *Working with parents of disabled children*
- \* *Specific disabling conditions*
- \* *IEP development*

Training is provided by local program personnel, consultants, and other members of the Head Start Disabilities Network such as the Specially Funded Coordinators, Quality Improvement Center for Disability Services, Chapel Hill Outreach Program, and the Western Kentucky Training and Technical Assistance Program.

### **Head Start and Public School Work Together**

While each of the Head Start Programs in Tennessee differs, there are basic ways in which the local school district and Head Start may work together to provide continuous quality services to disabled children:

- \* Sharing information for Child Find
- \* Referring children for recruitment and enrollment in Head Start and/or the local school district
- \* Sharing pertinent information and records with appropriate parental permission
- \* Serving on the Multi Service-Advisory Council or Policy Council.
- \* Sharing information concerning community resources
- \* Transitioning children from Head Start to Public School System

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers are vital to the operation of the Head Start program. Children need a lot of adult attention to teach them to count, comfort them when they cry, help them dig up treasure on the playground, mix ingredients for nutrition activities, and, especially, to tell them how well they are doing. Two teachers in a room of 20 children can do all these things but ten teachers can do it twice as well. Parents/guardians are the child's first teachers. Therefore, we encourage you to volunteer in the classroom.

Children take great pride in having their parents/guardians in the classroom. Parents/guardians can take advantage of the opportunity to see their child in a classroom setting. Volunteers fit easily into a Creative Curriculum classroom. Adults can talk with children while they play. Families are encouraged to be actively involved in whatever area is of most interest to them. Please consult the Parent Newsletter/Calendar for announcements of activities that may need volunteers.

Volunteer opportunities include but are not limited to:

**Preparing homemade learning materials**  
**Fixing toys that are damaged**  
**Being bus monitors during field trips and health appointments**  
**Going on field trips**  
**Saving containers to use in the Home Living Center**  
**Putting on a puppet show**  
**Making decorations for the room**  
**Requesting donated materials for the center**  
**Helping in the kitchen or during meals**  
**Playing on the playground**  
**Helping at nap time**  
**Making doll clothes**  
**Matting pictures**  
**Helping with decorations**  
**Preparing for that special party or event**  
**Cleaning up the room after an activity**  
**Typing**  
**Filing**  
**Organizing materials**  
**Setting up for a parent meeting**  
**Collecting materials for the classroom**  
**Calling other parents**

### **Volunteers Signing In and Out**

Volunteer services are counted as In-Kind contributions for the program. For this reason, both family and community volunteers are required to sign a Volunteer Time Sheet noting the times/date they volunteered (See Appendix). If a Volunteer Time Sheet is not available, ask one of the teachers to help you. Observation forms are available outside each classroom door (See Appendix). We ask all volunteers to take a moment to provide us with your input. We are only as good as you help us to be.

Maintaining In-Kind helps the program in two ways. First, because the federal government requires that the Head Start program match 25% of the federal grant money awarded with In-Kind contributions. Signing in helps prove that the community and family are providing the non-federal share required. Second, signing in helps the center plan activities for those times when large numbers of volunteers are in the classroom.

### **Volunteer Training**

Anyone who wishes to volunteer in the classroom is required to attend volunteer training. During this training you will be instructed about the center's rules and will be asked to sign an affirmation statement form concerning confidentiality, discipline, etc. (see Appendix).

#### Things Prospective Volunteers Should Know

While you are volunteering in the classroom, you should observe these rules:

- \* If you are going to be volunteering more than twenty (20) hours, you must provide us with a copy of your TB test.
- \* Laugh with, not at the children.
- \* The teachers are generally not free to socialize during the class time.  
Jot down any questions you may have and the teachers and service area specialist can discuss them with you at a later time.
- \* You may not discipline the children; you should indicate the problem to one of the teachers in the room.
- \* You may not take any child out of the group unless a teacher or coordinator is with you.

- \* You may not bring in food or drink to the classroom.

During lunch, please:

- \* Sit at a table and model for the children.
- \* Talk with the children.
- \* Help with clean up.
- \* Help children wash their hands before meal times.

**Remember:**

- ✓ Working with our program is voluntary; it is not required of any family member.
- ✓ There are no educational requirements, such as an elementary or high school degree.
- ✓ You do not need any special abilities or talents.
- ✓ Males and females of all ages are needed.
- ✓ The time you volunteer is at your convenience; however, we need to plan with you so that we may work your time into our plan. You can donate an hour, a day, or several days a month.
- ✓ Your individual desires, interest, talents, and abilities can be of use in the classroom.
- ✓ You will be part of a program where you will be of invaluable service and where you will serve on behalf of UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start children and families.
- ✓ All information you hear is confidential and should not be repeated.
- ✓ Respect other families' cultures and differences.
- ✓ Accept supervision from paid staff, follow through on specific request, and support class-room activities and express criticism and disagreements in private. **Never in the classroom.**
- ✓ Follow common sense guidelines for public behavior. Drug, alcohol and tobacco use, swearing, threatening, shouting, fighting, and firearms are all examples of common sense prohibitions. There are plenty more. Generally speaking, if you cannot do it in the mall, you probably cannot do it in the classroom.

All Classroom Volunteers, including parents, are expected to adhere to classroom conduct guidelines in order to maintain their volunteering privileges.

Van Buren Head Start reserves the right to deny access to Head Start facilities to parents and volunteers who violate the above guidelines for classroom conduct.

**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Family involvement in a child's preschool enhances the experience for both parents and children. Every Head Start program must have effective family participation. Parents are encouraged to be as actively involved in their child's education as possible.

**Performance Standards Appendix A**

Appendix A is the governance regulation that details the rights of Head Start families. There are at least four major kinds of participation in our program:

- (1) Participation in the process of making decisions about the nature and operation of the program
- (2) Participation in the classroom
- (3) Home activities
- (4) Communication

## **1) Participation in Making Decisions**

Parents/guardians can help make decisions concerning our program in two ways. First, parents/guardians make up 51% of the Policy Council, the governing board of our facility. The Policy Council approves the grant application, conducts detailed annual program evaluations, approves selection criteria of children for the program, approves budgets for improvement and expansions of the program, and hires staff. The Policy Council also reviews and revises policies used by our program.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start parents can be members of the Policy Council and all parents are members of the Center Committee. Families are invited to attend monthly Parent Committee meetings that are both social and informative. Programs for the meetings are based on the interest surveys you are asked to return during the year. During the meetings, parents/guardians may also discuss center issues, field trips, or how to solve a community problem.

Officers for the Center Committee and participants in the Policy Council are elected by the parents/guardians of children currently enrolled during the first 30 days of the program year.

## **2) Participation in the Classroom**

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start strongly believes in involving families in every aspect of the program and its service area. The relationship the family and child form with each other will shape the entire course of the child's learning and growing years.

The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start classroom is open to all parents. Having parent/guardians in the classroom has three primary advantages:

- (1) Providing the parents/guardians a better understanding of what the center is doing for the children and the kinds of home assistance they may require.
- (2) Showing the child the depth of his/her family's concern.
- (3) Providing the staff an opportunity to know the family better and to learn from them.

Parents are invited to apply for staff vacancies as qualifications allow. Volunteer participation in the program will be taken into consideration when hiring parents/guardians for staff positions. Parents/guardians who wish to observe their child are welcome to watch them at play, at meals, and on the playground. They are also invited to observe during screenings or therapy sessions. Observing your child often gives the parent/guardian a feeling of how your child views the world.

## **3) Home Activities**

Our curriculum works best when teachers and families work together. Each of us has something valuable to contribute. Your home is your child's first and continuous learning environment. Many families have asked us what they can do to help their children succeed in school. Sometimes the best thing you can do is to be a good listener and to talk with your child as you go about your normal, everyday household chores.

From time to time, our center will send home information and activities that families can do with their child. These are not homework or ditto sheets. They are suggestions that might be helpful for you as you try to encourage your child to succeed and become more independent. They will also help extend the experiences your child has in the classroom into the home. In addition to home activities Power Packs (packs with materials such as educational games and books, etc. for you and your child to enjoy at home), are available to check out at your convenience. We also have many teaching materials available from our lending library for your use at home.

#### **4) Parent/Guardian Communication**

The parent's bulletin board is located in the main hallway. The bulletin boards are used to post current information. Please check it regularly. You can also use it to post information. Feel free to use it to inform other families or staff members about events you want to share. Notes are sent home on a regular daily basis with your child. Please look over the paperwork each day for pertinent information regarding Head Start activities.

The staff members may contact you by telephone to provide or obtain needed information. **It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to keep all telephone numbers, addresses, etc. up to date.** If you have a change in your telephone number, please complete a Change of Status form. UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start agrees to keep all information concerning your family confidential.

Please feel free to contact any of our staff members by telephone. The office number is 423-881-5182. In the event that the staff member you need to talk with is out of the office, a message will be left so that they may return your call.

**In the event of an emergency situation such as loss of electricity, parents/guardians can contact the center on the emergency number: 423-881-5292. Please remember the number is used only in the event of a power outage or if the current phone line is not in working order.**

### **FAMILIES ARE IMPORTANT**

Families are a very important part of our childcare program. You are the very special people the children watch, learn from, copy, and go to in a time of need. The UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start program helps children by helping each parent/guardian develop skills, become involved, make new friends, and grow as a total person. Our lives are easier when we have others who care and want to help. We do care and are ready to help in any way we can. Please come to us if you need anything.

Also, we need you. As you are so vitally important to your child, you are also vitally important to keeping our program alive and growing. We want it to be the best it can be for your child. No one knows your child like you, so **Attend** meetings, **Give** your opinion, and **Communicate** with the program, the program staff, and most of all, your child.

### **MALE INVOLVEMENT**

Head Start's Male and Father Involvement Initiative encourages fathers and male figures to be actively involved in the lives of Head Start children. It is a proven fact that children are more successful when this occurs. We also value the ideas that:

- 1). All fathers can be contributors to the well being of their children.
- 2). Parents are partners in raising their children, even when they don't live in the same household.

UCHRA Van Buren County Head Start will ensure **3** activities for Male/Father Involvement each year. These activities will be:

- 1). **“Donuts for Dads”** - this event will occur during the month of September. Fathers and/or male figures will be encouraged to attend a “Meet and Greet” (for fathers and males only). This event will allow all that attend the opportunity to socialize and discover the importance of their involvement and methods of being involved.
- 2). **“Birds of a Feather”** - this event will occur mid-school year, fathers and male figures will be encouraged to participate with children in building a birdhouse for each child to take home.
- 3). **“MVP” (Male Valued Partner/Most Valued Person) Day** - this event will occur at the years end. Fathers and male figures will be encouraged to attend and participate in all event activities interacting with children. This interaction will allow both males and children to benefit from the experience.

