

2018 - 2019

# First Step

Early Learning & Family Support Programs

A Division of Community Link

## Parent Handbook



*The Mission of Community Link is to challenge, teach, and inspire both participants and community, linking them in ways that enhance their lives.*



## FIRST STEP PARENT EDUCATOR OR SERVICE PROVIDERS INFORMATION

**My Parent Educator or Service Provider's Name:**

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**Phone Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Director:** Shelise Zurliene Phone Number 526-3967

### **Names and Phone Numbers of all Staff:**

Community Link's Executive Director:	John Huelskamp	526-3905
First Step's Program Director:	Shelise Zurliene	526-3967
First Step's Administrative Assistant:	Robin Klocke	526-3960

Laurie Hemker	526-3916	Social-Emotional Specialist
Amber Pruitt	526-3961	Early Head Start Disabilities Service Coordinator
Deb Guest	526-3970	Parent Educator/Parent, Family, Community Engagement Assistant
Amber Livasy	526-3968	Parent Educator
Chrissy Brown	526-3964	Parent Educator
Tabitha Isaak	526-3969	Parent Educator
Danayka Berrocal	526-3965	Bilingual Parent Educator
Deb Beckmann	526-3972	Early Intervention Disabilities Service Coordinator
Geralyn Fehrmann		Registered Nurse Dietician

### **Contracted Early Intervention Staff**

Diane Connelly	Speech Therapist
Maribeth Detmer	Speech Therapist
Linda Hylla	Social/Emotional Therapist
Dave Toennies	Physical Therapist
Amy Becker	Developmental Therapist

### **Our office is open on the following schedule:**

Monday—8:00 to 4:15  
Tuesday—8:00 to 4:15  
Wednesday—8:00 to 4:15  
Thursday—8:00 to 4:15  
Friday—8:00 to 3:00



**Welcome  
to the**

**First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs**

We appreciate the fact that you have allowed us to come into your home and to become a part of your family's resource network.

This Handbook is designed to inform you about how services will be coordinated and delivered, and the purpose behind the First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs.

In order for First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs to work, there must be communication between the Parent Educator/Service Provider and the parent. We know that you are the best teacher your child will ever have. First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs is here to assist you with answering questions, addressing concerns and getting the support you need to meet your family's specific needs.

If you have any particular questions concerning your participation in our program or any family needs, please refer to this handbook and always feel free to contact your Parent Educator/Service Provider or other program staff. We believe that a strong partnership between the program and parents is the key to success.



# Early Learning & Family Support Programs

A Division of Community Link, Inc.

Mailing Address:

PO Box 157  
1665 North 4th Street  
Breese, IL 62230

Location Address:

955 North Plum Street  
Breese, IL 62230

Phone: 618-526-8830

Fax: 618-526-8831

Dear First Step Families:

We wish to welcome you and your family to our programs. It is our desire to make your family's transition into our programs a pleasant and rewarding experience.

Children may live with one or both parents, a grandparent, or a foster parent or a legal guardian. We use the word parent to mean the child's primary caregiver.

In order to have a successful program, families and staff must share their talents, knowledge, time and energy so that you and your children can receive the greatest benefits.

Parents who participate in the program show their children that they think learning and sharing are important. We urge you to participate as much as possible.

If you have any particular needs concerning your child's participation in our program or any family needs, please refer to this handbook and always feel free to contact us.

While it is important to build rapport and create lasting relationships, it is also important to maintain professional boundaries when working with families. With this being said, First Step staff is not recommended to attend an enrolled family's private event (birthday parties, celebrations, etc), 'friend' an enrolled family on facebook, purchase items from an enrolled family (business, fundraiser, etc) that could be seen as a conflict of interest, etc.

The First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs Staff

**Philosophy  
of  
Community Link's  
First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs**

Community Link First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs believes that parents are the primary decision-makers in all aspects of their children's lives. Parents possess the capabilities and competencies to explore options and make informed decisions regarding what they feel best meet their needs.

Based on this belief and the recognition of individual family values, diversities and priorities, we are committed to forming partnerships with families in accessing the resources, services, support systems, and information they have identified.

We also believe that services, based on each family's values, diversities and priorities, should be easily accessible, community-based and provided in the child's natural environment by professionals who have knowledge and expertise with young children and families.

In keeping with these beliefs, First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs strives to provide an array of services and to work collaboratively with families and other agencies so that services can be individualized to meet the particular needs of each family.

## First Step Home Visits and Playgroups

### Playgroup (for enrolled and waitlisted families only)

- Playgroups are provided 22 times a year.
- Groups last 2 hours.
- Ask Parent Educator if siblings can attend.
- Parent/Guardian must attend with the enrolled child.
- First Step will pay admission fees for enrolled children and parents.
- For Early Head Start enrolled families:
  - Transportation is provided on an as needed basis with 3 working day notice before playgroups and no additional transportation or gas cards can be added.
  - Number of car seats and number of people in family needing transportation
  - Transportation only includes parent/guardian, enrolled Early Head Start child and siblings.
  - No food or drinks in vehicles.

### Playgroup Activities

1. **Snacks**—Parents, children and staff eat together at playgroups.
2. **Free play**—Children are able to choose from a variety of activities such as blocks, trucks, dramatic play, art, reading, science, math, puzzles, etc.
3. **Gross motor play**—Children are given the opportunity to exercise their large muscles through activities such as push cars, climbers, playground balls, and songs with movements. Children can go outside when weather permits. The child should be dressed appropriately for outdoor activities.
4. **Small group**—Learning centers are arranged for the purpose of working on activities such as language, numbers, colors, shapes, stories, fine motor skills, etc.
5. **Large group**—Children and adults get together for a large group experience that includes such activities as singing songs, exercising to music, and finger plays.

### Parent Meetings/Parent Advocacy

- Parent meetings will be offered.
- Snacks and drink are provided at all events.
- Trainings are provided based on parent surveys.
- Parent Advocacy classes are offered throughout the year.

### Early Head Start and Prevention Attendance: Home Visits & Playgroups

1. Home visits must be made weekly. If you miss **2 consecutive visits** without contacting your Parent Educator, they **will** send you a letter to find out why the home visits are not taking place and to see if there is anything wrong.
2. Home visit attendance is recorded each week. All missed visits are expected to be made up.
3. If you must cancel your home visit, please notify your Parent Educator by phone or text message. A family **may be dropped** after several missed visits.
4. Just as we expect you to be at home for scheduled visits, as parents, you have the right to expect the Parent Educator to be at your home on time. If the Parent Educator is fifteen minutes late, then you can assume that something has happened to change the schedule. If at all possible, someone will contact you if the Parent Educator knows she is not going to make

it to your home for the visit. You can also call the office to make sure the Parent Educator is running late or something is wrong. It is also in the best interest of the Parent Educator because it will let the office know to find out if something happened to the Parent Educator.

5. Playgroups attendance is encouraged, but you will not be dropped because you cannot attend. For some working parents it takes a special effort to attend playgroups, and we understand and try to work with families to help them attend as many groups as possible.

### Early Intervention

	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>To Be Eligible</b>	<b>Weekly Home Visits</b>
<b>Children</b>	Birth to 3 years of age	Vary according to Service Providers	Child and Family Connections in your area will determine eligibility	- Determined by CFC. Visits usually last for 1 hour, evaluations/assessments can take up to 3 hours.

### Prevention

	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>To Be Eligible</b>	<b>Weekly Home Visits</b>
<b>Children</b>	2 to 4 years of age	Vary according to family needs, generally 8:00 am. to 4:15 pm. Monday - Thursday and 8:00 am. to 3:00 pm. on Friday.	Child must not be receiving any other services through the First Step Program	- 60 minutes a week - Parents-As-Teachers curriculum

### Child Waiver

	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>To Be Eligible</b>	<b>Home Visits</b>
<b>Children</b>	3 to 21 years of age	Vary according to family needs, generally 8:00 am. to 4:15 pm. Monday - Thursday and 8:00 am. to 3:00 pm. on Friday.	Referrals are accepted from the States PUNS system	- Varies according to family needs.

## Early Head Start

	<b>Ages</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>To Be Eligible</b>	<b>Weekly Home Visits</b>
<b>Children</b>	Birth to 3 years of age	Vary according to family needs, generally 8:00 am. to 4:15 pm. Monday - Thursday and 8:00 am. to 3:00 pm. on Friday.	Parents must be willing to meet for 90 minutes once a week for enrolled children and must meet enrollment income guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 90 minutes a week</li> <li>- If 2 kids or pregnant mom &amp; 1 or more kids, weekly visits are up to 2 hours.</li> <li>- Parent or legal guardian must be present (no babysitters).</li> <li>- Our goal is to help the parent become the child's BEST teacher.</li> <li>- Parents-As-Teachers curriculum</li> </ul>
<b>Pregnant Women</b>	Any age if pregnant	Vary according to family needs, generally 8:00 am. to 4:15 pm. Monday - Thursday and 8:00 am. to 3:00 pm. on Friday.	Parents must be willing to meet for 90 minutes once a week and must meet EHS enrollment guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer weekly 90 minute home visits.</li> <li>- If pregnant &amp; 1 or more children, weekly visits are up to 2 hours.</li> <li>- Our goal is to prepare the parent to become the child's BEST teacher.</li> <li>- Information on how your baby is growing, how the baby's health is connected to you, and how to locate resources in preparing for the baby's birth.</li> <li>- Family Partnership Agreement will be developed.</li> </ul>



# Early Learning & Family Support Programs

A Division of Community Link, Inc.

## Home Base Option for Children & Prenatal Services

### Parent Participation Agreement

First Step Early Head Start (EHS) home based program relies on the family and EHS staff to work together in order for growth to be achieved.

**EHS staff** will work with you and your child to plan weekly one and a half (1.5) hour home visits for single children and up to two (2) hours for families with more than one child or child & prenatal enrolled. EHS will provide at least 22 socializations per year and will provide transportation to these groups, if needed. If an EHS staff member is sick or unavailable and must cancel your scheduled home visit, an effort will be made to contact you by phone.

The EHS Program will offer at least 46 home visits per year and 22 socializations. If a home visit is cancelled, staff will attempt to offer and complete a make-up within the next seven (7) days. EHS staff will advocate and provide assistance to help develop and meet family goals. EHS staff will do developmental, behavioral, and sensory screenings within 45 days of enrollment. EHS will encourage all parents to participate in Parent Committee and the Policy Council meetings, where parents have a voice and are able to help make decisions and policies regarding the EHS program.

**As the parent or guardian:** I understand that my child(ren) will be enrolled in the home base option and I will be home and participate fully in weekly home visits. I understand that all EHS staff is mandated to report any suspected child abuse and/or neglect to DCFS.

I will provide records and/or give consent for records that document that my child(ren) will complete immunizations, lead screening, TB test, a hemoglobin or hematocrit test, a dental exam (for children over 2 years old) and all recommended well-baby checks. All prenatal clients will complete medical exam and a dental exam, completed as early in the term as possible.

I will not come or bring my child to socializations if any family member planning to attend is sick or running a fever or has other contagious conditions, such as lice, pink eye, diarrhea or vomiting; and I will let EHS staff know prior to a home visit, if at all possible, if any member of my family has had something contagious (in last 24 hours). I will let EHS staff know when I need to cancel the visit and reschedule for later.

We will work together to plan the activities for each home visit and I will expect EHS staff to share skills that I may use with my child during the home visit, and continue to use during the week to help my child develop and learn socially, emotionally, physically, and intellectually.

**Community Link, Inc**  
**Early Head Start Participation Agreement**

We believe you are the primary educator of your child and want to support you in this critical role. Our staff is committed to assisting families to meet the developmental needs of their children, including educational, health, dental, nutrition, emotional, and special needs. We believe strong parental involvement is necessary for each child's development and success in life. We will enroll families who demonstrate belief in and commitment to our program's philosophy and methods.

**Together we will . . .**

look at how your child is developing and learning.

discuss and plan activities you and your child will do together during the week which will help you enjoy one another during daily activities and teachable moments.

look at your child's health and dental needs to ensure he/she meets all of the Head Start health requirements within 45 days of enrollment, as well as maintain a schedule of well child checks to insure wellness.

explore information from other community services which may benefit your family.

create family goals within Family Partnership Agreement to provide direction for our home visits.

offer many free family socializations which will provide opportunities for you to meet other families with young children.

**I will . . .**

participate according to the program guidelines. This will include a weekly 90 minute home visit and monthly socializations.

contact my home visitor right away if I realize that I am unable to make a scheduled meeting or if a member of my family is ill.

understand that I am my child's most important teacher, not the home visitor. Therefore, I agree to actively participate in each visit, sitting on the floor (if able). I will focus on my child, so I will turn the TV off, not talk on the phone, or do housework during the visit.

be sensitive to my home visitor's possible allergies, etc. I will remove overly-friendly pets from the area where we are having our visit.

attend as many of the socializations as possible. I understand that these are designed for my whole family.

not take pictures of anyone besides my own child at socializations.

respect my Parent Educator by not photographing, videotaping or live streaming them without their consent.

inform the staff if I choose not to remain in the program. I understand there is a waiting list.

# **First Step Early Learning and Family Support Programs**

## **Illness in Children**

Most children have colds, the flu, and other illnesses during the year. At times these occur when they are at playgroups or at home during the time of their scheduled home visit.

One of the best ways to reduce illness is to wash your hands and your child's hands often. Frequent hand washing is important, especially after using the bathroom, assisting your child in the bathroom, changing a diaper (even if it is just wet), before cooking and after handling meats, before eating, after touching any body fluids including blowing your nose or helping a child with a runny nose. **Infectious germs live on all surfaces.** The only way to remove them is to **wash your hands with soap.** Water by itself does not do any good. Hand wipes and hand gel are better than nothing when soap is not available. However, it is not as effective as soap and running water.

## **Communicable Diseases**

When a child has a communicable disease, such as chicken pox, measles, mumps, head lice or scabies, the Parent Educator **will not** go into the home for a home visit **during the communicable period.** Flu, colds, strep throat, non-severe impetigo, etc. will be dealt with on an individual basis. Factors to be considered: if the child is currently under treatment for his/her condition, is past the communicable stage and if the child feels like having a home visit. Sometimes children will run a fever and have chronic colds, allergies, etc. all winter. The parent/Parent Educator will use their own judgment as to whether the child would benefit from the home visit on any given day.

## **Resource Directory**

Each family in the program will receive a copy of a Resource Directory. This Resource Directory is a listing of local agencies that might be of interest to First Step families. It includes services such as the Department of Human Services, food pantries, special needs services and other resources for families with young children.

## **Confidentiality**

### **Files**

The information contained in every file is CONFIDENTIAL and is not to be circulated outside the First Step Program without the prior written consent of the family.

First Step Program will not allow access to information contained in files to be given to anyone outside of this agency without written consent of the parent or guardian of the enrolled person.

Persons authorized to see files are:

- The parent or guardian of a recipient who is UNDER 12 years of age. Please remember that this means EITHER parent, even if the parents are divorced and the non-custodial parent is making the request. The only exception is this would be in cases where a court has terminated parental rights.
- First Step Staff/Contracted Providers
- First Step Self-Assessment teams
- All Peer Review Team (for documentation of services only)
- If the client is a DCFS ward, then DCFS must sign the consent to release information.

First Step must advise parents of their rights concerning these files and information. Parents have the right to read, review, and request a revision of information in their child's file. First Step must respond to a parental written request for access to their child's file within 30 days. If the court subpoenas files, First Step must comply and send the requested files.

## **Notice of Abuse/Neglect and Exploitation Protection**

- 1) At least annually, Community Link shall provide to individuals and/or their legal representatives written information about protections against abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
  - a) The Department of Children and Family Services defines child abuse as the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest), or emotional. Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basics for a child.
  - b) The Department of Human Services Office of the Inspector General defines mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and financial exploitation, of a person over the age of 18 who is receiving mental health service or developmental disabilities services, as follows:
    - c) Mental abuse: The use of demeaning, intimidating or threatening words, signs, gestures or other actions by an employee about an individual and in the presence of an individual or individuals that results in emotional distress or maladaptive behavior, or could have resulted in emotional distress or maladaptive behavior, for any individual present.
    - d) Physical abuse: non-accidental and inappropriate contact with an individual that causes bodily harm.
    - e) Sexual abuse: Any sexual behavior, sexual contact or intimate physical contact between an employee and an individual, including an employee's coercion or encouragement of an individual to engage in sexual activity that results in sexual contact, intimate physical contact, sexual behavior or intimate physical behavior.
    - f) Neglect: An employee's, agency's or facility's failure to provide adequate medical care, personal care or maintenance, and that, as a consequence, causes an individual pain, injury or emotional distress, results in either an individual's maladaptive behavior or the deterioration of an individual's physical condition or mental condition, or places an individual's health or safety at substantial risk of possible injury, harm or death.

- g) Financial exploitation: Taking unjust advantage of an individual's assets, property or financial resources through deception, intimidation or conversion for the employee's, facilities or agency's own advantage or benefit.
- 2) Information shall include the process for reporting allegations to the appropriate investigatory authority, depending on the age of the individual served
- a) Employees of Community Link are mandated reporters to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regarding any suspected incidents of abuse, neglect or financial exploitation.
  - b) For adults over 18 the OIG hotline is (800) 368-1463
  - c) For children under 18 the DCFS hotline is(800) 25- ABUSE (252-2873)
  - d) If any other person, individual, family member, guardian or advocate who witnesses, is told of or suspects an incident of alleged abuse, neglect, financial exploitation or a death of an individual may have occurred, may report the incident to OIG by telephoning the OIG hotline, or in writing by fax or other electronic reporting system offered by OIG to the OIG Intake or mail at:

Office of Inspector General  
901 Southwind Road  
Springfield, Illinois 62703

### **If Your Family Moves**

Your family may move and still be in the First Step Program. Please provide your new address and directions to the First Step staff to confirm your service area. If you move out of the First Step Program's service area, we can try to refer you to another agency if one is available or to other programs.

### **Smoking**

#### **The Law**

Effective January 1, 2008 the Illinois Clean Indoor Air Act has ban smoking in public places.

#### **Smoke Free Environment in First Step Programs**

Program instruction ACFY-Ph-Hi-95-04, effective May 1995, requires Early Head Start to create a smoke free environment for children and adults, and to eliminate exposure of children, staff and other adults to tobacco smoke.

Smoking is never allowed in space used by the First Step Program. This includes churches, classrooms, staff offices, kitchens, rest rooms, outdoor play areas, and all vehicles.

Parents and staff are role models for the children and should not smoke in front of them. Therefore, smoking is not allowed in front of the children during playgroup activities which include playgroups, field trips or other outdoor group activities.

In addition, please consider the health of your child and others involved during home visit time.

**Please try to refrain from smoking while any First Step Staff is in your home.**

### **Alcohol and Substance Use**

Alcohol and substance use is never allowed in space used by the First Step Program. This includes churches, classrooms, staff offices, kitchens, conference rooms, rest rooms, outdoor play areas and all vehicles.

**The local authorities or 911 will be contacted if anyone is suspected to be under the influence of alcohol or any other substance while attending First Step socializations.**

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## **First Step Program's POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Protections for the Privacy of Child Records**

Performance Objective: The program establishes and implements procedures to protect the confidentiality of any personally identifiable information (PII) in child records

#### **1.0 Program Procedures – Applicable Confidentiality Provisions**

1.1 If the program serves a child who is referred to, or found eligible for services under, IDEA, then a program must comply with the applicable confidentiality provisions in Part C of IDEA to protect the PII in records of those children.

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### **Disclosures With and Without Parental Consent**

Performance Objective: The program protects personally identifiable information (PII) in child records.

#### **1.0 Disclosures With Parental Consent**

1.1 Subject to the exceptions in 1303.22 b and 1303.22 c, the procedures to protect PII require the program to obtain a parent's written consent before the program may disclose such PII from child records.

1.2 The procedures to protect PII require the program to ensure the parent's written consent specifies what child records may be disclosed, explains why the records will be disclosed, and identifies the party or class of parties to whom the records may be disclosed.

a) The written consent must be signed and dated.

1.3 Signed and dated written consent may include a record and signature in electronic form that:

a) Identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic consent; and,

b) Indicates such person's approval of the information.

1.4 The program explains to the parent that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time.

a) If a parent revokes consent, that revocation is not retroactive and therefore it does not apply to an action that occurred before the consent was revoked.

## **2.0 Disclosure Without Parental Consent but with Parental Notice and Opportunity to Refuse**

2.1 The procedures to protect PII allow the program to disclose such PII from child records without parental consent if the program notifies the parent about the disclosure, provides the parent, upon the parent's request, a copy of the PII from child records to be disclosed in advance, and gives the parent an opportunity to challenge and refuse disclosure of the information in the records, before the program forwards the records to officials at a program, school, or school district in which the child seeks or intends to enroll or where the child is already enrolled so long as the disclosure is related to the child's enrollment or transfer.

## **3.0 Disclosure Without Parental Consent**

3.1 The procedures to protect PII allow the program to disclose such PII from child records without parental consent to:

a) Officials within the program or acting for the program, such as contractors and sub recipients, if the official provides services for which the program would otherwise use employees, the program determines it is necessary for Early Head Start services, and the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement;

b) Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, in connection with an audit or evaluation of education or child development programs, or for enforcement of or compliance with federal legal requirements of the program; provided the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure, except when the disclosure is specifically authorized by federal law or by the responsible HHS official;

c) Officials within the program, acting for the program, or from a federal or state entity, to conduct a study to improve child and family outcomes, including improving the quality of programs, for, or on behalf of, the program, provided the program maintains oversight with respect to the use, further disclosure, and maintenance of child records, such as through a written agreement, including the destruction of the PII when no longer needed for the purpose of the disclosure;

d) Appropriate parties in order to address a disaster, health or safety emergency during the period of the emergency, or a serious health and safety risk such as a serious food allergy, if the program determines that disclosing the PII from child records is necessary to protect the health or safety of children or other persons;

e) Comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided the program makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent about all such subpoenas and court orders in advance of the compliance therewith, unless:

i) A court has ordered that neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information provided in response be disclosed;

ii) The disclosure is in compliance with an ex parte court order obtained by the United States Attorney General (or designee not lower than an Assistant Attorney General) concerning investigations or prosecutions of an offense listed in 18 U.S.C. 2332b(g)(5)(B) or an act of domestic or international terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. 2331.;

(iii) A parent is a party to a court proceeding directly involving child abuse and neglect (as defined in section 3 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5101)) or dependency matters, and the order is issued in the context of that proceeding, additional notice to the parent by the program is not required; or,

iv) the program initiates legal action against a parent or a parent initiates legal action against the program, then the program may disclose to the court, also without a court order or subpoena, the child records relevant for the program to act as plaintiff or defendant.

f) A caseworker or other representative from a state, local, or tribal child welfare agency, who has the right to access a case plan for a child who is in foster care placement, when such agency is legally responsible for the child's care and protection, under state or tribal law, if the agency agrees in writing to protect PII, to use information from the child's case plan for specific purposes intended of addressing the child's needs, and to destroy information that is no longer needed for those purposes; and,

g) Appropriate parties in order to address suspected or known child maltreatment and is consistent with applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws on reporting child abuse and neglect.

#### **4.0 Written Agreements**

4.1 When the program establishes a written agreement with a third party, the procedures to protect such PII must require the program to annually review and, if necessary, update the agreement.

a) If the third party violates the agreement, then the program may:

i) Provide the third party an opportunity to self-correct; or,

ii) Prohibit the third party from access to records for a set period of time as established by the program's governing body and policy council.

#### **5.0 Annual Notice**

5.1 The procedures to protect PII require the program to annually notify parents of their rights in writing described in 1303.20 through 1303.24 and applicable definitions in part 1305, and

include in that notice a description of the types of PII that may be disclosed, to whom the PII may be disclosed, and what may constitute a necessary reason for the disclosure without parental consent as described in 1303.22 c.

## **6.0 Limit on Disclosing PII**

6.1 The program only discloses the information that is deemed necessary for the purpose of the disclosure.

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## **Parental Rights**

Performance Objective: Parents have the right to inspect their child's records.

### **1.0 Parental Rights**

- 1.1 If the parent requests to inspect child records, the program makes the child records available within a reasonable time, but no more than 45 days after receipt of request.
- 1.2 When the program maintains child records that contain information on more than one child, the program ensures the parent only inspects information that pertains to the parent's child.
- 1.3 The program does not destroy a child record with an outstanding request to inspect and review the record.

### **2.0 Amend Record**

- 2.1 A parent has the right to ask the program to amend information in the child record that the parent believes is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy.
- 2.2 The program considers the parent's request and, if the request is denied, renders a written decision to the parent within a reasonable time that informs the parent of the right to a hearing.

### **3.0 Hearing**

- 3.1 If the parent requests a hearing to challenge information in the child record, the program schedules a hearing within a reasonable time, notifies the parent, in advance, about the hearing, and ensures the person who conducts the hearing does not have a direct interest in its outcome.
- 3.2 The program ensures the hearing affords the parent a full and fair opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issues.
- 3.3 If the program determines from evidence presented at the hearing that the information in the child records is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the child's privacy, the program either amends or removes the information and notifies the parent in writing.

- 3.4 If the program determines from evidence presented at the hearing that information in the child records is accurate, does not mislead, or otherwise does not violate the child's privacy, the program informs the parent of the right to place a statement in the child records that either comments on the contested information or that states why the parent disagrees with the program's decision, or both.

#### **4.0 Right to Copy of Record**

- 4.1 The program provides a parent, free of charge, an initial copy of child records disclosed to third parties with parental consent and, upon parent request, an initial copy of child records disclosed to third parties, unless the disclosure was for a court that ordered neither the subpoena, its contents, nor the information furnished in response be disclosed.

#### **5.0 Right to Inspect Written Agreements**

- 5.1 A parent has the right to review any written agreements with third parties involving their child or themselves.

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### **Maintaining Records**

Performance Objective: The program maintains child records in accordance with the regulations.

#### **1.0 Maintaining Records**

- 1.1 The program maintains child records in a manner that ensures only parents, and officials within the program or acting on behalf of the program have access, and such records are destroyed within a reasonable timeframe after such records are no longer needed or required to be maintained.
- 1.2 The program maintains, with the child records, for as long as the records are maintained, information on all individuals, agencies, or organizations to whom a disclosure of PII from the child records was made (except for program officials and parents) and why the disclosure was made.
- a) When the program uses a web-based data system to maintain child records, the program ensures such child records are adequately protected and maintained according to current industry security standards.
- 1.3 If a parent places a statement in the child record, the program maintains the statement with the contested part of the child record for as long as the program maintains the record and, discloses the statement whenever it discloses the portion of the child record to which the statement relates.
-

## **Head Lice**

**Performance Objective:** To ensure the health and wellbeing of Early Head Start staff and families being served. There is a policy in place regards to Head Lice.

### **Procedure:**

- 1.0 In the home where there is a suspected case of head lice, the Parent Educator will assist the family in determining if the problem is lice and share information on treatment options and home cleaning. The home visit will continue with a focus on treating the lice problem. In the home that has a case of head lice (enrolled child, sibling, or adult) that is under treatment, the home visit will take place as scheduled as long as there are no live lice present.
  - 2.0 It is the parent/guardians responsibility to begin treatment in a timely manner.
- 

## **Bed Bugs**

**Performance Objective:** To ensure the health and wellbeing of Early Head Start staff and families being served. There is a policy in place regards to bed bugs.

### **Procedure:**

- 1.0 In the home where there is a bed bug outbreak, the Parent Educator will share information on treatment options and home cleaning. The Parent Educator will assist the family in determining options to get the home professionally treated. If the family is renting their home, have them notify the landlord of the infestation. In the home that has a case of bed bugs, the home visits will cease until the home has been professionally treated for bed bugs as that is the only reliable way to exterminate the bugs. The family will provide documentation that the home has been treated. In order to continue services with the family during the treatment process, visits may be conducted in a location deemed appropriate by the Coordinator and Director.
  - 2.0 It is the parent/guardians responsibility to begin treatment in a timely manner. If the family does not begin treatment in a timely manner, the child's enrollment in Early Head Start services will be determined at the discretion of the Early Head Start Director, Coordinator, and Contractual Nurse.
-

## **Infectious Diseases**

**Performance Objective:** To ensure the health and wellbeing of Early Head Start staff and families being served. There is a policy in place regards to infectious diseases.

### **Procedure:**

- 1.0 A child or any other household member who has a suspected infectious disease must obtain a doctor's note to verify diagnosis. Once that is received, the parents will follow the treatment plan given by the doctor. It is the parent/guardians responsibility to begin treatment in a timely manner.
  
- 2.0 To minimize the chance of spreading, Early Head Start staff is unable to attend home visits and the family members will not be able to attend playgroups or socializations until a signed document is received by the doctor stating they are receiving medical care and they are released around others without being contagious.

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## **Inclement Weather**

**Performance Objective:** The Early Head Start program's guidelines for safe driving and cancellation of visits/events during inclement weather.

### **Procedure:**

- 1.0 Although weather remains unpredictable and individual tolerances for snowy/icy conditions exist, these are the guidelines for Early Head Start home visits and socializations:
    - a. It is difficult to assess the conditions of all roads in the Early Head Start two county service areas. In case of inclement weather and the local school system is closed, home visits will be at the discretion of the Parent Educator. It should be noted that visits cancelled by the program or the Parent Educator must be made-up according the Head Start Performance Standards.
    - b. In case of inclement weather and all schools in the two county service areas are closed, playgroup/socializations will be cancelled by the program and be rescheduled when weather permits. If only some schools in the two county service area are closed, playgroup/socializations will be held at the discretion of the Director.
    - c. The Parent Educator is responsible for contacting their families scheduled for a home visit or playgroup/socialization if a program decision is made to cancel or limit travel.
    - d. The Director has final determination of canceling or re-scheduling events during cases of inclement weather.
-

## **Impasse Procedures**

**Performance Objective:** To facilitate meaningful consultation and collaboration about decisions of the governing body and the policy council, the agency's governing body and policy council jointly establish these written procedures for resolving internal disputes between the governing board and policy council in a timely manner that include impasse procedures.

### **Internal disputes between the Board of Directors and the Policy Council**

It is the policy of Community Link to resolve all disagreements between parties in its executive leadership that relate to Early Head Start fairly and expeditiously. Whenever possible, disagreements will be resolved through processes of informal discussion, compromise, consensus seeking and conciliation among the parties. If the parties agree that a mediated solution is necessary, professional mediation may also be employed. The following procedures have been established for the purpose of resolving an impasse, should it ever occur, between the Board of Directors and the Policy Council:

- a) When conflicting actions or non-actions occur, the chairman of the Policy Council shall notify the President of the Board of Directors within five (5) working days that an impasse exists.
- b) Upon notification of the impasse, the President of the Board of Directors shall request a meeting with the Chairman of the Policy Council and the Executive Directors to establish a communication process and clearly communicate any difference that may exist. These differences shall be clearly defined in writing. The intent of this meeting will be to communicate the differences and ideas of the respective bodies to each other with the hope of a compromise or amended action on behalf of the respective Board.
- c) At the next regular meeting of both the Board of Directors and the Policy Council, the chairman of the Policy Council and the President of the Directors, together with the Executive Director, shall clearly set forth to the respective bodies the difference of opinion and a possible solution to the impasse.
- d) If an impasse still exists by virtue of conflicting actions or non-actions between the Board of Directors and the Policy Council after the following steps have been complied with, the President of the Board of Directors shall immediately request a mediator to examine the wishes and the position of both bodies. A list of potential mediators shall be developed by the Executive Director.
- e) All mediators shall be persons who are well-respected in the community and will consider the best interest of the community. Mediators should be respected community leaders with experience in resolving disputes and dealing fairly with issues. The mediator shall be paid a reasonable fee for his or her services.
- f) The mediator shall attempt to resolve the impasse between the two bodies within ten (10) days of the notification of an impasse to the mediator.
- g) The mediator shall formally notify the Board of Directors and the Policy Council of his or her recommendations to resolve the impasse.
- h) If no resolution is reached with a mediator, the Board of Directors and Policy Council must select a mutually agreeable third party arbitrator whose decision is final.

When there is an impasse, the activity in question cannot be carried out until the impasse is resolved. The role of parents, Early Head Start staff, and other parties in the decisions-making process is not one of adversaries. Rather, all strive to work together as allies.

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## **Medical, Dental and General Emergencies**

**Performance Objective:** The program has an Allergy and Emergency Contact binder and Emergency Preparedness Procedure posted in a conspicuous area complete with emergency phone numbers.

### **1.0 Medical, Dental and General Emergencies**

- 1.1 The program maintains and trains staff on policies and procedures for emergencies that require rapid response on the part of staff or immediate medical and dental attention.
  - a. Plans of action for emergencies that require rapid response on the part of staff (e.g. a child choking) or immediate medical or dental attention are posted;
  - b. Emergency phone numbers are posted;
  - c. Up-to-date emergency contact information for each child/family is maintained and authorization for emergency care is readily available. It is maintained by the Health Services Assistant and also transported to each playgroup/socialization, so that it is immediately accessible in case of an emergency;
  - d. Emergency evacuation routes are posted and are practiced regularly (See 45 CFR 1304.53 for additional information);
  - e. Staff collects emergency contact information from each family at one of the first initial home visits. This information includes an emergency name and number, the name of the physician, and to whom to release the child in case of an emergency;
  - f. The program maintains procedures for handling cases of suspected or known child abuse and neglect that are in compliance with applicable Federal and State laws. Staff receives training annually.
  
- 1.2 Parent Educators encourage and assist parents to develop a list of names and telephone numbers of individuals to contact in an emergency. Parents can be encouraged to make two copies of the list – one to post at home and another to give to a responsible person outside of the home, such as a neighbor. Parents without phones are assisted in developing plans for accessing a neighbor's phone or public phone in case of an emergency.

## **Standards of Conduct**

Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support family's well-being and prevent and address challenging behavior.

Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers do not maltreat or endanger the health or safety of children. They do not:

- a) Use corporal punishment;
- b) Use isolation to discipline a child;
- c) Bind or tie a child to restrict movement or tape a child's mouth;
- d) Use or withhold food as a punishment or reward;
- e) Use toilet learning/training methods that punish, demean, or humiliate a child;
- f) Use any form of emotional abuse, including public or private humiliation, rejecting, terrorizing, extended ignoring, or corrupting a child;
- g) Physically abuse a child;
- h) Use any form of verbal abuse, including profane, sarcastic language, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or child's family; or,
- i) Use physical activity or outdoor time as a punishment or reward;

Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and do not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.

Staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers are required to comply with program confidentiality policies concerning personally identifiable information (PII) about children, families, and other staff members in accordance 1303.20-1303.24 and applicable federal, state, local, and tribal laws.

No child is left alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under program care.

### **Violation of Code Conduct**

For staff, violation of any or all portions listed herein will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

For volunteers, violation of any or all portions listed herein will result in the immediate termination of voluntary service.

For contractors, violation of any or all portions listed herein will result in the immediate termination of all contractual agreements.



## NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

This notice describes how medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

Effective Date: April 14, 2003

We respect an individual's confidentiality and only release Protected Health Information (PHI) about you in accordance with the Illinois and federal law. **PHI is information about you, including demographic information, that may identify you and that relates to your past, present or future physical or mental health or condition and related health care services.** This notice describes our policies related to the use of the records of your care generated by this agency.

**Privacy Contact:** If you have any questions about this policy or your rights, contact the Human Resource Generalist at 618-526-8800.

### USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

In order to effectively provide you care, there are times when we will need to share your PHI with others beyond our agency. This includes for:

**Treatment:** We may use or disclose PHI about you to provide, coordinate, or manage your care or any related services, including sharing information with others outside our agency that we are consulting with or referring you to.

**Payment:** Information will be used to obtain payment for the treatment and services provided. This will include contacting your health insurance company for prior approval of planned treatment or for billing purposes.

**Healthcare Operations:** We may use information about you to coordinate our business activities. This may include setting up your appointments, reviewing your care, training staff.

**Information Disclosed Without Your Consent:** Under Illinois and federal law, information about you may be disclosed without your consent in the following circumstances:

**Emergencies:** Sufficient information may be shared to address the immediate emergency you are facing.

**Follow Up Appointments/Care:** We will be contacting you to remind you of future appointments or information about treatment alternatives or other health-related benefits and services that may be of interest to you.

As Required By Law: This would include situations where we have a subpoena, court order, or are mandated to provide public health information, such as communicable diseases or suspected abuse and neglect such as child abuse, elder abuse, or institutional abuse.

Coroners, Funeral Directors, and Organ Donation: We may disclose medical information to a coroner or medical examiner and funeral directors for the purposes of carrying out their duties. When organs are donated, sufficient information will be provided to the program as necessary to facilitate the organ or tissue donation.

Governmental Requirements: We may disclose information to a health oversight agency for activities authorized by law, such as audits, investigations, inspections and licensure. There also might be a need to share information with the Food and Drug Administration related to adverse events or product defects. We are also required to share information, if requested with the Department of Health and Human Services to determine our compliance with federal laws related to health care.

Criminal Activity or Danger to Others: If a crime is committed on our premises or against our personnel, we may share information with law enforcement to apprehend the criminal. We also have the right to involve law enforcement when we believe an immediate danger may occur to someone.

Fundraising: As a not for profit provider of health care services, we need assistance in raising money to carry out our mission. We may contact you to seek a donation.

## **INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**

You have the following rights under Illinois and Federal Law:

Copy of Record: You are entitled to inspect the PHI our agency has generated about you. We may charge you a reasonable fee for copying and mailing your record.

Release of Records: You may consent in writing to release your records to others, for any purpose you choose. This could include your attorney, employer, or others who you wish to have knowledge of your care. You may revoke this consent at any time, but only to the extent no action has been taken in reliance on your prior authorization.

Restriction on Record: You may ask us not to use or disclose part of the medical information. This request must be in writing. The agency is not required to agree to your request if we believe it is in your best interest to permit use and disclosure of the information. The request should be given to the Human Resource Generalist.

Contacting You: You may request that we send information to another address or by alternative means. We will honor such request as long as it is reasonable and we are assured it is correct. We have a right to verify that the payment information you are providing is correct. We also will be glad to provide you information by email if you request it. If you wish us to communicate by email, you are also entitled to a paper copy of this privacy notice.

Amending Record: If you believe that something in your record is incorrect or incomplete, you may request that we amend it. To do this, contact the Human Resource Generalist and ask for the *Request to Amend Health Information Form*. In certain cases, we may deny your request. If we deny your request for an amendment, you have a right to file a statement that you disagree with us. We will then file our response. Your statement and our response will be added to your record.

Accounting for Disclosures: You may request an accounting of any disclosures we have made related to your PHI, except for information we used for treatment, payment, and health care operation purposes. It also excludes information that we shared with you, your family, information that you gave us specific consent to release, or were required to release. To receive information regarding disclosure made for a specific time period; please submit your request in writing to the Human Resource Generalist. We will notify you of the cost involved in preparing this list. The requested time period may not be for a period longer than six years, but not prior to April 14, 2003.

Questions and Complaints: If you have any questions or wish a copy of this Policy or have any complaints, you may contact the Human Resource Generalist in writing or contact our office for further information at 1665 N. Fourth Street, Breese, IL 62230. You also may complain to the Secretary of Health and Human Services if you believe our agency has violated your privacy rights. We will not retaliate against you for filing a complaint.

Changes in Policy: The agency reserves the right to change its Privacy Policy based on the needs of the agency and changes in state and federal law.

# For Early Head Start Only

## **Family Services**

Early Head Start provides families with a variety of services, sometimes referred to as “Comprehensive Services”. The description of these services is outlined here and followed by contacts for more information.

**Child Development**—Early Head Start’s child development program is designed to meet each child’s individual needs. Parents are involved in the planning and implementation of activities for their family and the program. Every child receives a variety of learning experiences to foster his/her intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth. Children participate in indoor and outdoor play, and are introduced to many educational concepts.

All Parent Educators are trained in child development, early childhood education, and in working with children with disabilities. Developmental and behavioral screenings are completed within 45 days of enrollment.

**Health**—Early Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of health problems. We work with each family to develop a comprehensive health care program, including medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional services. Well checks and immunizations are also monitored and encouraged. Dental exams are strongly encouraged after the first birthday, and required for all children after their second birthday. Vision and hearing screenings and health assessments are completed within 45 days of enrollment.

**Transitions**—Early Head Start will provide you with resources to help you through transitional times. When your child turns 30 months of age, a transition plan will be developed with the Parent, Parent Educator, EHS Disabilities Service Coordinator. Early Head Start will send referrals and releases to Head Start, Early Childhood or Pre-K of those children not in EI. CFC will send referrals and releases for the children enrolled in EI.

**Mental Health**—Early Head Start recognizes the importance of providing mental health services to children to encourage their emotional and social development. A mental health specialist is available to provide resources and training to staff and parents.

**Nutrition**—Early Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of nutrition problems & the importance of nutrition education. A nutritious snack is served at all playgroups. Monthly handouts are sent out to each family for nutritional snacks, etc. Nutrition Screenings are completed in the first 45 days and every 6 months.

**Parent Involvement**—Parents are the most important influence on a child’s development. An essential part of Early Head Start is the involvement of parents in parent education, program planning, and activities. Many parents serve as members of Policy Council and as officers in EHS parent committees.

**Family & Community Partnerships**—Early Head Start serves as a link between the family, the program and the community. Every family is encouraged to develop a Family Partnership Agreement. We are here to help families to be more aware of community resources and how to use them. Our goal is to support families as they work to strengthen their family units and improve the quality of their lives.

**Disability Services**—Early Head Start reserves at least 10 percent of its total enrollment for children with disabilities. Some children receive both Early Head Start services and Early Intervention services, such as developmental therapy, speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy or social/emotional therapy in home based and family child care settings. EHS works closely with the Early Intervention staff to provide services to meet these needs and adapt our curriculum when necessary.

### **Early Head Start Health Requirements**

For our Early Head Start Program to continue receiving money for operation, the government requires that the following health services be provided to all enrolled children. These are the **minimum** requirements every child in the Early Head Start Program must receive:

1. A Child Development/Health History and a Nutrition Assessment will be filled out on each child.
2. During well-baby checks and WIC visits children will be weighed on a regularly scheduled basis. Any children showing a low or high height/weight or any other growth or nutritional concern will receive additional service, which may include height/weight measurements and or referral to a dietician.
3. Vision and hearing screening will be conducted within 45 days of enrollment. Questionable or failed screenings will be referred for further evaluation, with parent consent. OAE testing will be conducted upon opening and as needed or as concerns arise.
4. Hemoglobin (blood work to check for anemia) and lead tests will be strongly encouraged when age appropriate.
5. Immunizations need to be kept up to date to protect your children and others from communicable disease. We recommend following the EPSDT schedule for well child check-ups which is a complete physical exam at the following ages: 2 weeks, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months and 36 months. We will assist you with transportation and making appointments if needed.
6. Follow-up care as indicated by medical records.
7. A dental examination for children over the age of 2 is required, however we strongly encourage 1st dental exam at age one.

8. Dental exams for pregnant women are also required, unless it is not recommended by their primary care physician. If it not recommended, we are required to receive a copy of the primary care physician's dental recommendations.

Please help us and you and your child by getting all the health services required as instructed by your physician or Parent Educator.

### **Dental Care**

The care of your child's first teeth is very important and has an effect on his/her permanent teeth coming in correctly. Baby teeth are needed for chewing and speech development. Gauze should be used to wipe off an infant's teeth after a feeding and at bedtime. Parents should assist their children in brushing teeth at an early age. Teeth should be brushed well two times a day. Limit sticky and high sugar content food.

All children, two (2) years and older, are required to have a dental exam by a dentist. A copy of the dental exam form will be uploaded into ChildPlus. Parents are encouraged to take their child to a dentist after the child's 1st tooth emerges and follow through with any recommended dental treatment.

Since a baby tooth is so small, it does not take long for a cavity to take over the entire tooth. This will become painful in time. It's a much more positive experience for the child to visit the dentist when feeling well than when in pain. An abscessed tooth puts infection into the body which will spread to other areas of the head and body. The decayed baby tooth can spread to the permanent tooth causing it to come in decayed.

A special form of tooth decay in children between 18 months and 3 years of age is baby bottle tooth decay. This happens when a child is given sugary liquids in a bottle and when a baby is laid down with a bottle, even with milk or formula in it. The results are brownish teeth which are easily broken off, sometimes even with the gum line. This can be painful and gives the child little substance to chew with. They also affect a child's appearance and self-esteem. **Never put a baby to bed with a bottle!**

Make the child's visit to the dentist a pleasant one. Avoid negative talk like, "Don't be afraid, the dentist is not going to hurt you" or "Don't be a baby". This is a new experience for your child. It's okay if he/she is a little afraid. Say things like, "The dentist takes care of little boy's and girl's teeth". Positive early dental experiences will lead to continued good dental care in his/her life. Dentistry has come a long way from those painful experiences you may have had as a child. Try not to pass on any feelings from a past negative experience you had. Remember, always keep your appointment or call in advance if you must cancel.

First Step works with a mobile dentist to provide dental care to the community at least twice a year.

### **Health Transportation**

Some parents will need help in arranging transportation for dental and medical needs. The following guidelines should be followed when parents and children will be transported by an

Early Head Start staff:

1. **Appointments for medical or dental services should always be made with the Early Head Start staff that will be transporting.** Staff is not usually available on short notice.
2. **Long distance transports must be pre-approved by the Program Director.**
3. The parent is encouraged to make arrangements for someone to watch brothers and sisters of the child going to the doctor. Early Head Start staff may provide assistance on a case by case basis as approved by the Program Director.
4. Health transportation is only for enrolled children and pregnant mothers.
5. Parents should remember that smoking is not allowed in any agency vehicle and their child will be required to sit in an approved safety car seat or seatbelt at all times the vehicle is in motion. Adults are also required to wear seat belts.
6. The parent and child should be transported directly to the appointment and back. When an appointment will cause the parent and child to be away from home over a mealtime, the parent should make arrangements for providing lunch for the child and self. A sack lunch or money for buying lunch out is the responsibility of the parent. The Early Head Start staff person should not be expected to provide lunch for the child and parent.
7. The Early Head Start staff will stay with the parent and child during the doctor's visit. The parent is to go into the room with the child while the doctor is examining. The Early Head Start staff may also go into the examining room if the parent and/or the doctor wish but not in place of the parent.



# Early Learning & Family Support Programs

A Division of Community Link, Inc.

## **POLICY COUNCIL BY-LAWS**

### **ARTICLE 1 – NAME**

This organization shall be named Community Link First Step Early Head Start Policy Council.

### **ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE**

The mission of Community Link is to challenge, teach, and inspire both participants and community linking them in ways that enhance their lives.

#### **Section 1 – Purpose**

The purpose of the Policy Council is to implement Head Start Program Performance Standards, 1301– Program Governance. The Policy Council is to serve as a link between public and private organizations, the Grantee, the communities served by Head Start, and the families in the Head Start program. Appropriate training and technical assistance shall be provided to members of the Policy Council to ensure that members understand the information they receive and can effectively oversee and participate in the programs of the Head Start Program.

#### **Section 2 – Function**

The functions of the Policy Council shall include the following:

1. The Policy Council must work in partnership with key management staff and the governing body to develop, review, and approve or disapprove the following policies and procedures:
  - a. All funding applications and amendments to funding applications for Head Start (HS), including administrative services, prior to the submission of such applications to HHS;
  - b. Procedures describing how the governing body and the Policy Council shall implement shared decision-making;
  - c. Procedures for program planning in accordance with the requirements of 1301;
  - d. The program’s philosophy and long- and short-range program goals and objectives;
  - e. The composition of the Policy Council and the procedures by which policy group members are chosen;
  - f. Criteria for defining recruitment, selection, and enrollment priorities, in accordance with the requirements of 45 CFR part 1302 Subpart A;
  - g. The annual self-assessment of the Grantee’s progress in carrying out the programmatic and fiscal intent of its grant application, including planning or other actions that may result from the review of the annual audit and findings from the Federal monitoring review;
  - h. Program personnel policies and subsequent changes to those policies, in accordance with 45 CFR 1302.90, including standards of conduct for program staff, consultants, and volunteers;
  - i. Decisions to hire or terminate the Head Start director of the Grantee;

- j. Decisions to hire or terminate any person who works primarily for the Head Start program of the Grantee;
  - k. Policy Council reimbursement. Grantee and delegate agencies must enable low-income members to participate fully in their group responsibilities by providing, if necessary, reimbursements for reasonable expenses incurred by the members; and
  - l. Internal dispute resolution. Grantee and the Policy Council jointly must establish written procedures for resolving internal disputes, including impasse procedures, between the governing body and Policy Council.
2. In addition, the Policy Council must perform the following functions directly:
- a. Serve as a link to the Parent Committees, the governing body, public and private organizations, and the communities they serve;
  - b. Assist Parent Committees in communicating with parents enrolled in all program options to ensure that they understand their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in Head Start and to encourage their participation in the program;
  - c. Assist in recruiting volunteer services from parents, community residents, and community organizations, and assist in the mobilization of community resources to meet identified needs; and
  - d. Establish and maintain procedures for working with the Grantee to resolve community complains about the program.

## **ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1 – Composition**

- 1. At least 51 percent of Policy Council members must be parent of currently enrolled children [Head Start Act Section 1304.50(b)(2)].
- 2. The Policy Council will be made up of six (6) Parent Representatives and five (5) Community Representatives from the community.

### **Section 2 – Eligibility**

- A. The Policy Council is made up of Parent Representatives and Community Representatives from the community. To be eligible for membership on the Council, an individual must fall into one of these categories:
  - 1. A Parent Representative is defined as a biological parent or person acting in the role of parent of (a) currently enrolled child/children [Head Start Act Section 1306.3(h)] and residing in Clinton or Washington County.
  - 2. A Community Representatives from the community is defined as an individual residing in or representing an agency or program serving either Clinton or Washington County. A Community Representative from the community may be a former First Step Early Head Start parent, child-care/social-services professional, or an interested citizen [Head Start Act Section 1304.50(b)(3)].
- B. No person may serve on the Policy Council while he/she or any member of his/her immediate family is employed by Community Link. Immediate family will include husband, wife, brother or brother-in-law, sister or sister-in-law, father or father-in-law, mother or mother-in-law, son or son-in-law, and daughter or daughter-in-law [Head Start Act Section 1304.50(b)(6)].

### **Section 3 – Responsibilities**

All Policy Council members will:

1. Stay informed as to the purpose, plans and progress of the Policy Council.
2. Consider all viewpoints; listen with respect and attention to all the information before making a motion or voting.
3. Act as a positive role model and conduct him/her self in a professional manner.
4. Attend Policy Council meetings regularly and actively participate in those meetings

Parent members will also:

1. Bring ideas and suggestions from their Parent Committee groups.
2. Report back to their Parent Committee the activities of Policy Council. This should be documented in the Parent Committee minutes.

Community members will also:

1. Act as an advocate for the BCMW Head Start Program
2. Offer information to the parents concerning services available in the communities they serve.
3. Influence the services of the community in order to improve the available resources to our families.

### **Section 4 – Procedures for Election of Members**

#### **A. Parent Representatives**

1. Any parent of a child currently enrolled in First Step Early Head Start may be nominated or may nominate herself/himself as a Parent Representative to the Policy Council.
2. Nominations shall be placed only with the consent of the nominee. Parent Representatives will be elected by ballot from the list of nominated parents of children currently enrolled in the program.
3. The annual nomination will be done in March and election process will take place in April, and elected parents will be presented to the Policy Council in May.
4. Each family enrolled in Early Head Start and each Community Representative is entitled to one vote.
5. Only one parent from the immediate household in which an enrolled child resides is eligible to serve on the Council at a time.
6. In the event of an opening for a parent representative on the Policy Council, parents in the First Step Early Head Start Program are informed about that vacancy by letter from the First Step EHS Program Director and are invited to nominate themselves or another parent in the program to represent all parents at Policy Council meetings. After nominations are received, a list of nominees is compiled and ballots are sent out for a vote. The Policy Council parent representative is elected from this list of nominees. The selected parent representative is presented to the Policy Council at the next Policy Council Meeting for approval.

#### **B. Community Representatives**

1. Community Representatives from the Community may be nominated by parents, staff or current Policy Council members. All nominees must then be approved by the Policy Council.

2. Parent Representatives acting on behalf of all parents of children currently enrolled in the program will cast ballots to elect Community Representatives annually at the May Policy Council meeting or, in the event of an opening, at the next scheduled Council meeting.
3. One representative from Community Link Board of Directors may be appointed by the Board Chairperson to serve on the First Step Early Head Start Policy Council. If so appointed, the member shall be considered a Community Representative from the community and shall have all rights of membership, unless the five Community Representatives from the community are filled at the time of appointment. All membership by-laws apply to the Board Representative.
4. According to the Head Start Act Section 642(c)(1)(iv)(I & II), the Community Link Governing Board must include parents of children who are currently or were formerly enrolled in Early Head Start programs. To accomplish this requirement, the Policy Council Chairperson may fill this position herself/himself or may request a current or past Head Start parent to fill this role; all Governing Board by-laws apply to this parent representative.

### **Section 5 – Term of Office**

- A. Members shall stand for election or re-election annually.
- B. Members of the Policy Council shall be limited to five (5) one-year terms. A one-year term is defined according to annual election in April and is for a 12 month period from May to April of the following year. 1301.3(d)(2)
- C. If a member cannot finish a full one-year term, elections will be conducted for a new member to fill a partial term which will not count towards the five (5) year term limit. A partial term can be one (1) to eleven (11) months in length dependent upon the vacancy.
- D. Parent Representatives whose children transition from the Community Link First Step Early Head Start Program will be allowed to complete their current term.

### **Section 6 – Voting Rights**

- A. Only elected Parent Representatives and Community Representatives from the community may vote on Policy Council decisions.
- B. Each member of the Policy Council shall have one vote (either in person, by phone, or email). There shall be no proxy voting by, or for, any member.
- C. Following Community Link's Conflict of Interest Policy, an individual must disclose the existence of his/her financial interest in connection with matters constituting any actual or possible conflict of interest. In such an instance, the individual may make a presentation at the Policy Council meeting or committee meeting but, after such presentation, shall leave the meeting during the discussion of, and the vote on, the transaction or arrangement that is the subject of the conflict of interest.

### **Section 7 – Resignation/Termination/Vacancy of Membership**

- A. Membership may be terminated by the Policy Council after due notice to the Policy Council member and opportunity to be heard is given.

- B. A member of the Policy Council can be terminated by a majority vote of the Policy Council if absent from three (3) consecutive meetings without having given a legitimate excuse prior to the meeting. A member of the Policy Council may also be terminated if the member violates the signed Standards of Conduct for program staff, consultants, and volunteers. 1302.90(c)
- C. A Policy Council Member wishing to resign from Policy Council needs to submit their resignation in writing to the Director of the Program before the next Policy Council Meeting.
- D. Policy Council Members who resign or who are terminated shall be replaced by the standard process as promptly as possible.

## **Section 8 – Quorum**

- 1. At least 1/3 of the voting members must be present at a meeting for official business to be conducted. This constitutes a quorum.
- 2. A member may attend the meeting by telephone, if he/she is unable to be present physically.
- 3. If the Policy Council Chair or Vice-Chair is not present, a voting member must assume the role of Acting Chair in order for business to be conducted.
- 4. The Policy Council Chair can count in determining whether or not a quorum is present.

## **ARTICLE 4 – OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 – Officers**

Officers shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and a Secretary. Individuals in these positions, like other members of the Policy Council, have no authority to speak or act on behalf of the Policy Council other than per the authority granted by the by-laws, or by resolution of the Policy Council or Board of Directors.

### **Section 2 – Election and Term of Office**

Nominations for officer positions must be offered from the floor. This can be from an interested candidate or from another member. If more than one nomination is made for a position, election will be by secret ballot. Each officer will be elected by a majority vote of the members present once the Policy Council has been seated in April, and will serve a term of one (1) year.

### **Section 3 – Removal**

Any officer or member of the Policy Council, who fails to perform the duties as outlined in the by-laws, can be removed by a majority vote of the Policy Council.

## **Section 4 – Chairperson**

1. The Chairperson will:
  - a. Preside at all meetings and maintain order.
  - b. Encourage commitment and cooperation from each Policy Council member.
  - c. Lead the program toward the accomplishment of its mission.
  - d. Appoint standing and special committees and committee chairpersons.
  - e. Serve on all committees and coordinate activities as needed.
  - f. Encourage all committees to function well and be accountable to the full Policy Council.
  - g. Sign official documents requiring signature.
  - h. Explain motions to be voted on and may only vote to break a tie.
  - i. Perform other duties as appropriate.

## **Section 5 – Vice Chairperson**

1. The Vice Chairperson will:
  - a. Preside at Policy Council meetings in the absence of the Chairperson.
  - b. In the case of the vacancy of the chairperson, assume the office of Chairperson.
  - c. Perform other duties as appropriate.

## **Section 6 – Secretary**

1. The Secretary will:
  - a. Record the minutes at Policy Council meetings and record motions as they are made.
  - b. Sign Policy Council minutes once approved (secretary is not allowed to vote to approve minutes).
  - c. In case of a vacancy another Policy Council member will record the minutes.
  - d. Perform other duties as appropriate.

## **ARTICLE 5 – COMMITTEES**

The Policy Council will appoint such committees as are necessary to the proper conduct of business, including but not limited to the following: Executive Committee, Personnel Committee, and By-Laws Committee. Staff can attend as support but cannot vote in these meetings.

### **Section 1 – Personnel Committee**

The purpose of this committee is to act in an advisory capacity to Policy Council regarding approval or disapproval of hires and terminations.

1. This committee is responsible for:
  - a. Assisting in interviewing and recommending persons to be hired to fill vacancies in Head Start.
  - b. Providing recommendations and reports to Policy Council as a whole regarding the termination of employees (with the exception of probationary staff).

- c. Answering questions from Policy Council regarding personnel matters.
2. All meetings of the Personnel Committee will be closed to everyone except the committee, immediate supervisor, Head Start Director, and Executive Director.

### **Section 2 – Policy Committee/Program Committee**

The purpose of this committee will assist with policies, procedures, program planning and other issues relating to governance as well as program related activities such as self-assessment, community assessment, review of program plans, developing goals, objectives and program outcomes, developing the program budget, etc.

### **Section 3 – Activity Committee**

The purpose of this committee will assist in program activities such as planning parent activities and trainings, developing support groups, developing a newsletter, etc.

### **Section 4 – Self-Assessment Committee**

The purpose of this committee will assist with preparing for and completing annual program self-assessment and Federal site review.

### **Section 5 – Health Service Advisory Committee**

The purpose of this committee will assist the program in strengthening the child health care guidelines by drawing on its knowledge of the community. Also assists in identifying long-term providers, sources of funding for health services and ways to inform community health providers about the needs of Early Head Start children and families.

### **Section 6 – Special Committee**

Special Committees may be appointed by the Chairperson or selected by the Council as the need arises. These committees can review and comment prior to presentation to Policy Council in the following areas: Requests for funds, Policies and Procedures, Program Plans, or other applicable matters.

## **ARTICLE 6 – MEETINGS**

Meetings will be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order.

### **Section 1 – Regular Meetings**

Regular meetings of this Policy Council will be held on the third Friday of each month (unless Friday falls on a holiday) beginning at 12:00 pm. A member may attend by telephone if they are physically unable to attend.

## **Section 2 – Special Meetings**

1. The Chairperson or Early Head Start Director may call a special meeting or change the regular meeting date as needed. This can include a phone call and/or email to each member to conduct business. Each member's vote will be accounted for in the written minutes of the Phone and/or Email Meeting.
2. When the Policy Council needs to deal with sensitive issues regarding staff or families, the portion of the meeting in which the issues are discussed will be closed to anyone other than voting members and approved staff. The minutes shall be handled as stated in the Open Meetings Act.

## **Section 3 – Notice of Meetings**

1. Written notices will be mailed, electronic copy, and/or Community Link's Policy Council Portal to each member at least one week prior to the date of each regular meeting. The mailing will include:
  - a. An agenda for the meeting
  - b. Minutes from the previous month's meeting
  - c. Supporting documents requiring approval
2. Notice of special meetings will be given at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting via phone call, email, or home visit.

## **ARTICLE 7 – CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS – POLICY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

It is the policy of Community Link to resolve all disagreements between parties in its executive leadership that relate to Early Head Start fairly and expeditiously. Whenever possible, disagreements will be resolved through processes of informal discussion, compromise, consensus seeking and conciliation among the parties. If the parties agree that a mediated solution is necessary, professional mediation may also be employed. The following procedures have been established for the purpose of resolving an impasse, should it ever occur, between the Board of Directors and the Policy Council:

- a) When conflicting actions or non-actions occur, the chairman of the Policy Council shall notify the President of the Board of Directors within five (5) working days that an impasse exists.
- b) Upon notification of the impasse, the President of the Board of Directors shall request a meeting with the Chairman of the Policy Council and the Executive Directors to establish a communication process and clearly communicate any difference that may exist. These differences shall be clearly defined in writing. The intent of this meeting will be to communicate the differences and ideas of the respective bodies to each other with the hope of a compromise or amended action on behalf of the respective Board.
- c) At the next regular meeting of both the Board of Directors and the Policy Council, the chairman of the Policy Council and the President of the Directors, together with the Executive Director, shall clearly set forth to the respective bodies the difference of opinion and a possible solution to the impasse.

- d) If an impasse still exists by virtue of conflicting actions or non-actions between the Board of Directors and the Policy Council after the following steps have been complied with, the President of the Board of Directors shall immediately request a mediator to examine the wishes and the position of both bodies. A list of potential mediators shall be developed by the Executive Director.
- e) All mediators shall be persons who are well-respected in the community and will consider the best interest of the community. Mediators should be respected community leaders with experience in resolving disputes and dealing fairly with issues. The mediator shall be paid a reasonable fee for his or her services.
- f) The mediator shall attempt to resolve the impasse between the two bodies within ten (10) days of the notification of an impasse to the mediator.
- g) The mediator shall formally notify the Board of Directors and the Policy Council of his or her recommendations to resolve the impasse.
- h) If no resolution is reached with a mediator, the Board of Directors and Policy Council must select a mutually agreeable third party arbitrator whose decision is final.

## **ARTICLE 8 – AMENDMENTS**

1. These By-Laws will be reviewed at least annually or as the need arises.
2. These By-Laws may be amended by sending a copy of the proposed amendment to each Policy Council member at least one (1) week before the meeting.
  - a. The Policy Council may debate an amendment before adoption.
  - b. All amendments must be approved by a majority of the Policy Council members present.
3. Policy Council By-Laws must be approved by the governing board.

1665 North fourth Street • Breese, IL 62230  
Ph: 618-526-8830 • Fax: 618-526-8831  
[www.commlink.org](http://www.commlink.org)

First Step Early Learning & Family Support Programs, Adult Day Programs, and Community Living Programs  
are accredited by CARF—The Rehabilitation Accreditation Commission.

Community Link is a charitable, not-for-profit organization; all contributions are tax deductible.

