

HEAD START PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES

1304.53(a)

Head Start staff ensures that the physical environment supports the delivery of high quality services to children and families. Facilities, materials, and equipment are selected and maintained to create a learning environment that is safe, accessible, comfortable and welcoming. Attention is also given to ensure that the physical environment is both age-appropriate and culturally sensitive in addressing the individual needs of children and families and the particular features of the community.

Procedures:

Head Start Facilities

- HCAP Head Start Program Managers conduct monthly visits, facility inspections quarterly, and meal service reviews three times annually for each licensed classroom.
- State child care licensing inspectors from the Department of Human Services (DHS) conduct annual site visits to ensure that health and safety requirements are maintained. This includes reviewing children's health records, inspecting for hazardous conditions, and checking to see if required documents are posted or on file in the classroom.
- Classrooms have at least 35 square feet of indoor space per child for children's use (exclusive of bathrooms, halls, kitchens, staff rooms and storage places), and at least 75 square feet of usable outdoor play space per child.
- Classrooms are organized into distinct interest centers which support individual work and/or peer interactions, and which provide a variety of materials with which to interact.
- Classrooms are designed so children have easy access to materials and equipment that are of interest to them.
- Classrooms are designed and equipped with materials reflecting the different developmental needs of children.
- The outdoor play areas are designed to keep children safe and to prevent them from leaving the premises and getting into unsafe and unsupervised areas.
 - Children are not exposed to vehicular traffic, unsupervised, when walking to and from play areas.
 - Outdoor areas are fenced or coned, or involve staff and volunteers being positioned strategically so as to prevent children from leaving the premises.
 - The teaching staff ensures that playground equipment is safe, well-maintained, and does not pose a threat to children due to hazardous conditions.
 - Annual playground inspections are conducted by Certified Playground Safety Inspector(s).

- The playground area is fully supervised at all times.
- The teaching staff is responsible for cleaning and maintaining facilities.
- Carpets are vacuumed and uncarpeted floors are swept and mopped with a sanitizing solution daily and when soiled.
- Annual carpet and floor cleaning/waxing schedules are maintained.
- Mops are sanitized thoroughly before and after use.
- Bathrooms, toilet training equipment, kitchens and tables are cleaned and sanitized when soiled, or at least daily.
- Trash and garbage containers are covered and placed in properly designated areas. Trash and garbage is removed from the premises on a daily basis.
- Sleeping mats are sanitized after use.
- Bleach solution is made daily, labeled and in a locked cabinet.
- Toxic substances such as, Clorox, Lemon Q, and Pink Soap are stored and secure in a cabinet with a child's lock and away from consumables.
- The teaching staff ensures that the environment is free of toxins, such as cigarette smoke, lead, pesticides, herbicides, and/or other air pollutants, as well as soil and water contaminants. If there is cause for concern, Managers are consulted for possible referral to the Department of Health.
- Teaching staff completes "**Health and Safety Classroom Cleaning Checklist**" daily by recording the time they completed the cleaning and verifying with their initial.
- Teaching staff completes a lead inspection and logs it monthly, if applicable, for the classroom.
- The Teaching staff completes **Environmental Health and Safety Protocol Checklist** for their classroom monthly. Teacher and Teacher Mentor will need to initial checklist upon completion.
- A "**Health and Safety Screener**" is completed twice a year to ensure that facilities are healthy and safe for children.
- Approved, working fire extinguishers are readily available.
- An appropriate number of smoke detectors are installed and tested regularly.
- Exits are clearly visible and evacuation routes are clearly marked and posted.
- Children are protected from potential danger from exposed electrical outlets through the use of child-resistant covers or the installation of child-protection outlets.
- Toilets and hand washing facilities are adequate, clean, in good repair, and easily reached by children.

- Adequate provisions are made for children with disabilities to ensure their safety, comfort and participation.
- HCAP Head Start Emergency Procedures Guide is readily available and annually reviewed.
- Managers and/or Teacher Mentors visit classrooms twice a month and note conditions or situations requiring attention or follow-up on the “**Education Manager Site Review**” checklist.
- A “**Maintenance Work Request**” form is completed and submitted to the Facilities Manager for follow-up, as needed.
- Staff assists parents in assessing health and safety issues in the home.
- Staff promotes the importance of children’s physical development and provides suggestions for active outdoor and indoor play, as well as for the safe use of equipment and materials.

General Procedures Applicable to Head Start

- A designated self-assessment team consisting of staff, community partners and parent volunteers conducts an annual assessment of centers, home-based and family child care programs using the “**Health and Safety Screener**”, “**Creative Curriculum Self Assessment Checklist**”, “**Education Manager Site Review**”, and “**Head Start Self-Assessment Checklist**” for the center-based and family child care programs and the “**Home Base Socialization Facility Health and Safety Checklist**” for the home based programs. An orientation/training is conducted prior to completing the self-assessment process.
- The “**Health and Safety Screener**” looks at issues of health and safety at the beginning of the school year and corrective actions are implemented immediately by staff.
- The “**Creative Curriculum Self Assessment Checklist**” looks at the arrangement of physical facilities and the adequacy of materials, equipment and furnishings that are provided to the children and adults.
- The “**Education Manager Site Review**” looks at safety and supervision issues, as well as teacher/child interactions, documentation and record keeping.
- The “**Home Base Socialization Facility Health and Safety Checklist**” looks at how the home visitor supports the parents as their child’s primary teacher, how the planned experiences support children’s learning and how the home visitor helps families with their goals and needs for resources.
- Funds are budgeted for leasehold improvements and repairs in order to ensure the safety and security of facilities and equipment.

- When emergency repairs are required (e.g., plumbing and electrical), the Teacher notifies his/her Manager and describes the extent of the problem, and may be advised to call the Facilities Manager.
- If the request is deemed appropriate, the Facilities Manager authorizes a contractor for needed services at the most reasonable cost, or assigns Head Start Maintenance staff to complete services for repairs.
- The Manager processes an “**Authorization for Emergency Repair**” form and sends it to the fiscal office via the Head Start Director.
- When services have been completed, the Maintenance staff and/or Teacher sign the repair bill or invoice and sends it to his/her Manager for processing.

- Consumable supplies are paper goods and other items used on a regular basis for food service, diapering supplies, and the cleaning and maintaining of facilities. These are stored at the main office and are available for delivery and/or pick up at the start of each month.
- The teaching staff accurately determines what supplies and quantities are needed for the next month (based on enrollment/attendance). “Hoarding” of supplies is strongly discouraged.
- The teaching staff completes a “**Consumable Supplies Request**” form and submits it to their Manager for approval. Maximum amounts allowable are designated on the request forms.
- The Manager submits the approved request to the Facilities Manager by the first week of the month.
- The Head Start Maintenance staff delivers supplies during the 1st-2nd week of the month for approved requests.
- The teaching staff contacts the Facilities Manager via their Program Manager for any emergency requests, or basic building/equipment repairs or replacements needed using the Maintenance Work Request form.

Forms:

Authorization for Emergency Repair
Consumable Supplies Request
Creative Curriculum Self Assessment Checklist
Environmental Health & Safety Protocol Checklist
Health and Safety Classroom Cleaning Checklist
Health and Safety Screener
Head Start Self-Assessment Checklist
Home Base Program Assessment Instrument
Lead Report
Maintenance Work Request
Education Manager Site Review
Monthly Lead Inspection Log